

**SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ISLAM IN THE WEST:  
THREE BRITISH STUDIES**

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## Abstract

This study explores social representations of Islam in the West, with the empirical inquiry focused on Britain. Drawing on Said's critique of Orientalism, treated as a Western representation of Islam, the author establishes a clear distinction between Islam and its representations in the West. Said's analysis of Orientalism is related, by the author, to Moscovici's theory of social representations. Islam is dealt with in terms of cultural otherness. Culture, both as a dynamic and a heterogeneous social phenomenon, is reinstated, by reference back to Durkheim's collective representations, as an integral component of Moscovici's theory. The author investigates social representations of Islam in Britain by means of three empirical studies: (1) a participant observational study of the British security establishment in relation to interrogation by Scotland Yard of a suspect terrorist; (2) a content analysis of nine popular and quality national newspapers for the whole of 1989 in relation to the Rushdie Affair; and (3) group discussions involving members of the community at a University of London college. Representations of Islam are sought in (i) the interrogation; (ii) letters to the editors of various newspapers; and (iii) the discussion of groups considered as thinking societies in miniature. In accordance with the findings of the three empirical studies Islam is, largely, represented as a fundamentalist phenomenon. Aspects of culture such as individualism and secularism are instrumental in shaping Western representations of Islam. Results also indicate that the structure of representations of Islam persist even though the contents of those representations and the thinking societies which produce them keep changing. The media play a powerful role in generating representations of Islam. Power, like culture, also structures the social representations of Islam in the West. Culture requires the adoption of more appropriate methods of investigation, while power needs operationalisation. The study of social representations of cultural otherness remains virtually unexplored terrain.

**To Hwaida**

*for her unfailing support*

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## Introduction

*The word 'religion', or the word that takes its place in other languages, is given to us by our culture, and its meaning differs greatly from one society to another. Westerners, for most of whom the only religion familiar in detail is Christianity, tend to understand other religions in Christian terms. They see the Muslim mosque as like a Church, the Koran as like the Bible, the learned as like clergy, the Caliphate as like the Papacy and so on.*

*(Stewart 1994, p.ix)*

The ideas we choose to research are not apportioned to us by some authority. Nor do they come into existence through a lottery draw on a Saturday night. The ideas we research are produced through an interaction, over time and within history, of a multitude of factors from the current to the historical; from the private to the public and from the cultural to the universal. It is an interaction which occurs in 'the social sphere' and in accordance with the power system that governs our present moment. We eat and drink, sleep and get up, speak and are spoken to, and suffer the affliction of everyday pressures as well as enjoying the good moments. All such human activities are social activities - the intricate interactions of which build the bridges across which our novel ideas come into being and are grasped and subjected to inquiry.

At the outset, the story behind this study was a purely private one. The researcher's arrest by the police for allegedly intending to commit an act of terrorism formed the start of the research project. The allegation arose from a suspicion of an Islamic fundamentalist connection. Fundamentalism was conceived of as a source of inspiration for committing terrorist threats. A legal process then ran its course. Meanwhile periods in a cell in a maximum security police station and in a London prison were spent - a time for pain, hope and reflection. Then came freedom, but with it also came a change of research priorities. An initial proposal for conducting a comparative study in political psychology was scrapped. This gave way to the present study which concerns the social representations of Islam in the West with subjects for empirical inquiry

selected from Britain. This topic was essentially prompted by that seemingly personal incident but in fact matters beyond the purely personal also featured at the very outset of the incident.

*Social Representations of Islam in the West: Three British studies* sees the light of day in an international context which saw the end of Communism: believed by triumphalist Western authors like Francis Fukuyama, to be ‘the end of history’, and which gave rise to Samuel Huntington’s fashionable idea of a ‘clash of civilisations’, with Islam and the West on different sides of the cultural divide. From academe to the media, and from the world of business to the world of intelligence, a new Cold War started to take shape unchallenged. Reading his lips, this was the inauguration by the triumphant American President, George Bush, of the ‘New World Order’, immediately after the Gulf War. In such an atmosphere a whole range of stereotypical labelling of Islam began to proliferate: Islamic fundamentalism; Islamic terrorism; Islamic threat; Islamic *Jihad*; Islamic bomb etc. Newspaper headlines, magazine cover stories and prime time television programmes not only generated such stereotypes but also spread them to the far most corners of the world. A religion and a culture, many centuries old, with over one billion adherents world-wide and with only loosely defined geographical borders, Islam is constructed as though it were a monolithic phenomenon. Such is the representation which this study laboured to investigate.

Studying Islam as Western social representations requires choosing an epistemology, a theory and an appropriate method. These are the research tools without which we could not embark on such a job. Stressing the social context in which the phenomenon in question ought to be studied implied the choice of an epistemological paradigm which asserts the importance of the social versus the non-social. This led to opting for the Hegelian paradigm which was later endorsed by Kuhn over and against the Cartesian paradigm which provided the basis for a behaviourist-dominated social psychology.

With Moscovici's theory of social representations setting the theoretical context for the thesis, a multi-method approach is adopted herein.

The overriding notion on which this thesis rests is cultural otherness. This is the context in which Islam is constructed, in terms of representations, in the West (which for the purposes of this thesis is Britain). The core of the notion of cultural otherness is culture. Many towering notions have overshadowed culture in the centuries during which modern social theory has developed. Ethnicity, race, nationalism and ideology are some such ideas worthy of mention. The rise of such notions was assisted by broader socio-cultural and political waves which influence social theory as well as social research. Lately, culture has assumed an all time salience in social and political theory. At least since the end of the Cold War, scholarship based on culture has proliferated extraordinarily<sup>1</sup>.

Culture assumes a powerful and increasing role in the evolution of this thesis as it qualifies identity: the one of the representing (the West) and the other of the represented (Islam). Both Islam and the West are broad entities. They are also highly diverse when conceived of as cultures. This is why this thesis stresses the heterogeneous rather than the homogenous nature of culture in modern times. It is dynamic in nature, and exists across racial, geo-political and national borders. Although it is a conceptualisation that needs further articulation, by incorporation of the notion of culture the thesis breaks with the strictly anthropological conception of culture as a small, static and homogeneous phenomenon characteristic of 'primitive' societies. Although it admits cultural influence as contributing to the generation and transformation of representations, the theory of social representations has yet to develop a full-scale incorporation of culture within its ambit. There has been some research in social

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<sup>1</sup> Among the recently published books which have culture, in one way or another, as a main theme are: Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organisations: Intercultural co-operation and its importance for survival*. Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. Harrison, L. E. (1992). *Who Prospers? How cultural values shape economic and political success*. Sowell, T. (1994). *Race and Culture: A world view*. Gannon, M. G. et al. (1994). *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical journeys through 17 countries*. Huntington, S. (1996). *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*. Kaplan, R. (1996). *The Ends of the Earth*.

representations employing the notion of culture, but reluctantly. This thesis is intended to contribute to overcoming such reluctance. Perhaps this is because Moscovici rejected Durkheim's notion of collective representations in favour of his own notion of social representations. Culture, it is argued, should be viewed as a bedrock phenomenon in the study of social representations.

A high profile adoption of culture within the theory of social representations implies the development of appropriate methods of research. More importantly, it implies the further extension and articulation of the epistemological foundations mentioned earlier. Although this thesis adopts and advocates a multi-method approach, further research remains vital to develop more appropriate methods for the study of culture. With culture, I argue in this thesis, power exerts due influence in the construction of representations. Power has been on the agenda of research on the construction of social knowledge for quite sometime now. Different schools of thought play it differently in social research. Its articulation as an influence on representations, or representation-related forms of knowledge, renders power more operational and, therefore, researchable. This is particularly valid for the works of Foucault and Said. This thesis advocates power as determining the extent to which one culture or another is influential in shaping representations. In agreement with Said (1978), power is conceived of in hybrid terms - a mix of structures including the political, the economic, knowledge etc. In the era of knowledge capital, culture and power roles are becoming more important than ever before. Perhaps Marxists, too, have underestimated the importance of the cultural superstructure.

The study, like ancient Gaul, is divided into three parts and nine chapters. The first part represents the theoretical and historical background to the research topic. The first chapter concerns the theory of social representations and how it relates to the cultural other. A wide range of relevant issues is covered here. The 'crisis' of traditional social psychology i.e. its individualisation, is highlighted together with its epistemological

base. An exit from such a crisis becomes possible with the advent of the theory of social representations. This chapter also outlines the theory of social representations in terms of its nature, functions and processes. It is argued in chapter one that culture relates to social representations even more closely than most social representations researchers imagine. Emphasising the social in social representations, the cultural should also be stressed, and thereby, reinstated in the discipline. In conclusion, this chapter outlines the problem of the thesis. This can briefly be summarised as extending the theory of social representations to incorporate culture and to explore cultural otherness as a social construction; investigating the social representations of Islam in the West; and, in the context of the former objective, examining empirically the evolution of the social representations of Islam in Britain.

The second chapter deals with various aspects of the old interaction between the West and Islam and the representations in the West of this long-standing encounter. Such a history is believed to reflect the background of reciprocal representations at present, and also emphasises the role both of historical and of cultural factors in the construction of the representations of Islam in the West.

The third chapter is devoted to a review of contemporary encounters between the West and Islam in which I was unwittingly caught up at the start of my studies. This contemporary period is set from the end of World War II, which is justified as a suitable start on the grounds that the Muslim world had taken its present shape by that date. The degree and the extent of the interaction which took place between the West and Islam following this period is quite extraordinary. Reviewing both the historical and the contemporary interactions between Islam and the West is important since it avails an integrated picture of what had happened as well as what is happening.

Chapter four is an exploration of the role played by Edward Said in bringing to the attention of those interested in the West's interaction with the cultural other, how the

latter is fashioned by the former. This is achieved by a critical exposition of Said's *Orientalism* which was published in 1978. Said's work on the West and Islam is particularly relevant to the theory of social representations and, by extension, to this very study. *Orientalism* is dealt with in a separate chapter for two main reasons. Firstly because it introduces into the theory of social representations, vigorously, the notion of cultural otherness, and secondly because it deals with the study of the social construction of cultural otherness in terms of representations.

The second part comprises chapter five which reviews the fundamental paradigms within which the methods of social psychological research are formulated. In this chapter the thesis seeks ancestry, from an epistemological point of view, in the Hegelian paradigm which also takes root in Kuhn's epistemology. It also constructs the methods and procedures used in studying social representations. A multi-method approach is advocated and adopted for conducting the empirical studies of the thesis. The methods involved include participant observation, content analysis of the press and group discussion.

Part three deals with the empirical inquiry. In the first of three chapters (chapter six) the social representations to be found in the interrogation transcript in which members of the British security forces interviewed the researcher on his alleged involvement in terrorist activities are surveyed. The method applied here is that of participant observation but with the important difference that the author is one of the key participants and not just a passive observer. The transcript of the interrogation (Appendix i), however, was an account written by another participant observer namely, the legal clerk who sat in on the investigations. Whilst the author of the thesis is the suspect terrorist, my examiners and other readers have access to an independent account of these events in terms of the legal transcript. The existence of two participant observers is a methodological refinement.

In the second study (chapter seven) the social representations of Islam in a selected sample of British national newspapers are investigated. The issue at stake in this survey is the response to the Muslim campaign against the publication, in 1988, of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. This response is sought in the letters written by readers to editors of five national newspapers. Those newspapers, presumably representative of the British press, are four dailies: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, two middle sized: *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express*, two tabloids: *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*, and a weekly: *The Observer*. In the short history of research on social representations investigations usually include content analyses of the media.

Next is a study (chapter eight) which complements the investigation by seeking, with the use of group discussion, the social representations of Islam in the mentalities of members of the British public. Five groups (undergraduates, postgraduates, technicians, librarians and secretaries from the London School of Economics and Political Science) comprise the sample used in this last study.

The results the empirical inquiry have delivered are, to a great extent, highly consistent. The three studies integrate rather than clash with each other. Islam is constructed in the three studies as a monolithic phenomenon labelled as fundamentalism, which assumes different forms according to the type of study conducted. In the participant observational study fundamentalism is viewed as terrorism and is, therefore, a threat to public security at a national and international level. In the content analysis of the letters to editors of the national press in relation to the Rushdie Affair, fundamentalism contrasts with freedom of expression and, accordingly, is a threat to the secular, individualist values of British society. Meanwhile, fundamentalism arises as the construction of a monolithic Islam in forms ranging from a religious threat to a secular society, to a threat to gender rights. Culture emerges as a fundamental factor in forming

representations of Islam. Like culture, power is also an element to be reckoned with in shaping, sustaining or transforming representations. Suspicion in the media is frequently reported in the discussion groups, though the media remain a powerful source of generating and diffusing representations.

Finally, chapter nine extracts the lessons drawn from the thesis as a whole. Epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues are re-thought with a view to throwing light on those aspects which need further elaboration. Culture and power are exposed to further examination to incorporate them in the theory of social representations. Methods appropriate to investigating culture in this context are yet to be sought, and structures in which power is housed are to be figured out. An agenda for future research is outlined.

This piece of research, both as an inspiration and as an end result, is the outcome of a mix of the personal and the public. As social scholarship I hope it will contribute to an on-going process of transforming the agenda of social psychological research - a process within which the theory of social representations is a landmark. The thesis topic fits in the context of the growing interest in realising a better understanding of how different cultures interact with each other. Such an interaction is better understood and interpreted if, and only if, a scholarship conceiving of knowledge as representation is developed. Cultural borders do exist in our multi-cultural world. Borders are, sometimes, mistakenly read as barriers. One can become imprisoned within other people's representations as I knew to my cost. That is not what this thesis argues should happen. Let us not preserve such misunderstandings. Conceiving of the cultural other as the one that we cannot do away with, and, therefore, need to better understand, is what renders the world a better place.

## **Chapter One**

### **Social Representations and the Cultural Other**

In this opening chapter, the theoretical framework of the thesis will be established and the literature which is relevant to the topic of study will be reviewed. Three main areas of interest are to be covered, these are a comment on the current state of social psychology; an outline of the theory of social representations; and a map of the problem being investigated. The whole thesis is an attempt to explore Islam in the context of the West's understanding of it in Britain. To achieve this objective, the theory of social representations is employed as a theoretical approach along with an account of three empirical studies. These include a content analysis of some British daily and Sunday newspapers, a participant observational study of a suspect terrorist arrested by the British security establishment and a focus group study in which participants discuss Islam.

It is common knowledge that the theory of social representations has been dealt with at some length in the past three decades. There is no point repeating at length what has already been documented. This is not to say that the theory is uncontroversial. The theory of social representations has, in fact, been subjected to many criticisms on many occasions and for many different reasons (Billig 1993, Jahoda 1988, Jaspars and Fraser 1984, Potter and Wetherell 1987). The purpose of this chapter is to outline the foundations of the theory of social representations, the shortcomings of the theory and what lies ahead for it. The conclusion will be to outline the problem of this study.

One aim of this thesis is to expand the scope of social representations further still so that culture can be incorporated as a fundamental element in bringing the 'social' into social representations. Culture, it is to be argued, is both a controversial and a problematic issue in social scholarship. The scope of its use in research extends from political

theory, through international relations, to anthropology and sociology. Social psychology, in particular, was never conceived of as an appropriate abode for culture. This, however, might be seen as the problem of social psychology rather than of culture. For this reason one might concur with the critique made earlier by several social psychologists, that social psychology has been undergoing a crisis and that awareness of such a crisis is now widespread. Therefore, this chapter commences with a brief review of the state of social psychology.

In the context of this thesis it is also argued that the theory of social representations might better dwell in the context of the research tradition of the sociology of knowledge rather than being simply part of a social psychological enterprise, in the most common conception of social psychology. Disciplines from sociology to anthropology to cultural history are all fertile soil for social representations. It is, thus, an important item in the theory of social representations' agenda that it seeks to locate itself somewhere in the map of disciplines of social scholarship, and this chapter is equally concerned about where, in this regard, social representations could possibly be placed.

### **1.1. Rethinking Social Psychology**

As a result of research undertaken by Moscovici (1961), a new French tradition of research under the rubric of 'social representations' came to existence. Having been somewhat neglected by the social science community in the 1960s, the following decade saw the theory of social representations beginning modestly to find a way through as a new tradition of social research. More attention was then given to it by French social theorists (Abric 1976, Moscovici 1976). A decade later, a confident upsurge of interest in the theory of social representations was well underway. That was, and still is, an era best marked by the new theory crossing the English channel to enjoy a relatively privileged status amongst social scientists in Britain and elsewhere in Europe and then in the world at large. From then on, increasing research centred around

the new theory in both France and England (Doise 1984, Farr 1987, Farr and Moscovici 1984, Jodelet 1984a). But the theory of social representations did not enjoy an entirely safe journey as it has been subjected to a great deal of criticism which will be highlighted later in this chapter. Nevertheless, the advent of the theory of social representations into social theory itself exacerbated the crisis affecting social psychology (Gergen 1973, Moscovici 1973, Ring 1967, Tajfel 1972). The dominant position is that social psychology is science. The theory of social representations is a fine example of what Gergen (1973) calls social psychology as history. Gergen's article sparked off a fierce debate among social psychologists in America.

The introduction of the theory of social representations is a land mark development in the field of social science, and of social psychology in particular. With its introduction to the world of social theory, social psychology had virtually entered a new era. Formerly, social psychology was of an individualised, positivistic and behavioural nature (Farr 1981). Farr (1987) has brilliantly rooted the old days of social psychology, as an offshoot of psychology, in the Cartesian method of doubt. That is to say certainty about one's own existence is not a matter to be doubted whereas doubt that others have minds is an established certainty. Applied to psychology, this favoured behaviourism as an appropriate method and crowned the former as an experimental science. Unfortunately, this has since formulated the nature of social psychology.

As was summed up by Augoustinos and Walker (1995), the crisis of social psychology is two-fold. First, as an experimental science it is devoid of its presumed nature as "predominantly an historic inquiry" (Augoustinos and Walker 1995, p.1). Second is the unchallenged epistemological assumption on which it was based, i.e. the individual is its principal unit of research and analysis. A serious critique of its epistemology and genesis is therein needed. As an experimental science, social psychology has its roots in the positivist philosophy of science, and as "a positivist philosophy of science engenders a break with the past" (Farr 1991b, p.372), social psychology was by no

means a field of scholarship with any historic depth. Nor did it take the trouble of taking on board culture as a fertile terrain for sowing social forms of human behaviour. With such a genesis, the most cherished definition of psychology for a new psychology student was that it is the study of the behaviour of man and animals. As a predominantly experimental science it is, by and large, correct not to distinguish between the behaviour of man and animal. That is because the behaviour of both is studied within the boundaries of the highly artificial environment of the laboratory. Culture is a distinctly human phenomenon, the culture that man shares with animals is rudimentary. In the above mentioned paper, Farr has finely traced a social genesis of social psychology by distinguishing between two forms of positivist philosophy which have both inspired social psychology. As opposed to the positivism that ended up with social psychology as an experimental science such as “that of Mach and Avenarius”, Farr believes that there has been another form of positivism which resulted in social psychology being regarded a social science: “that of Comte”. Experimentalists have been generalising the findings of laboratory experiments, however, in the laboratory social psychology lacks an everyday environment with its cultural and historical dimensions to justify generalisation of findings.

Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that experimentation in the realms of ‘science’ is rather a ‘play it safe’ way of research. What makes it plausible is its convenience with respect to specification and measurement. In a world of scholarship where pure sciences such as physics, chemistry and technological sciences assume the high ground and bring about concrete measurable findings and applications, it would have been the fashion for social scientists to follow suit. In such a coercive atmosphere non-experimental and sociological forms of social psychology such as Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* and social psychology from Chicago such as Mead's social behaviourism, Blumer's symbolic interactionism and Ichheiser's inter-personal relations, would hardly be regarded as form of social psychology.

There is another factor explaining why social psychology inevitably underwent a crisis: this is its individualistic genesis. We would argue here, further to Farr (1991a) and Marková (1982), that social psychology had jeopardised its position as a social science by being heavily concerned with the individual rather than with the collective, the group or the social. This is clearly evident in social psychology being all about attitudes; personality; cognition; attribution and the like, but not as social phenomena. The root of this type of social psychology can, however, be traced back to the emergence of psychology as part of philosophy (Farr 1991b). Although the history of Western philosophy is perceived of as a dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism, both are, in fact, of a Cartesian origin. The Cartesian paradigm, Marková (1982) tells us, is a non-social paradigm whereas the Hegelian, still part of Western philosophy, is an explicitly social paradigm. As an offshoot of philosophy, Western psychology thus had a strong Cartesian upbringing. And so did social psychology.

Individualism not only influenced social psychology through its early link to Cartesian philosophy, it was further emphasised by the individualistic culture in the wider surrounding society. It was North America where social psychology, in its individualised version, thrived. There, individualism was the fashion of the century and success and failure were measured as personal (i.e. individual) matters. Psychology itself was first studied as the science of mental life. The late introduction to social psychology of research such as social identity theory, inter-group relations, social representations, rhetoric or discourse analysis are a little more than the ringing of alarm bells. That was a strong indication that an awareness of the crisis in social psychology was maturing. It marks the era of questioning the social in what has been presented, for so long, as a social psychology.

### **1.2.1. Social Representations: Theory and beyond**

The theory of social representations is now an established tradition of social scholarship well known to researchers and scholars of the social sciences. Its advent is

unanimously traced back to Moscovici's *La Psychanalyse: Son image et son public* (1961). Apparently there are two novelties the theory of social representations has introduced to social scholarship. First, it claims that ideas, thoughts, images and knowledge at large are socially constructed, deconstructed and shared. That is where it departs from cognitive science. Second, it is of such a dynamic nature that representations form, develop and transform. And this is its point of departure from Durkheim's notion of collective representations. But this does not mean that the notion of representations was invented by Moscovici only three decades ago. It was used by anthropologists much earlier, and it was Durkheim (1898) who first introduced the notions of individual and collective representations. Durkheim's collective representations were useful in the study of cultural phenomena, especially in regard to 'primitive' societies where culture is more static in nature. But it was the same notion of collective representations that later inspired Moscovici to come up with the notion of social representations. At this point it may be worthwhile clarifying the nature of social representations before moving on to the topic of this thesis. This will include the definition, functions and processes of social representations.

**Definition:** The theory of social representations has been criticised for either inadequately defining itself or for refusing to do so. Moscovici, whose contributions towards providing basic definition(s) of the notion of social representations are emphasised here, openly admitted this state of affairs. He claims (Moscovici 1985) that clarity and definition should be an outcome of research rather than a pre-requisite. But this did not prevent him from providing some operational definitions of the notion. Moscovici, when he was in the business of theorising about social representations, was clearly of the opinion that there was a vacuum in both theoretical and methodological domains of social science to be filled. This was clear when he wrote:

*Science will not gain much through learning that in Minneapolis 12 percent of the people interviewed link centrifugal force and gravitation. To understand the impact on the public of the spread of scientific and technological knowledge, and the upheaval this implies at*

*linguistic, intellectual, cultural, and symbolic level, requires other methods than those currently used and other theoretical approaches.*  
(Moscovici 1963, p.234)

In the light of this, the driving idea behind Moscovici's articulation of the theory of social representation was, as it might appear to one now, his concern about how people become aware of, how they define, experience, and perceive:

*A world in which, at one extreme, we are acquainted with man-made things representing other man-made things and, at the other extreme, with substitutes for stimuli of which we shall never see the originals, their natural equivalents, such as elementary particles or genes.*

(Moscovici 1984, p.5)

Thus social representations are defined by Moscovici as concepts and percepts, as ideas and images, as theories and explanations, as descriptions of social realities through which we establish our shared knowledge and understanding of the world in which we live. They are, furthermore, the systems we use to establish communication so that things about which we are concerned can be rendered understandable and brought within our grasp at a conceptual level. Social representations exist in, what may be called, our collective cognition, and in the collective acts they inspire. This social nature is so central to the notion of a social representation that it sets it apart from similar notions in other fields of social research. The 'socialness' which social representations seek to emphasise includes the environments from which they emanate and those in which they circulate. Such an enlarged conception of the 'social' in social representations was, however, missed even by Jaspars and Fraser (1984), who saw that social representations are social because they are shared by many individuals. The social in social representations transcends the understanding that they are shared by individuals in a thinking society to include the proposition that they are socially created by members of such a thinking society. Being primarily concerned with the cultural and social aspects of reality, social representations exemplify the supra-individual nature of social life (Purkhardt 1993). Moscovici's project is about an ambitious theoretical approach to a form of knowledge that is socially created and socially shared so that social representations are:

*... cognitive systems with a logic and language of their own... They do not represent simply 'opinions about', 'images of' or 'attitudes towards' but 'theories' or 'branches of knowledge' in their own right, for the discovery and organisation of reality... Systems of values, ideas and practices with a two-fold function; first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; secondly, to enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history.*  
*(Moscovici 1973, p.xiii)*

Through the course of their development, social representations are found to combine several characteristics (Purkhardt 1993), some of which have yet to be articulated. One characteristic of all social representations is that they are constitutive of social reality. They are surely not reality as it exists beyond the representations themselves, but they constitute reality within the social environment. That is reality re-presented as a result of the working of the social factors surrounding it. In this way, social representations can serve as an appropriate theoretical approach to interpreting our knowledge of the world and the way such knowledge expresses itself in terms of human action. Social representations, arguably, are about relative reality rather than absolute reality. As relative reality social representations are formed through human interaction with other humans and with the physical world. Being of a dynamic nature, once they are communicated, social representations either become consolidated or they are transformed further still.

As phenomena of a dynamic nature, social representations are also distinct from Durkheim's notion of collective representations. The dynamic nature of social representations is exhibited not only in the tendency to consolidate or transform, as explained above, but also in the dynamic nature of the patterns that produce them. By this, one means the ever-changing constitution of the thinking society in which social representations are constructed. These can be individuals, the mass media of communication, academe, the political or the security establishments. Social representations are not static taboos; nor are the patterns producing them static forces.

Another characteristic of social representations emanates from the fact that they are not mere cognitive images or ideas in the minds of the individual. Social representations exist in our social life. Their formation is not a two-step process in that the represented object is, say, first seen, then interpreted. Rather, an object is represented as a symbolic reality all in one go. Our culture and social interactions provide such a symbolic tool whereby we represent our world, whether that be a mere thought or a material substance. The symbolic nature of social representations serves to distinguish them from purely cognitive phenomena.

Moscovici (1984) adds to the characteristics of social representations that they are conventional and prescriptive. He sees social representations as a censor in charge of examining whether a new representation will fit into an already coded frame. If it fits it will be allowed entry as a representation, and if not it will be rejected. Such a filter gives social representations a coercive power and transforms them into hegemonic phenomena. But such a characteristic stands in sharp contrast to the dynamic nature of social representations. As phenomena with a dynamic nature of their own, social representations themselves change in response to an objective influence, emanating from the surrounding cultural, physical and social environments. If so, the force that social representations exert as conventional and prescriptive should not be exaggerated. Rather, it is the factors that influence them that determine whether social representations yield to or resist transformation. A powerful culture, for instance, may possibly determine how we represent other objects or ideas and thus it, rather than social representations per se, may be the source of coercion.

The above point brings one, logically, to where it is to be argued that instead of ascribing to social representations a characteristic such as that of being conventional and prescriptive, they should be seen as stereotypes. The notion of the stereotype is not alien to social psychology. It has been conceived of as a manifestation of cognitive schemata, thus confining it within the borders of cognitive, individualistic phenomena.

According to Jones (1985) a stereotype is an oversimplified, and often biased, conception of reality that is resistant to change. Allport (1954) describes stereotypes as normal things in our perception which emanate from our tendency to categorise things, persons or groups.

What appears to be lacking in these descriptions of stereotypes is their social genesis as well as their social function. A stereotype is basically a phenomenon that emanates from our everyday life, and works quite often towards perpetuating some of our perceptions of something or somebody. They are mechanisms we use to protect our interests, prejudices or beliefs whether as individuals, small groups or larger entities. Similar to social representations, they are dynamic. They are socially constructed, widespread and used by dominant groups to categorise minorities or foes. Relating it cautiously to social representations, Moscovici and Hewstone (1983) claim that a social representation has some similarities, among others, with the notion of stereotype. Later it was Augoustinos and Walker (1995) who established that stereotypes are linked to social representations and by so doing they saw in stereotypes a social dimension both in their construction and their functioning. For them stereotypes are social representations:

*... they are objectified cognitive and affective structures about social groups within society which are extensively shared and which emerge and proliferate within the particular social and political milieu of a given historical moment.*

*(Augoustinos and Walker 1995, p.222)*

Asserting that stereotypes are social representations may depict the latter as biased constructions of social reality. If so, social representations are discursively reduced to a theoretical approach not for constructing social knowledge in normal circumstances but rather in abnormal ones. A stereotype as a social representation, can rightly be *a* social representation but not *the* social representation. In a given case social representations are stereotypes such as, for instance, when Islam is represented as a form of fundamentalism, Jews are perceived as mean and Irish as idiots. In such a strict sense,

a further dimension could be added to social representations, namely that they could function as stereotypes.

**Functions:** Besides their characteristics, social representations have functions which are of vital importance to our social life. The functions of social representations are basically those of constructing social knowledge and communicating it within our social space. By social space we refer to interactive human and physical worlds. It goes without saying that neither mankind without a physical environment nor a physical environment in the absence of human beings could constitute such a social space. It is only through the interactive union of the two that we can end up with a social space that gives our life its meaning and renders it liveable. The conceived main function of social representations is to protect us against unfamiliarity by rendering the unfamiliar familiar. Such familiarisation is needed to render our social space understandable and communicable. Once understanding is established and communication is given its substance we realise our knowledge of the world and bring our environment into our grip. This was what Moscovici meant to clarify :

*The act of re-presentation is a means of transferring what disturbs us, what threatens our universe, from the outside to the inside, from far off to near by. The transfer is effected by separating normally linked concepts and perceptions and setting them in a context where the unusual becomes usual, where the unknown can be included in an acknowledged category.*

*(Moscovici 1984, p.26)*

By converting the unfamiliar into the familiar and fitting the unknown into an acknowledged category social representations, in fact, shape our social reality, create and consolidate our social awareness and further facilitate our social interaction. As such, groups in our social space only become identifiable, for themselves and vis à vis the other. This said, what remains unanswered in the literature on social representations is the role of the individual vis à vis the collective in their formation. Equally important is the question about the role of culture in the same respect. Why what is familiar to a given social group is, at one and the same time, unfamiliar to another social group is

still a question to be answered. This leads us to the philosophical problematic of where the limits of the individual vis à vis the social lie. It is incumbent on future research in social representations to provide answers to such questions.

**Processes:** It must be said that the processes through which social representations are constructed remain one of the mysteries of the theory. There has been little or no progress beyond Moscovici's original description of anchoring and objectification. By anchoring, Moscovici was clearly indicating the step, on the way to socially representing someone or something, whereby objects are located within a net of social representations. It is anchored there. Anchoring requires the two sub-processes of (i) classification, and (ii) naming. The task of classifying and naming is that of unfolding the familiar from within the unfamiliar. Classification is part of the anchoring process whereby a categorisation of the represented item takes place by establishing an association between it and a prototype.

However, the represented item is either represented as matching, in which case generalisation prevails, or as different in which case particularisation is the order of the day. Once classified in the above order, the represented item is labelled. Labelling, strictly speaking, is identification. Being given an identity by a particular social representation determines where something or somebody belongs, how they will be dealt with as well as their worth or value. Here, one might argue that it is through this process of anchoring that social representations could become stereotypes.

Another process, Moscovici informs us, is objectifying. The way in which he explains objectifying renders it closer to giving an independent or de-subjectified existence to the element represented. Objectification in Moscovici's own words:

*... saturates the idea of unfamiliarity with reality, turns it into the very essence of reality. Perceived at first in a purely intellectual, remote universe, it then appears before our eyes, physical and accessible.*

*(Moscovici 1984, p.38)*

Notwithstanding Moscovici's effort to articulate the processes of anchoring and objectifying, they remain shrouded in ambiguity. What makes them so is Moscovici's failure to draw sharp lines between them. One example is when he describes objectifying as converting a concept into an image - this appears to be identical to what is realised through the anchoring sub-processes of classifying and naming. Moscovici might have come up with the concept of objectifying to force some form of materialisation or "concretisation". That is possibly what he referred to as "having a remote universe appears before our eyes physical". However, such does not apply to ideas, which are themselves subject to being socially represented. Another point to be made in this respect is that anchoring and objectifying may correctly interpret how social representations are constructed but they do not explain how such social representations, once constructed, change or even consolidate. That this area of research (processes of social representations) remains entangled in what Moscovici has contributed for some three decades now, is equally surprising.

### **1.2.2. Social Representations and Culture**

This section of the present chapter is devoted to exploring the relationship between social representations and culture. It must be stated right from the outset that culture is a familiar concomitant of social representations. It has been frequently mentioned and linked to social representations in the literature of social representations (Moscovici 1981a, 1984, 1988). Nonetheless, culture does not appear to have been shown reasonable consideration by researchers and theorists of social representations despite its apparent importance to the theory. We would argue in the following paragraphs that culture is the most fertile soil in which social representations grow. As such, the role of culture in the construction, consolidation and transformation of social representations should be emphasised strongly with a view to re-incorporating it within the discipline.

Culture is an extremely fluid concept and how it works remains something of an enigma. It was given due consideration as a subject matter for sociological as well as anthropological research, albeit anthropology rather than sociology addresses culture more frequently. In the US a separate sub-discipline has been created for culture under the guise of cultural anthropology - a sub-discipline sometimes referred to as ethnology.

The conceptual looseness of culture is unmistakably manifest in attempts to define it. In the last two centuries philosophers and social scientists from Hegel to Kant to Spengler from Matthew Arnold to Taylor and Geertz have all attempted to define and employ culture in myriad theoretical works.

Among contemporary social scientists Geertz has been a leading proponent in the study of culture. For him culture:

*.... denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.*  
(Geertz 1975, p. 89)

As it appears in these words, Geertz' conception of culture is as static in nature as Durkheim's earlier conceptualisation of collective representations. Culture, according to Geertz, is something which is in history and is inherited. It lacks the dynamic character which Moscovici accorded to social representations which themselves, as we propose to argue, are fundamentally about culture. Geertz is possibly influenced by his background as an anthropologist, as it is anthropology that has emphasised the non-dynamic nature of culture. Such an anthropological conceptualisation of culture also emerges in the essay in The Social Science Encyclopaedia by Hatch (1985) who defines culture as:

*... the way of life of a people. It consists of conventional patterns of thought and behaviour, including values, beliefs, rules of conduct, political organisation, economic activity, and the like, which are passed on from one generation to the next by learning - and not by biological inheritance. The concept of culture is an idea of signal importance, for it provides a set of principles for explaining and understanding human behaviour. It is one of the distinguishing elements of modern social thought, and may be one of the most important achievements of modern social science, and in particular of anthropology.*  
(Hatch 1985, p.178)

Although distancing culture from conceptualisations which ascribe to it the force of biological inheritance, both Greetz and Hatch emphasise its coercive nature. It is coercive since it is static. It dictates to humans how to behave. Now, one could argue that culture is a determining variable in the construction and the transformation of social representations. To establish such an argument one needs an operational definition of culture. As such, culture is neither static nor restricted to small scale homogeneous groups. Culture is part of our history and our inheritance just as much as it is a present reality. It is like a living being whose cells die and are replaced. Perhaps, it is only through such a definition that culture could be said to have a dynamic nature. As such, culture should not be perceived as restricted to small scale homogeneous groups. It appears that the emphasis on the restricted nature of culture (that it is associated with small scale homogeneous groups) emanates from the desire, on the part of the anthropologists, to deal with homogeneity. A larger group of people is definitely less homogeneous than a small one, and therefore anthropologists, taken up with homogeneity, were unable to see culture in a wider societal context.

Admitting that culture is not just associated with small groups and that homogeneity is not necessarily its most striking feature, it can equally be said that a given culture can accommodate a certain degree of heterogeneity. Hence, one can talk about a British culture where sub-cultural groups like Pakistanis or Afro-Caribbeans share many values and patterns of behaviour with the wider British society, yet they may also have other values and rules of conduct which are uniquely their own. Culture, therefore, encompasses elements of both homogeneity and heterogeneity as well as dynamism. Heterogeneity is perhaps essential to activate dynamism in culture. We live now in an age where the revolution in communications has transformed our world into what is dubbed as a global village. People in the furthest corners of the world neither own the space above their heads nor can they ward off cultures from intruding into their bedrooms. In this global village, pure culture exists nowhere. Pure culture does not

exist today even among the smallest and most highly homogeneous of societies. Anthropological research that bases the study of culture solely on small scale homogeneous groups is either redundant or in need of reform. And for the social sciences, culture is either re-conceptualised or it passes into the mists of history.

Fortunately, culture in such a broad, though not necessarily dynamic, sense is already in use now. Many social scientists are employing the notion of the 'Americanisation', sometimes dubbed the 'McDonaldisation', of culture. In his thought-provoking thesis on the clash of civilisations, Huntington (1993) divides the entire world into only eight cultural categories: the Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African. For him, civilisation is a cultural entity and in this sense what he means by civilisation is culture. Although Huntington advocates the view that cultures are rather closed and separated from one another by barriers of history, language, tradition and religion, he conceives of culture in terms of international relations rather than in terms of social science. Perhaps he was so occupied with the notion of conflict that he was unable to see how world cultures interact in a dynamic way. Applied to the social sciences Huntington's conception of culture refutes the long held view that it is a hallmark of small scale groups. And, in the light of this it should be the task of social scientists, if they have not achieved it already, to find the dynamic in culture.

It is relevant now to see how and where culture fits into the theory of social representations. It was a long time before Moscovici's social representations came into existence in the 1960s, that culture was placed right in the centre of Durkheim's collective representations. Strictly speaking, Durkheim did not refer explicitly to culture but he advanced the notion of collective representations which he defined (Lukes 1973) as concepts, as opposed to sensations and images which are common and communicable and which represent the means by which minds communicate. They are the equivalent in the social sciences of Kant's categories. Collective representations are

to be judged when operating within a social milieu and, as such, collective representations are socially determined. Durkheim referred to societies in Australia and North America whose conceptions of their public space are determined by the dictates of their social order. Durkheim's collective representations are similar to, or even prototypes of, belief systems. We are neither concerned with the empirical validity nor the epistemological correctness of Durkheim's notion of collective representations, it must be established that his primary focus was on 'primitive', highly homogeneous societies. In such tiny social groups collective representations are the product of a kind of irresistible social determinism. Collective representations are, therefore, static phenomena and they are only applicable to 'primitive' societies.

The claim of this study, in full agreement with Farr (1990), is that collective representations are not applicable to our modern highly dynamic societies, hence they cannot aid our interpretation of present day social phenomena. There are at least two reasons why they are all but redundant with respect to the interpretation of current culture-related phenomena. First is the invention of the printing press which helped the diffusion and interaction of cultures. Since then, no human society could claim complete isolation and, therefore, cultural stagnation. The print media, in the broadest sense, have possessed ever since, the power to bring each society's culture in the fold of the other and thus have allowed greater dynamism of cultural interaction. The second reason is the invention of the electronic media which have also added new dimensions to the ways in which culture is diffused and interactive. An illiterate Bedouin in the farthest corner of the Arab desert, a peasant in Siberia or a farmer in Mongolia are not in isolation today from the Western cultural influences delivered to their respective places by CNN or BBC Radio. Both the print and electronic media are symptoms of cultural power and whenever culture is associated with power, as Said remarked in his widely read *Orientalism* (Said 1978), its influence increases (see chapter four). Nevertheless, the point to emphasise in this respect is not the depth of change but whether cultural values, beliefs and practices undergo a given degree of change in all the circumstances

just mentioned. Should the answer be yes (an answer supported by this present study), then a theory other than collective representations is required i.e. one which deals with culture as a dynamic phenomenon.

This was perhaps one reason why Moscovici resisted using the notion of collective representations and employed, instead, the notion of social representations. And although collective representations are an alias of culture, Moscovici's social representations also include culture, though ambiguously, in his theoretical venture. In one instance Moscovici appears to be dealing with representations and culture as though they were two different notions, note: "We think, by means of a language; we organise our thoughts, in accordance with a system which is conditioned, both "*by our representations and by culture*" (Moscovici 1984, p.8, researcher's italics). This point was taken up by Jahoda (1988) in his attack on Moscovici's social representations. Elsewhere in the same paper (p. 11), in a review of an *International Herald Tribune* article on neurosis: "*culture appears as related to fragments of social representations*" (researcher's italics). Later Moscovici located representations right in the heart of culture:

*Every representation, to be sure, takes shape in a culture that divides persons from things and that imposes a framework on all thinking and behaviour in a set of societies.*  
(Moscovici 1988, p.232)

Notwithstanding, it must be recalled that Moscovici's revolution against the individual-centred social psychology targeted in the first place the introduction of culture to social psychology: Social psychology, Moscovici tells us "is a science of culture, and particularly of our culture. It is, or should be, the anthropology of the modern world" (Moscovici 1981a, p.viii). And since social representations ferment within a thinking society, what is the basis of the 'thinking' in the thinking society, if it is not culture?

Sharing Moscovici's view that social representations are linked to culture is Farr (1990, 1993a). He tends to deal with culture as an "ecological pattern of psychological

phenomena" which, on the other hand, include the notion of widespread beliefs. Farr links social representations to culture which, unfortunately, is back in the laboratory now. In his article in Breakwell and Canter, Farr's conception of the theory of social representations is that it:

*... confers significance on the information that circulates in society concerning the object of study. This refers to culture in general -whether the culture of the masses or the more restricted culture of such elite groups as research scientists.*

*(Farr 1993a, p.17)*

When Moscovici inaugurated his research on social representations with a study of the diffusion of a scientific knowledge of psycho-analysis in the French society (Moscovici 1961), he was not only concerned about the social representations of psycho-analysis *in* popular culture, but equally with social representations of psycho-analysis as constructed *by* popular culture itself. There seems to be a component of culture in most of the research projects on social representations conducted by French researchers like Jodelet (1989) and Chombart de Lauwe (1971/78). These were substantially about how cultural settings influenced the representations uncovered by their respective studies. An element of culture is apparently present in Jodelet's participant observational study on the mentally ill. A similar cultural component is also manifest in Chombart de Lauwe's empirical studies on the social representations of childhood. Elsewhere in the present thesis Said (1978) is found to have claimed that Orientalism, due to cultural influences on its construction as a social representation, is not so much about the Orient as it is about the West:

*Orientalism is - and does not simply represent - a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world.*

*(Said 1978, p.12)*

At this juncture it ought to be acknowledged that the current study holds the view that culture, which has been only tentatively linked to social representations, is a principal factor in studying social representations. As the theory of social representations stresses

the centrality of the adjective 'social' to qualify representations, the 'cultural' should also be duly acknowledged and emphasised. This is because the social cannot be viewed to be devoid of the cultural. It might be necessary to further qualify that, in this respect, the social only exists in the context of the cultural. Why then, did culture retain such a low profile in the theory of social representations.

It is true that reinstating culture in the theory of social representations entails the employment of appropriate method(s) with which to investigate it. However, while it is not the intention of this chapter to become embroiled in a discussion of methods, the theory, as Farr (1993a) indicated is inter-linked with method. It is incumbent on social representations researchers to devise methods which might enable them to properly investigate *the* culture-specific social representations.

### **1.2.3. Social Representations: Questions of identity and coherence**

As this chapter on social representations draws to a close there are two points to bring out. These are the questions raised by many a researcher about the theoretical coherence of the theory of social representations and about where theory belongs on the map of social sciences. With respect to the first issue, criticisms of the theory are as diverse as they are varied and it would better suit the purposes of this study to sample the works of four critics in order to provide a general idea about the critique of the theory of social representations. The four critics, all from England, are Billig (1993), Jahoda (1988) and Potter and Wetherell (1987).

In his essay *Critical Notes and Reflections on Social Representations*, Jahoda (1988) questions some conceptual as well as some methodological aspects of social representations. Setting aside the methodological questions, Jahoda does not appear, as a psychologist with a lifelong commitment to anthropology, to be radically opposed to the concept of social representations. Instead, he advocates a further articulation, and

further interaction between social representations and what he calls neighbouring disciplines - a project he depicts as a reconstruction of social representations. In this respect, he advocates the need to circumscribe the meaning of social representations sufficiently and exclusively. Falling under the pressure of his anthropological background, Jahoda calls for concepts embraced by anthropologists to be jettisoned once and for all from social representations. Such concepts may include family, private and personal beliefs as well as official and religious dogma. Relationships between culture, ideology and belief systems are also to be clarified. With anthropological concepts sent off, Jahoda would rather social representations be embraced in the fold of psychology, possibly as part of "the growing body of work on social cognition rather than claim the unverified existence of some special domain" (Jahoda 1988, p.207). Jahoda apparently finds it difficult to accept the existence of a new field of social research which borrows, in a sense, the concepts and the methods of anthropology. However, a point missing here is Jahoda's failure to pinpoint the social and dynamic genesis of social representations. It is because of the 'social' that social representations cannot be incorporated in an individually oriented social cognition, and it is for their dynamic nature that social representations cannot be incorporated in an anthropological science dealing with cultural phenomena as essentially static.

Jahoda is eventually correct in calling for a clarification, but in doing so he is only half way to the truth. It is imperative that researchers incorporate culture in the theory of social representations without being crippled by the understanding that culture is the exclusive province of anthropology. This will entail the articulation of research methods to enable researchers to investigate culture as previously indicated elsewhere in this chapter. That appropriate methods to investigate social representations are scarce is no excuse for not incorporating culture in the theory of social representations. Again it is the view of this study that it is only through such an incorporation of culture that the theory of social representations will not only thrive, but also take its final shape.

Billig (1988, 1993) is takes a different stand altogether. He criticises the inconsistent use of social representations and promotes a rhetorical approach. The rhetorical approach, Billig tells us, is the thinking in the 'thinking society' which is *essentially rhetorical* (researcher's italics). In modern times, he suggests that rhetorical or argumentative skills are integral to thought (Billig 1993, p.40). Although there is no opposition between the rhetorical approach and social representations, Billig believes that the early formulations of the latter failed explicitly to recognise the social psychological importance of argumentation. It is therefore the view of Billig that rhetoric can represent a much-needed completion to social representations. Incorporating rhetoric into social representations will, on the other hand, imply the readjustment of certain key concepts of social representations. Specifically, attitudes are to be viewed as being of an argumentative nature, the two processes of anchoring and objectification need to be readjusted and the thinking society will be duly articulated.

It is clear that Billig's is a project to reform rather than attack the theory of social representations. He implicitly hints at the importance of culture to social representations first by emphasising the argumentative genesis of the thinking society and further by asserting that the rhetorical approach emphasises the social content of culture (1993, p.45). Nevertheless, Billig's rhetorical approach is, in one way, an articulation of the notion of communication which Moscovici holds as a substantial function of social representations. Communication is, in fact, a process during which argumentation takes place and it is perhaps because of such argumentation that social representations either consolidate or transform.

Unlike Jahoda and Billig, Potter and Wetherell (1987) are rather calling for entirely transcending the theory of social representations in favour of discourse analysis. That is because social representations are "fragmented and sometimes contradictory" (p.139), and that in the light of the social representations' quest for a social psychology, discourse analysis offers a "systematically *non-cognitive* social psychology" (italics in

the original). They point out three main areas of criticism centred around: the relation between the groups and representations; the nature of consensus in social representations; and the roles of language and cognition.

Social representations, Potter and Wetherell say, invent a new group identity, that is the one constituted by their shared social representations. One problematic about such group identification, according to Potter and Wetherell, is that it indicates a presupposition that representations form groups and not vice versa. In accordance with this, researchers can take groups as homogeneous since they share one kind of representation whilst they might differ in another, resulting in the formation of yet another grouping. Inspecting three empirical studies of social representations, Potter and Litton (1985) conclude that consensus was found to have been presupposed among the groups studied, regardless of the diversities that lay beneath the surface of consensus. This led the researchers to argue that the notion of consensus or the degree of agreement among people is a very difficult thing to define (Potter and Wetherell 1987, p.144). Potter and Wetherell also argue that the cognitive assumptions underlying the theory of social representations are highly problematic. In this respect, the processes of anchoring and objectification are seen by them as little more than an exercise in speculative cognitive psychology (*ibid.*, p.145). Alternatively they suggest the introduction of the notion of interpretative repertoire which, other than carrying out some of the explanatory functions social representations do, also deals with the organisation of such cognitive phenomena as attitude, beliefs and attribution.

Obviously the first point in Potter and Wetherell's critique of social representations raises the question of which is prior to the other: the shared representations or the thinking society that gives rise to them. However, admitting that representations get constructed as well as transformed may lead one to favour the view Potter and Wetherell embrace which is that the identification of groups by their shared representations contradicts the underpinnings of the processes of anchoring and

objectification. As may have been noted in Billig's view earlier that argumentation is essential to the thinking society, it could equally be said that argumentation gives social representations the mechanism for transformation as well as construction. Although it might appear a simple answer to a complex question, it is perhaps the group rather than the representation that kick-starts the process. It is also clear that the literature on social representations does not provide, to date, satisfactory answers to questions regarding the attainment of consensus and the degree needed to deem a social representation consensual. Moreover, as the consensual is the other face of the controversial; how does the controversial develop in some instances into the consensus? How can the notion of argumentation be useful in developing an answer to such questions? Further research is undoubtedly necessary to articulate and operationalise the two processes of anchoring and objectification which Potter and Wetherell have rightly described as speculative cognitive phenomena.

The theory of social representations, notwithstanding the popularity it achieved and the wide-ranging applicability it enjoys, is to be expanded further. Its enthusiasm to construct a social identity for itself seems to have ignored the ever creative, mentally and socially productive individual, not only in the formation of an individual representation but also in the complex process of constructing and transforming social representations. It is not easy to understand why a social representation constructed in a thinking society does not acknowledge the role of the individual.

Elsewhere in this chapter a reference was made to the centrality of culture to social representations. Nothing, it can be strongly argued, should exceed the importance that ought to be accorded to culture in the construction and transformation of social representations. That culture has traditionally not been recognised as a social psychological field of research might have hindered social representations researchers from taking it on board. Yet this should not serve as a road block on the way to fully incorporating it into the theory of social representations. The inclusion of culture in

social representations may entail the development of research methods that will render it researchable. However, this should be viewed as a challenge rather than a barrier.

As regards the question of belonging, the fundamental question is certainly whether there is a need to relocate social representations to a different field in the area of social disciplines. Some may perhaps say that it is high time now, after more than three decades of development, that social representations research begins to address the question of where the theory belongs. There have been instances where researchers briefly touched on this sensitive and unsettled issue. Moscovici and Hewstone (1983) claim that social representations lie at the cross-roads of anthropology, sociology and psychology.

Although Moscovici and the whole generation of social representations theorists appear to have tacitly accepted that social representations belong to the discipline of social psychology, the latter does not seem to possess the capability to adequately house the former. That social representations could still take root in the highly experimental, individualistic and cognitive research culture of social psychology is proven by the diverse research already conducted on social representations in Europe and beyond. Nonetheless, that is not the issue at stake. The question is whether such a dominant research culture will allow social representations to expand in terrain that is potentially theirs to expand in. By this, one means the huge potential for expansion social representations have in the event they fully incorporate culture: not in the besieged anthropological sense mentioned previously, but instead, culture in its broadest sense as homogenous/heterogeneous trans-national phenomena. Moscovici explicitly calls for a sociological social psychology but, as already explained, the association with social psychology may reinforce the fear that it will only undermine the social as well as the cultural in social representations.

A less traditional idea is perhaps to call for incorporating social representations in the discipline of the sociology of knowledge. In the face of its possible opponents, some favourable precedents, though implicit, can be cited here, awaiting further research support. Farr (1990) appears to favour a position closer than mere juxtaposition between social representations and the sociology of knowledge. That is clear in his judgement of Ichheiser's monograph: *Misunderstandings in Human Relations: A study in false social perception* (Ichheiser 1949), when he saw the monograph written within the framework of the sociology of knowledge as of considerable theoretical importance to social representations:

*Over the years that I have known him, Moscovici has maintained, quite consistently, that social representations are more basic, or operate at a more profound level, than mere attributions. The reasons why he is right are to be found in a little-known monograph which Ichheiser published in 1949, entitled *Misunderstandings in human relations: a study in false social perception* (Ichheiser 1949). The monograph is of a considerable theoretical importance in relation to research on social representations (Farr and Moscovici 1984). It was written within a framework of the sociology of knowledge.*

(Farr 1990, p.61)

Farr's enthusiasm to have Ichheiser re-instated and social representations studied as *the* antidote to the social impoverishment of much contemporary work in attribution theory (Farr 1990, p.62) is possibly another appeal to bring social representations into the sociology of knowledge. Studies conducted by Moscovici on the social representations of psychoanalysis and Marxism are perhaps more similar to research in the sociology of knowledge than they are to research in social psychology. Indeed, the present study on the social representations of Islam in the West may better fit in the context of the sociology of knowledge than in other similar disciplines. The argument in favour of the sociology of knowledge could be further bolstered by stressing both the cultural and the historical geneses to representations that are social. In a word, social representations articulation is far from achieved. The same can be said of identity.

### **1.3. Mapping the Problem: Representations of Islam in Western knowledge**

Were it not for conventional wisdom requiring a researcher to map out his or her research problem, it would have been tempting to leave this task to the study itself. A research problem is, more often than not, too manifest to outline, yet it is to be outlined - a concrete example of hegemonic wisdom! However, this study explores, using the theory of social representations, the cultural other: Islam in Western representations. From the wider Western context, Britain is chosen as the focus of this research.

The study conceives of Islam both as a world-wide religion with its origins in the so-called Middle East and as a culture. It is not implausible to suggest that Islam, at this particular moment in history, has never been so contentious an issue of public debate for the West since the time of the Crusades. One theory has it that with the end of the cold war and the collapse of Communism as a ruling ideology in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, Islam has been brought within the firing zone of the West. Islam is thought to have replaced Communism as the cultural other in a persistent bipolar Western mentality. It is thus a beginning of yet another cold war where Islam is widely viewed as a threat (see for example: Esposito 1992, Halliday 1996 and Huntington 1993). Mutual relations between Islam and the West have never been so turbulent as in recent years. Many events have overshadowed relations, from the Iranian Revolution (1979) and its repercussions, to the Gulf War (1990-1991). The most striking of all events is the rise, in the last three decades, of the pan-Islamist political phenomenon which is indiscriminately reported and represented, in the West in particular, as Islamic fundamentalism. The Muslim world has also been increasingly important to the West, as will be shown in chapter three, following the Arab oil boom of the 1950s onwards.

Islam's relations with the West, it must be said, do not have their roots only in recent history as the encounter between the two polar opposites - the West and Islam - can be traced back to centuries of interaction and conflict. As a representation Islam has been a

permanent constituent of the West as a thinking society. Times of conflict as well as those of calmer exchanges have left their mark in colourful social representations. Dealing with the entire Orient, the Western tradition of Orientalism, has particularly focused on Islam for a period spanning well over two centuries. Recently, Western media have entered the race and are apparently outdoing Orientalism as the overriding thinking society by constructing, deconstructing and transforming the representations of Islam. Islam, as social representations in the West, thus exists in people's minds as well as in books and, more recently, in the media.

Britain, within the West, is chosen as the universe of this study for many practical reasons. Apart from the accessibility of the data concerned, Britain is, extraordinarily, one of the few Western countries whose relations with Islam go deep in history as well as extensively in terms of geography. During the era of imperialism, vast areas of the Muslim world were under the British rule. In scholarship, British academe has the lion's share of writings and research about Islam and the Muslim world. The interest of the British media in Islam has never waned. The British economic interests in the oil rich Middle East is not solely a thing of the past, and to provide a more current example, the debacle over *halal* meat went from being a Muslim community concern to eventually contributing towards shaping the British social representations of Islam.

The Salman Rushdie Affair, to which a separate chapter is devoted, has been central to the public debate on Islam in Britain from late last decade to the present day. Writers, including journalists, are possibly intent on regenerating publicity for the case since they believe it infringes on their civil liberties. In large measure this stance is attributed also to some Muslims who insist on maintaining the *fatwa* (religious edict) against Rushdie. More recently, the issue of religious education in British schools has generated a growing row over Islam as Muslim pupils in Kirklees and Birmingham have opted out of state schools while, at the same time, many Muslim schools are seeking to obtain government funding. The barring of the Muslim group, Hizbul

Tahrir, from many British university campuses coupled with frequent media reports that London has become a haven for Muslim terrorists from the Middle East and North Africa are further issues pre-occupying the British social space at the time of writing.

In the social psychological tradition of research, this study would rather identify with and transcend Tajfel's social identity theory (SIT). By introducing into social psychology, both in Europe and beyond, the social identity theory and inter-group behaviour (Tajfel 1982, Tajfel & Turner 1986), Tajfel made a profound leap towards 'socialising' social psychology though he remained more or less within the boundaries of an individual oriented social psychology. In accordance with Tajfel's SIT, a social identity, or a group, is defined as:

*... that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership.*

*(Tajfel 1981, p.255)*

Elsewhere:

*... a group is a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it.*

*(Tajfel & Turner 1986, p.15)*

Tajfel's SIT, albeit showing a tendency to bridge the social gap in social psychology, remains much less social in research practice. With its emphasis on self-esteem as a determinant of group-affiliation, SIT's approach to the social is one of a personal identity rather than of a group identity. One of its failings in this respect lies in not identifying a solid ground on which the group is formed. A fundamental variable to mention in this regard is culture. Culture is essential to group formation as well as in the determination of the degree of commitment of members to the group. That is one point where this thesis departs from SIT, though it favours its ethos of 'socialness'. Another point where the gap with SIT widens is the minimalisation of its minimal group. SIT's

minimal group imprisons the social within the same culture. The minimal group in SIT is similar to the small-scale homogenous cultures of classical anthropology. As such, it does not match this study's basing of 'groupness' on a much wider cultural ground.

This study might appear to identify with Durkheim's collective representations. In fact, they are worlds apart. Whilst Durkheim's concept of culture is one that is static, culture is employed in the present study as a dynamic phenomenon. It does not assume a complete homogeneity in the cultural categories with which it deals as it assumes that a degree of heterogeneity is there within almost every cultural category and will never cease to exist. Therefore, this study may better identify with Moscovici's theory of social representations. This said, the present study admires the dynamic nature of social representations but goes on to criticise its undermining of culture. It argues that culture, in broadest sense is to be incorporated in social representations whether the latter remains as a social psychological field of research or locates itself elsewhere in the wider spectrum of social science.

There are three objectives set for this study:

- a) To expand the scope of social representations in two respects: to study, within the tradition of social representations, the cultural other, and to incorporate culture as part and parcel of the study of social representations.
- b) To aim more specifically at exploring the social representations of Islam in the West using Britain as the focus of three empirical studies on: (i) the social representations of Islam by the British security establishment as manifested in a case of a suspect terrorist, (ii) the social representations of Islam in the British press as reflected in their response to the Rushdie Affair and (iii) the social representations of Islam as voiced by focus groups within an academic community.

c) The study aims to investigate the evolution, both in the historical and the situational contexts, of the social representations of Islam in Britain also in two regards: namely, the content of representations themselves and the thinking society which has been constructing and transforming these representations.

## Chapter Two

### Social Representations of Islam in the West: A historical perspective

Throughout the world, and particularly in the West, Islam is receiving increasing attention. It is becoming exposed to close scrutiny by academics and policy makers, and to wide-ranging coverage by the media. Islam is seen by politicians and the public as an imminent threat. Frightening images of Islam are the substance of extensive reporting in the Western press and television today. The portrayal of Islam is as a sword with which to divide the earth, as a veil behind which hides the gun of an assassin, or as a bomb that has only one job left, i.e. to blow up the universe. These are, perhaps, the most salient images of Islam currently in the Western mind.

An early encounter with such images was, for the author of this study, a BBC television documentary in 1987. The opening sequence showed a sword striking the earth and shattering it into tiny pieces. *The Sword of Islam* was a distressing mixture of blood, explosions, hostages and the like. All were associated with the long-bearded and often black-turbaned Muslims who came to be known in the West as Muslim fundamentalists. Despite hopes to the contrary, this programme did not prove to be an exception to the mainstream representation of Islam in the West.

The interaction between the West and Islam on the one hand, and the interaction between Islam and the West on the other, are phenomena that have deep historical roots. This long history does not seem to have enhanced their mutual understanding. Esposito (1992) describes the situation in the following way:

*Despite common theological roots and centuries-long interaction, Islam's relationship to the West has often been marked by mutual ignorance, stereotyping, contempt, and conflict. Ancient rivalries and modern conflicts have so accentuated differences as to completely obscure the shared theological roots and vision of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. Both sides have focused solely on and reinforced differences, and have polarised rather than united these three great interrelated monotheistic traditions.*

*(Esposito 1992, p.25)*

The theory of social representations might help us to understand how and why Esposito is able to arrive at such a conclusion in which polarisation is emphasised over unity. The theory of social representations is about how the 'other' and the 'self' are brought into being. The present study is about how the West, focusing primarily on Britain, represents contemporary Islam. Employing a multi-methods approach, this study seeks to explore the patterns and contents of representations through a variety of media including the British mass media, the British security forces, and the British public itself.

This chapter centres around the historical background of the evolution of the representations of Islam developed and perpetuated in the West. Throughout the centuries, the West's contact with the Muslim world may well be seen as exclusive in that after the Arabs encountered Europe as early as the fourth century (Rodinson 1988), they were not overly concerned with expanding westwards. This history of contact between the West and Islam has taken shape through encounters of a religious, political, cultural, military and later, economic nature. The Crusades, for example, were a landmark in the course of the West's contact with Islam. More recently, in the Western academic establishment there has emerged a great drive to study Islam. In modern times the media, the world of economic enterprise, and the political establishment in the West have all shown a greater interest in understanding the Muslim world.

Interestingly enough, this Western interest in Islam has been tinted by unequivocal misunderstanding and stereotyping of Islam (Esposito 1992). In the light of the

objective of this study, a basic knowledge of Islam - the religion, the community, and the world view - is indispensable. Before embarking on this, it will be useful to define the key concepts used in this chapter and throughout the whole study, this step also serves to safeguard objectivity and rigour.

Introducing Islam to readers, any community of readers, poses immediately the question of which approach to use. There are many writings on Islam by both Western and Muslim writers and yet the gap of misunderstanding is still there. This problem could be attributed to the community of readers as well as to the community or communities of writers themselves. To overcome the shortcomings of writings that might have led to such misunderstanding is an approach that introduces Islam as a phenomenon that has evolved over time and place. Al Farouqi and Al Farouqi (1986) adopt this approach in their encyclopaedic study *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*. This phenomenological approach:

*... requires the observer to let the phenomena speak for themselves rather than force them into any predetermined ideational framework.*

*(Al Farouqi and Al Farouqi 1986, p.xii)*

Another methodological consideration to preserve is to stick strictly to the objective of the study. Being thus confined demands that the scope of this chapter be restricted to a knowledge of Islam closely relevant to the topic of the research.

## **2.1. The West: What and where?**

As far as this study is concerned, whether the West is a geographical, cultural, religious, or economic phenomenon or some combinations of these, is something worthy of an in-depth investigation on its own. At first glance the term West or Occident brings to one's attention a geographical opposition to the term East or Orient. Based on such a geographical definition, the West is as difficult to define as the East.

Moreover, it is not uncommon to have geographical boundaries politically determined.

The West and East are sometimes determined within the framework of the Cold War.

Lewis (1963/64) stated that:

*In the West, when we talk nowadays of East-West contrasts and conflicts, we usually mean the cold war and its ramifications. In this sense, the East means the Soviet or Communist blocs (the two are no longer identical); the West means the Western alliance and its associates, sometimes called humorously the free world. It includes, in this context, a string of more or less dictatorial regimes on several continents, but excludes Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland and of course Finland.*

(Lewis 1963/64, p.280)

Outdated as it is, Lewis's definition of the West is not restricted to a mere geographical territory as it includes "a string of more or less dictatorial regimes on several continents". It provides a model of the West as a political and/or a cultural entity.

Lewis (1963/64) himself affirmed that the West designates a cultural, social, political and military entity. From the end of the fifteenth century, as Lewis (1963/64) observed:

*The people of Europe embarked on a vast movement of expansion - commercial, political, cultural and demographic - which by the twentieth century had brought almost the whole world into the orbit of European civilisation.*

(Lewis 1963/64, p.31)

Said (1978) asserted, in his search for a definition of the Orient, that it (the Orient) is not simply 'there' just as the Occident (the West) itself is not 'there' either. One should concede that in our present age which is characterised, first and foremost, by the communication revolution, geographical boundaries will mean little or nothing in the face of cultural expansion. Regardless of definitions based on a geographical classification the West, especially to Muslims (including those living inside the geographical West), is a cultural 'other'.

Based on a broader cultural conception such as the one mentioned above, it is safe to say that the West has a well established presence even within the boundaries of the Muslim world. Fukuyama (1992) argues confidently that history has dispensed with the

Western values of liberal democracy and a market economy as the core of a single world order. It is a reasonable inference to draw from Fukuyama's account that Western culture is indeed, now, the world's culture.

The West, defined in terms of culture, has for centuries been in close contact with the Muslim world. One reason this is so is the geographical proximity of the West (the European part in particular) is contiguous with the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. Another reason is the joint origin of Islam and the Judaeo-Christian tradition from which Western culture stems. This mutual relationship has not been all milk and honey. It has been marked by war, expansionism, and the struggle for dominance as well as by times of peace, cultural dialogue and commercial exchange.

The traditional West represented by Europe (and later North America), has recently expanded as a consequence of the end of the cold war. The dismemberment of the former Soviet Union (currently the Commonwealth of Independent States - CIS) has undoubtedly left the member states of the former Warsaw Pact either within the boundaries of the West or on a waiting list for membership of the European Union (EU), the economic arm of the European West.

In the final analysis, the West which is viewed as a cultural and a political phenomenon has a geographical centre of gravity that is to be found on both sides of the Atlantic. Within this centre, Britain, which is the object of study here, is a major power.

## **2.2. Islam: Religion, community, and world view**

Islam, which means literally "absolute submission to God" (or Allah as Muslims prefer) unlike Christianity with its secular presuppositions, is a religion which locates public

and individual spheres within the framework of religion. Religiosity within the framework of Islam requires the observance of divine instructions both in the private and the public spheres. Esposito (1992) is one of only a few Western academics to make such a distinction:

*Bereft of a sense of history, few realise that the term religion as known and understood today is modern and Western in origins. Similarly, it was the West that then set about naming other religious systems or isms. Christianity and Judaism were joined by newly named Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism. Thus the nature and function of other religious traditions were categorised, studied, and judged in terms of modern, post-Enlightenment, secular criteria, with its separation of Church and State.*

*(Esposito 1992, p.199)*

Historically, Islam at the time of the Prophet Mohammed and his caliphs (successors) integrated spiritual and temporal authorities. This view of religion was challenged only centuries later when modern (renaissance) Western political thought was introduced to the Muslim world. Having witnessed the failure of the Western-style secular, cultural, economic, and socio-political modernisation, the Muslim world is currently undergoing a vigorous transformation towards reviving and restoring Islamic polity.

Islam has one or more things in common with Christianity. They share the same theological origin - together with Judaism. Islam affirms this fact frequently and emphasises that it is a religion whose task is to complement the message of earlier divine religions. Although Muslims believe that some chapters of the Bible underwent some modification, they regard it as a holy book and regard Christians as *Ahl al-Kitab* (adherents of a holy book). The same also applies to Jewish people. Secondly, both religions have had some sort of universal appeal. They have a history marked by a long march towards the actualisation of this universal appeal.

### **2.2.1. Basics of a Religion**

Muslims derive their religious teachings in the broad sense of the word, from the Qur'an (Islam's holy scripture), the *Sunnah* (sayings and deeds of the Prophet of Islam

addressing legislative issues), and *Ijtihad* (the intellectual contribution of the Muslim public).

The Qur'an is the message of God revealed piecemeal to Prophet Mohammed over a period of twenty three years, the mission of revelation was accomplished before his death. From that time on, Muslims believe they have had a complete scripture that has not and will never change. The scripture is written in Arabic but there have been translations of it into almost all languages spoken by Muslims the world over.

The content of the Qur'an deals with a wide range of issues varying from highly philosophical and absolute matters such as *Tawhid* (the act of affirming God to be one and absolute) to worldly affairs such as the socio-political order (Al Farouqi and Al Farouqi 1986). The comprehensive and inclusive nature of Islam is affirmed within the scripture.

Given all these characteristics, the Qur'an is unanimously regarded by Muslims as the basic and authoritative source of knowledge about Islam and other related matters.

The *Sunnah*, as the collection of the Prophet's exemplary sayings, reflects his opinions on matters of good and evil (Al Farouqi & Al Farouqi 1986). It is conceived of as an explanatory and complementary text to the Qur'an. It must be understood that the Qur'an was not meant by God to explain those details which the Prophet's *Sunnah* or the Muslims' *Ijtihad* are qualified to make. The other thing the *Sunnah* endeavoured to do, or actually did, was to set a practical example as revealed in the life and experience of the Prophet. This was the realisation of the ideal, the advancement of the *de facto* towards the *de jure*, and the continuous upgrading of religiosity (the relative) in the direction of religion (the absolute).

Religiosity as the process of realising Islam in everyday life illustrates the historical dimension of Islam. Islam's historical dimension has brought into existence the principle of *Ijtihad*. This is the intellectual contribution of the Muslim elite and public to making things understandable, and life on earth worthwhile. The principle of *Ijtihad* obviously represents and emphasises the role of man in determining the shape and content of life in Islam.

Taken together the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, and *Ijtihad* are the epistemological frame of reference that forms the basic foundations necessary for understanding Islam. They are the guidelines along which Islam has materialised over time and space.

### **2.3. The Encounter between Islam and the Other**

In the desert of the Arabian peninsula some fourteen hundred years ago Mohammed began calling people to embrace Islam. The place was not known to represent any centre of cultural, political or economic importance. Even the contacts it had with the outside world were restricted to seasonal commercial ties with the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine) to the north of it and Yemen to the south.

In Makkah, where he was assigned to propagate Islam, the task of the Prophet was not an easy one. There he faced a society clinging to tradition and dominated by tribal authorities which were wholly unprepared to welcome the new messenger whom they regarded as a rival and threat to their norms and power. To find a more accommodating community, the Prophet migrated to the Madinah (north of Makkah and known at the time as Yathrib) where he was warmly welcomed.

Unexpectedly, the migration of the Prophet to Madinah was a turning point with regard to the expansion of Islam. From there it did not take the Prophet more than ten years to convert the Bedouins of almost the whole of the Arab Peninsula to Islam. One

arrangement he made in his endeavour to establish relations with other religious communities in Madinah was to sign a pact on co-existence with the indigenous Jewish community making them a constituent member of the new Islamic polity. This agreement, which became known as the Madinah Covenant (Al Farouqi and Al Farouqi 1986), is regarded by some historians of Islam as having set an example of how Islam deals with the cultural other.

After the Prophet's death, the task of introducing Islam to the rest of the world was left to his caliphs who, driven by the call for the universalisation of Islam continued in the footsteps of the Prophet towards spreading Islam. The West was certainly one of their targets.

#### **2.4. Early Encounters between the West and Islam**

Interestingly enough, the early encounters between the West and the Orient took place well before the introduction of Islam to the populace of the Arabian Peninsula more than fourteen centuries ago. Evidence that certain groups in the West had had some knowledge of the Arabs is adduced by Rodinson (1988):

*Christians had known of the Saracens, or Arabs, long before the rise of Islam, and at first the Saracens' conversion to Islam went virtually unnoticed. A fourth-century description of the world, for example, stated that the Saracens got by bow and plunder all they required to live.*

*(Rodinson 1988, p.5)*

#### 2.4.1. Andalusia

Nevertheless a history of the encounter between the two poles materialised in real terms only when Muslims assumed the leadership of the Arab world. The West at the time was, of course, a Christian West.

An early encounter between the West and Muslims was the latter's conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, or Andalusia, in 710 following their conquest of North Africa (Watt 1991). The Muslims advanced further inside southern France where they controlled Narbonne until 751, and only ceased to advance beyond Narbonne because of military defeat.

The first collision between Islam and Christianity in the West generated bitter Christian sentiments towards Islam, and triggered a series of counter-raids that continued unabated until Islam was exiled from the Iberian Peninsula and southern France. In such an atmosphere, representations of Islam began to take shape. Under the sub-title of "Christian apologetic", Watt (1991) indicated what he prefers to call Christians' perceptions of Islam. There had been, according to Watt in the afore-mentioned book, a flood of apologetic Christian writings on Islam in Arabic in the East. Famous among such writers was John of Damascus (700-754), and the Catholic Timothy. Having both studied Islam, the first also held an administrative post under the Umayyad caliphate (Watt 1991 and Hussain 1990).

John of Damascus denied categorically the prophethood of Mohammed, but, unlike many Christians, he conceived of Islam as a form of Christian heresy. Timothy, for his part, admitted that Mohammed "walked in the path of Prophets". In a further elaborate assertion, (Watt 1991), John of Damascus attributed to the Prophet of Islam (whose prophethood he does not recognise) representations almost identical to those found in the Qur'an:

*He says there is one God, maker of everything, neither begotten nor begetting. He says that Christ is a word (logos) of God a spirit of his, created and a slave, and that he was born to Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron, without male seed. The Jews tried to kill him, but crucified his shadow, because God took him to himself because he loved him.*

*(Watt 1991, p.70)*

However, the representations of Islam provided for the Christian public by John of Damascus did not go unopposed. To Watt (1991), John's accounts of Islam are made from a somewhat objective standpoint. While defending a truly Christian perception of Islam, Watt steps back, attributing the utterance of such inadequate perceptions to:

*People defending themselves against the considerable pressures upon them from Islamic colonialism.*

*(Watt 1991, p.71)*

Yet an interesting remark on the reasons to which Watt attributed John of Damascus's inadequate perceptions of Islam is that even contemporary Western academics tend to stick to centuries-old representations of Islam. John of Damascus, who himself held an administrative post under the Umayyads, did not need to protect himself by sharing his inadequate perceptions of Islam with his rulers. Had he needed to defend himself in that way he would not have voiced such assertions as the one denying Mohammed's prophethood as Watt himself has indicated elsewhere.

It might make sense to conclude that earlier representations of Islam in the West are more or less coloured by the Church's preconceived perceptions of Islam and its history of bitter confrontation with the religion. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the overseas cultural other from being accepted and becoming culturally challenging. Watt (1991) attributed to a much-quoted Christian writer that young Christians in Andalusia admired Arabic poetry and were more interested in Arabic than in Latin.

## 2.4. 2. The Crusades

If the Muslim conquest of Andalusia is an early example of an encounter with the West, the subsequent Crusades turned out to be a Western encounter with the world of Islam whose consequences persist to the present day. Never mentioned in the Qur'an, the Crusader became the prototypical Christian in Muslim literature.

The Crusades were initially inaugurated in 1097 under the leadership of French noblemen like the Duke of Normandy, Norman lords, the Count of Toulouse, and Baldwin of Boulogne (Hussain 1990). In yet another account, the Crusades were actually launched in 1018 when a band of Frankish knights and their followers marched from France to help their fellow Christians in Spain fight against Muslims (Toynbee 1934-54).

“Crusade” *per se*, is a word heavily loaded with Christian conceptualisations of war. Although it is widely used today by the media, by politicians, and by other players in the public sphere to mean a campaign for any good cause, in most dictionaries it is referred to as a war instigated by the Church for alleged religious ends.

The Crusades were preceded by a kind of Christian resurrection which resulted in an ideological unity, rallying member communities of the Latin Christian world under a single flag (Rodinson 1988). The underlying causes that gave birth to the Crusades are still open to debate but they were obviously instigated, at least in part, by the desire to stop the internal fighting among Christians. On the other hand, the Crusaders intended to challenge advancing Islam. There were also minor factors such as Pope Urban II's quest to ease the pilgrimage to Jerusalem as it was said that the Muslim rulers made it difficult for Christian pilgrims to make their journey.

The call for a holy war echoed throughout Christendom and thousands flocked to join the armies. From their rise in the eleventh century to their decline in the fourteenth

century, the Crusades inspired deep-seated antagonistic feelings in both Muslims and Christians towards each other - from the Atlantic to Mongolia. The Pope spared no effort, with the assistance of the entire papacy, to mobilise the followers of the Church towards that end.

The eight Crusade wars, a catalogue of blood and brutality, represent a major landmark in the history of relations between the world of Islam and Christendom. The atrocities of that period are still recounted, as if vivid memories, by many Muslims and Christians. In concluding his three volume history of the Crusades, Sir Steven Runciman (1978) remarks that:

*In the long sequence of interaction and fusion between Orient and Occident out of which our civilisation has grown, the Crusades were a tragic and destructive episode. The historian as he gazes back across the centuries at their gallant story must find his admiration overcast by sorrow at the witness that it bears to the limitations of human nature. There was so much courage and so little honour, so much devotion and so little understanding. High ideals were besmirched by cruelty and greed, enterprise and endurance by a blind and narrow self-righteousness; and the Holy War itself was nothing more than a long act of intolerance in the name of God, which is the sin against the Holy Ghost.*

(Runciman 1978, p.480)

Muslim historians and writers themselves also identified the outbreak of hatred and misrepresentations caused by the Crusades. Hussain (1990), described the Crusades as:

*These wars between the Muslims and the Christians known as the Crusades plagued the Middle Ages. This major conflict reinforced hatred and distrust among Muslims and Christians and from an institutional level, churches brought the conflict to the homes of the people in the West. It was a landmark between the history of the two civilisations which cannot be erased. Since history is a witness, every generation reads about it and forms their own perception and perspectives. But because the West was the loser in these violent confrontations such perceptions and perspectives have always portrayed Islam as something negative and fearful.*

(Hussain 1990, p.13)

That the Church coloured the Western communities' representations of Islam is beyond doubt. Even more true is that the Crusades created, as well as emphasised, representations of Islam in the West full of bitterness, antagonism, and perpetual suspicion. Muslims, though not our concern in this study, were, and still are,

influenced by those 'bad old days'. The Crusades have left their mark in that they are frequently part of the social representation of Christianity in the Muslim world.

To Watt (1991), the Crusades changed little the Christians perceptions of Islam. Moreover, he attributes the creation of the new and more detailed image of Islam to the scholars of France and Western Europe. It must be said, he seems to underestimate the seemingly deep influence of the Crusades on the representations of Muslims of the West. He believes that the Crusades, for the great majority of Muslims were:

*No more than a remote frontier incident, comparable to British India in the nineteenth century.*

(Watt 1991, p.81)

Once indicating a contact between the Orient and the West, even before the introduction of Islam, Rodinson (1988) believes that the image of Islam is drawn from the Latin Christian world's gradually developing ideological unity, rather than simply being drawn from the Crusades. He views the conquests of Sicily, Toledo, and Jerusalem in the eleventh century as contacts with Islam from which a more sharply defined and accurate image of Islam began to take shape. He also views the prolonged ideological rivalries within Christianity as having modified such an image and, in so doing, as having distorted it. Rodinson (1988) identifies three general areas underlying the European (i.e. Western) understanding of Islam. First, the Islamic world was a hostile political and ideological system. Second, it was an utterly different civilisation. And third, it was a remote and foreign economic sphere. Notwithstanding, the Crusades created a huge market for a comprehensive, integral, entertaining, and satisfying image of the enemy's ideology (Rodinson, 1988). With great clarity and precision Rodinson enlightens us. The Crusades were an extraordinary episode in the series of events which created the Western representations of Islam. Of course, the more explosive the event in the history of relations between the West and Islam, the more enduring the representation. To mention only a few incidents in this respect one can speak about the

Western colonisation of the world of Islam that lasted until some decades after the end of World War II; the establishment of the state of Israel (1947); the Gulf War (1991); and, more recently, the prolonged war in Bosnia Herzegovina. On the Muslim side, the oil crisis (1974); the Iranian revolution (1979); and the Salman Rushdie Affair (1988) have also contributed to the shaping of social representations of Islam in the West.

The thunder of the Crusades, according to Southern (1980), echoed in fireside stories of returning warriors and clerks behind the lines of fire; in schools and monasteries these exploits were rendered palatable to the Western appetite. Legends were produced about the Prophet of Islam as were fictitious descriptions of Islamic practices which underwent little change over time, they included claims of Mohammed's false prophecy, that he was 'an emissary of the devil', 'inspired by the father of lies', and 'himself the Anti-Christ' (Watt, 1991). The Qur'an similarly was represented as a false scripture where Mohammed included true material from the Old and New Testaments, but added heresies of his own which included Manichaeism (Watt, 1991). Thus, the outcome of the Crusades with respect to social representations of Islam in the West can be summarised from Watt's account (Watt 1991) in the following assumptions:

- (a) Islam is a false and deliberate perversion of the truth.
- (b) Islam is a religion which spreads by violence and by the sword.
- (c) Islam is a religion of self-indulgence.
- (d) Mohammed is the Anti-Christ.

Yet according to another Orientalist like Rodinson (1988), the public wanted to see an abhorrent image of Islam, and this image was the product of the most striking of the exotic traits that had impressed the Crusaders in their encounters with Islam. Rodinson establishes a relation between every ideological movement (e.g. the Crusades) and its own sacred history (his designate for representations). In this context, representations are intended to explain a movement's appearance as a necessary antidote to the evils of

the time. Southern (1980) asserted that the Crusades gave free rein to “the ignorance of triumphant imagination” to give birth to their representations of Islam. Matching with Southern’s interpretation of the context within which the Crusaders represented Islam is Said’s explanation of how Orientalists, the successors to the Crusaders, determined the way in which Islam was represented centuries later within Western academic circles in the West (see chapter three). Said (1978) established a relation between the representations of Islam formed by the Orientalists and the power the West was, and still is, enjoying:

*The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of hegemony.*  
(Said 1978, p.5)

To conclude, one must say, after finishing this fishing expedition in the seas of the Crusades that they undoubtedly contributed to the stock of negative Western representations of Islam. It is worth noting now that misunderstandings, misperceptions, and misrepresentations between the West and Islam have always been reinforced by the most dramatic of mutual encounters. The world of Islam and of Europe (the heart of the West), if they have two factors in common these must be: (a) their joint borders and (b) their historical background as constituting the heart of the ancient world.

Interestingly enough, despite the fact that the Mediterranean served as a bridge between the West and Islam, it carried nothing to the Orient other than Western animosities, Crusades, and, later, colonialism as Berques (1992) observed. Such a pattern of contacts seems to have emphasised a feeling of imminent threat. That Islam is seen more and more by the West as a threat both before and after the Crusades might perhaps be attributed to the challenge Islam had set Christianity. Such a challenge was, apparently, a root cause behind the ignition of the Crusades. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (1993) summarised the Crusades by saying:

*To Western school children, the two hundred years of the Crusades are traditionally seen as a series of heroic, chivalrous exploits in which the kings, knights, princes and children*

*of Europe tried to wrest Jerusalem from the wicked Muslim infidel. To Muslims, the Crusades were an episode of great cruelty and terrible blunder, of Western infidel soldiers of fortune and horrific atrocities, perhaps exemplified best by the massacres committed by the Crusades when in 1099, they took back Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam.*

*(Prince Charles 1993, p.6)*

To represent Islam as a menace to the West is an off-shoot of an element deeply entrenched in the history of the West. The Crusades only perpetuated an already existing representation.

#### **2.4.3. Travellers**

As we further our investigation of Western representations of Islam, it is worth noting that they appear to be the outcome of a process involving a number of different players.

At one time the Crusades occupied centre stage, shaping Western representations of Islam in the way described above. Some centuries later the Crusades gave the cue for Western travellers and Orientalists to assume the main role.

About four centuries after the Crusades ended, the first Western travellers journeyed East. It was of course, a destination that could not be reached by jet aircraft, nor could one find the comfort of five stars hotels. In those days, travelling without fear of attack or illness was a remote experience. An additional factor affecting travel was the fierce hostility lingering between the West and the Muslim world from the time of the Crusades. What could have possessed people to traverse seas of endless sand to arrive, finally at a cultural wilderness? Of the various reasons underlying the determination of Western travellers to risk reaching remote, unknown destinations, the main one could only be an excessive desire to extend existing knowledge of the geographical and cultural other. Or to explore it anew.

It is evident that most of those Western travellers were either missionaries or emissaries of colonial administrations. They were required by their churches and employers, among other duties, to find out about the peoples and countries of the Orient. That they too came to influence Western representations of Islam is beyond doubt. But to

understand how they formed and diffused such representations, one should first take into account a number of things. The first being the non-existence, at that time, of the media of mass communications. The media in our modern times have taken over as the single most influential agent for producing and diffusing representations. Second, there were only a few means of interaction between the West and Islam - with travel ranking high among them. Third, travellers, after mixing with people of the orient, living with them under the same roof or tent, and learning their languages, were, to all intent and purposes, the best qualified and the most trusted commentators on the Orient.

Unfortunately travellers highlighted the most negative, exotic and fascinating aspects they came across in the world of Islam. For instance, Edward Henry Palmer (1840-1882), who used the Muslim name Sheikh Abdullah, travelled in the Arabian Peninsula (presently Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states) and Sinai, and wrote a biography of Harun al-Rashid in which he describes the Arabs (synonymous with Muslims) as 'plunderers who had spread ruin, violence, and neglect' (Hussain 1990). Another traveller, Charles Doughty (1843-1926), adopting the Muslim name Khalil, issued a description of 'antique humanity, and the mouth of the Arabs as full of cursing and his prayers; their heart a deceitful labyrinth' (Hussain 1990). 'The Arabian religion of the sword,' Khalil wrote, 'must be tempered by the sword' (Hussain 1990). Such were their representations of Muslims and the world of Islam, that Rodinson (1988), did not hesitate to describe many of those travellers as narrow-minded voyagers who brought back unusual and fascinating details.

A possible interpretation of the travellers' consensus in producing negative representations of Islam (as is the case with the Crusades and other players yet to be mentioned) may lie in two strongly preconceived notions noticed by Manzoor (1991). The first concerns using Western civilisation as the norm for all human civilisations. The other concerns using the Christian, and later the Judaeo-Christian tradition as

normative for all religions. The matter of interpretation will be more fully discussed later on in this chapter.

#### **2.4.4. Orientalism**

After the representations generated by travellers came the phenomenon that is known today as Orientalism. It is difficult to draw a sharp boundary between travellers and Orientalists. Both developed careers of working towards knowing, and making known, the Orient. Most of them travelled to the Orient where they learned to speak oriental languages. Even the representations of the Orient which they formed were quite similar to each other. But Orientalism, which has taken shape as a Western academic discipline, left a more enduring legacy.

Though the term Orientalism appears self-explanatory, numerous definitions have been evolved to explain its nature and meaning. Notwithstanding, we elect to consider an Orientalist, for the purpose of the present study, a scholar considered to be well versed in the knowledge of the Orient, its languages, its literature, its peoples and its cultures. This definition is one based on Said's illuminating treatise on Orientalism:

*Orientalism is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident.*  
(Said 1978, p.2)

Early Orientalist discourse was born within the context of the Western Church. This was a time when the reality of Islam had already pervaded Christian strongholds not only in the Balkans (after the historic defeat of the Byzantine empire with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans (in 1453) but in Andalusia as well. The flourishing Muslim civilisation in Andalusia generated a need among Church ranks for studying Arabic as a means towards propagating the missionary cause (Rodinson 1988). A formal start to Orientalism, so to speak, is widely believed to locate its roots in 1312

when the Church Council of Vienna decided to set up a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon, and Salamanca.

When Granada fell to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492 the enthusiasm to continue with the study of Arabic faded. And so it was specifically for the Church's commitment to promote its own missionary campaign that Orientalism was revived. Among those clergy who laboured towards establishing Orientalist discourse were Guillaume Postel (1510-81) and his student, Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609). Both studied oriental languages and peoples, together with collecting oriental manuscripts (Rodinson 1988).

A general atmosphere in some parts of the West combining learning with economic progress generated the need for advanced scholarship. That coincided with a commitment, on the part of states, to support financially such scholarship. The result of this in regard to Orientalism was a flourishing of scholarship combined with a proliferation of academic institutions undertaking to study the Orient.

The first chair of Arabic was set up in Paris in 1539. In 1627 Urban VIII founded in Rome the College of Propaganda which was very much concerned with oriental studies. In Britain, a chair of Arabic was founded in Oxford in 1638. This wave of new academic centres for oriental studies paved the way for creating organisations such as the Société Asiatique in Paris in 1822, the Royal Asiatic Society in London in 1834, and the American Oriental Society in 1842.

Following this spate of activities was the convening of a series of conferences dealing with a whole range of issues concerning the Orient. From the first of these conferences which was inaugurated in Paris in 1873 up until the First World War, a total of sixteen conferences were held.

Thus, with the emergence of such institutions, organisations and events, a ‘proper’ Orientalist scholarship appeared to be in existence. Needless to say, the content of this scholarship has powerfully shaped the representations of the Orient prevalent in the West. In the words of Said (1978), this resulted in an “orientalisation of the Orient”. This was an essentially exotic, picturesque Orient where fantastic genies could, at their whim, do good or evil (Rodinson 1988). Driven by such representations Galland, the renowned Arabist, translated the now familiar *A Thousand and One Nights*. This was a book where fact mingled with fiction and where a strong imaginative drive shaped the whole image of ancient Arabic communities. The most conspicuous image of the Arabs dispersed throughout this book was one of entertainment and pleasure-seeking. Such representations of the Orient and of oriental peoples persisted through the eighteenth century. They only gave way to romantic exoticism and to a Western sense of cultural superiority towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was described by Rodinson in the following way:

*By the beginning of the nineteenth century, three major trends stood out: a sense of Western superiority marked by pragmatism, imperialism, and utter contempt for other civilisations; a romantic exoticism mesmerised by a magical East whose growing poverty seemed only to add to its charm; and a specialised erudition focused on the great ages of the past.*

(Rodinson 1988, p.52)

In addition to the endeavour to find out about fascinating, exotic, and romantic aspects of life in ancient Arabic communities and to transmit them as real images of the Arabs, the nineteenth century witnessed an increased interest in the study of the Qur'an, the Prophet of Islam, and Islamic jurisprudence. The Qur'an was still a puzzle to most Orientalists who set out to study, and indeed, solve it. They saw it as the joint collaboration of Jewish and Christian sources. Mohammed was the subject of innumerable writings where he was mostly represented in a highly negative way. It was once believed he was possessed by demons through whom the Qur'an was dictated. Sir William Moiré (1819-1905), for instance, was one of those who believed that the Qur'an was the composition of Mohammed. It is conspicuous that many Orientalists

were not prepared, in any way, to entertain the well-established belief of Muslims that Mohammed was the messenger of God, and that the Qur'an was a revelation from God to him.

To this extent it is worth mentioning that Orientalism was associated with two main institutions of Western society. The first institution, which provided the cradle for Orientalism, was the Church. As mentioned earlier, Orientalism as a branch of scholarship in the West was founded in response to the challenge to Christianity set by the expansion of Islam in regions believed to be Christian territory. Therefore, the pioneering institutions through which Orientalism came into existence and the pioneering figures who initiated Orientalism were in one way or another linked to the Church.

The other institution that catered for Orientalism was the imperialist establishment. When the Western naval fleets sailed East in search of territory, wealth, and glory, a basic knowledge of the world to be explored was necessary to minimise the risk of the unknown. The imperial establishment opted to employ a regiment of orientalists to work alongside the armies of colonisation.

Watt (1991) cited the connection between some Orientalists and their ministries of foreign affairs which were in charge of colonial affairs. He argued that until the Second World War, most academic Orientalists remained remote from politics. That is true, though misleading. Orientalists did not restrict themselves to the ivory towers of academic institutes. Most academics were actively involved in the public sphere - they were members of bureaucratic institutions and were recompensed for their services by the imperial establishment.

To assert that the *raison d'être* of Orientalism was the service of missionary and colonial crusades has serious implications with respect to its frame of reference and its

final objectives. Orientalism was assigned to represent the Orient in a way that served the cause of the forces behind its creation; i.e. the Church and the colonial establishment. In that respect, the Orient it created was not necessarily the Orient as it was but the Orient as Orientalists wanted it to be.

In fact Orientalism existed almost exclusively within two major contexts. One context was that of power represented by an a power-hungry West that wanted to be central to, and to own the geographical and cultural 'other'. For instance this overpowering and power-seeking West represented the other as either non-existent or existent only in relation to it. In this sense, whole regions of the world such as North America and South America had lain dormant until Columbus found them only five centuries ago. The new Western discovery was simply named the New World. The Middle and Far East (middle and far in relation to the West) are used to designate those parts of the world even by those people who live there. Even when Orientalism was immersed into area studies it never ceased to base its theses on an overpowering and power-seeking West.

Within the previous context, Orientalism could also be regarded as an embodiment of occidental ethnocentrism. What we refer to as occidental ethnocentrism is the projection of Western istory, norms and epistemological paradigms as the sole history, norms and paradigms for the whole of humanity. In this sense it is fairly evident that such ethnocentrism was persistent and prevalent in Orientalist scholarship. Watt (1991) stated clearly that Orientalists are believed to have misrepresented Islam due to the effects of their own linguistic and cultural background. What he refers to as 'misrepresentation of Islam due to linguistic and cultural background' is ethnocentrism by another name. The West employed its power to universalise its ethnocentrism.

## 2.5. Conclusion

Regarding the overview of the representations of Islam in the West, two conclusive points are worth mentioning. One is that representations seem to develop along the same lines as existing representations i.e. many current representations are, in fact, centuries old. Within this context, during every period of heightened interaction between the two parties certain representations persist and prevail. Representations during the Crusades were neither identical to those formed during the Renaissance nor like the ones taking shape at our present time. Nevertheless they all fit in a framework that is generally negative.

The other point to highlight is that representations are usually formed with the assistance of agents called, throughout this study, agents of representations. It is quite evident that each period of intense interaction between the West and Islam selects its representation agent(s). What is meant by that is the different media through which representations are either initiated or perpetuated. Throughout this study the Crusades, Orientalism, and the media of mass communications are, successively, agents of representation. It is also evident that in each period of heightened interaction between the West and Islam new agents emerge. They reflect the sophistication of their own time in regard to the techniques used in the transmission of representations once they are formed. While the media may be new, many of the representations are quite old. It is a virtue of the theory of social representations that history is taken seriously.

## Chapter Three

### **Islamic Revivalism as Islamic Fundamentalism: Contemporary representations of Islam in the West**

In many ways, this chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter. As in chapter two, the focus of interest here is the development, through several encounters and processes, of the West's representations of Islam but with an emphasis on the most contemporary of such encounters and constructions. Particularly, this chapter deals with the period that spans from World War II to date. In about half a century from now, this era will be remembered in many respects, as a turbulent one in the history of relations between the West and Islam in spite of the fact that this period was shaped by the Cold War with the Muslim world (and the Middle East in particular) acquiring growing importance for the West - perhaps more so than the West had ever been to the Muslim world. Interaction during this period has been active whether in the direction of conflict or of consensus, as will be highlighted below.

In the Muslim world, this period has witnessed the growth of Islamic revivalism into a significantly dominant phenomenon in the political and the public sphere. Not only important within the Muslim world, Islamic revivalism has had serious implications for the interaction between the Islam and the West. It has been of general significance because Islamist leaders claim they inherit the rule of their countries from a failing post-independence national elite conceived of as pro-Western. Islamic revivalism has apparently clashed with the West and is largely constructed by the West as Islamic fundamentalism.

The perceived threat to the West from Islamic fundamentalism was, and still is, reinforced by the end of the Cold War. Many analysts (Esposito 1992 & Halliday 1996)

choose to embrace the idea that the post-Cold War West has replaced the vanquished Soviet Union with Islam in yet another Cold War. The consolidation and the construction of Islam as a fundamentalist phenomenon is a representation strongly adhered to and publicised by the media, 'experts' and politicians.

### **3.1. Western Representations of Islam from Past to Present**

Creating new representations of Islam in the West has never been at a standstill and times of crisis appear to have merely intensified the momentum (see previous chapter). With relations between the West and Islam still in a state of conflict, the underlying lesson to emerge is that the history of such representations has not yet come to an end.

The occasions of recent interaction between the West and Islam are not confined to confrontational encounters only. The West has been commercially active with the Muslim world, with its trade exchange rating higher after the oil boom in many Muslim countries. Many Muslim scholars and professionals have migrated to the West either in pursuit of advanced academic and vocational training, or to escape state persecution or both. Some of these scholars and professionals have made significant contributions to the Western stock of knowledge and expertise in their particular fields. It therefore comes as somewhat of a surprise to learn that such scholarly exchanges appear to have had scarcely any effect on the representations formed by their confrontational forebears. Social representations are slow to change. They are an important part of the inertia of most cultures.

To explore the representations resulting from contemporary encounters between the West and Islam the following pages review a series of events where the construction, as well as the consolidation or transformation of representations appear to have intensified.

The events reviewed below are, in many ways, a general overview of some of the encounters that have occurred since World War II. During this period the disreputable Western colonisation of many Muslim countries reached its height. Although within two decades after the end of World War II almost all of the previously colonised Muslim countries had achieved independence, imperialism left a bitter legacy for Muslims.

The state of Israel, created in the Islamic heartland, provoked much controversy - the intensity of which has not faded in many quarters of the Muslim world. The wars that have been fought in its name also seem to have contributed to colouring the representations of Islam in the West and vice versa. In the course of the Arab-Israeli fighting, for example, the Oil Crisis of 1974 occurred, posing an imminent threat to the economic prosperity of the Western world.

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 was undoubtedly an event with far-reaching consequences in regard to the representations of Islam engendered in the West. The fact that many Westerners were held hostage by allegedly pro-Iranian Muslim organisations in Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries further popularised concern over Islam in the West.

Few events regarding Islam in the West, however, have rivalled the public reaction to the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Here, the West was largely mobilised by the Muslim reaction to the book. States as well as citizens became involved in the very public expression of opinions and outrage. One of the empirical studies reported below concerns an analysis of letters to the press relating to the publication of this book and subsequent events.

The Gulf War in 1990/91; the Serb-Croatian war against the Muslims of Bosnia Herzegovina; the turbulence in Algeria where the violent struggle led by Islamic forces

against a military government that robbed them of electoral victory in 1991 has claimed the lives of thousands of Algerians and Western expatriates alike, and the contemporary Islamic revivalism (constructed as Islamic fundamentalism) have all played roles in constructing, consolidating or transforming the West's most recent representations of Islam. Some of these events are reviewed below.

### **3.1.1. Israel, the West, and the Muslim World**

Israel is one of the most recently established states in the world. A resolution by the United Nations led to the emergence in the predominantly Muslim inhabited region of the Middle East, of the state of Israel in 1949. The realisation of Israel as an independent state, in an area that was, and still is, known to the Arabs and Muslims as Palestine, was achieved as a result of a Zionist campaign launched in the late nineteenth century by Theodor Herzl. The campaign was aimed at creating a national state for members of the world Jewish community. The pressures to create such a state were greatly accelerated by Western guilt over the Holocaust which led to the extermination of over six million Jews and left thousands of others homeless.

For many Muslims the establishment of Israel where they see as their land is not blamed on the Israelis alone, but on their Western allies as well. The West is widely believed by Muslims to have conspired with the Jewish Diaspora to create the state of Israel. Every time it is argued that Israel was the creation of the United Nations, many Arabs and Muslims pose the counter-argument that the United Nations was, and still is, a Western-influenced international institution. Thus Israel is viewed by many Muslims as a Western state planted in the midst of their holiest of lands.

Muslims and Arabs fought four major wars in the years 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 against the Israelis and their Western backers. Though in 1979 the late Egyptian President Sadat signed a peace agreement with the Israeli government and the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat signed the Gaza-Jericho accord with the Israeli

authorities in September 1993, the Muslim representation of Israel and its links with the West appears to have remained largely unchanged.

Similarly, the Muslim-Israeli conflict appears indirectly to have influenced Western representations of Islam, though in a negative direction as often is the case. To many in the West, the Arabs and Muslims with whom the Israelis are fighting are backward-thinking war-mongers inspired by Muslim fundamentalists. Apart from its interest in the existence of the state of Israel, the West's economic interest in the oil-rich Middle East has obviously increased its concern over the region. Such a concern has, of course, brought the region more sharply into focus in the eyes of the Western media. So far, the media continue to perpetuate stereotypical representations of Islam.

### **3.1.2. The Iranian Revolution, the Western Hostages and Western Representations of Islam**

The late seventies marked the emergence all over the Muslim world of an overwhelming tide of Islamic resurgence. It followed an era characterised by failures of national rule widely regarded by Muslim and non-Muslim citizens as a continuation of the cultural, political, and economic imperialisms of the West. The ruling elites were accused of complacency by many Muslims who also denounced the West for its cultural and political hegemony.

It was in this context that the Iranian Revolution took place in 1979. The Revolution was not simply a message of anger against Shah Reza Pahlavi who was overthrown, it was also a message of anger against the West - symbolised in particular, by the United States of America. The angry masses who took to the streets of many Iranian cities chanted anti-American slogans like 'Death to America' and declared America the 'Greatest Satan'.

The Iranian Revolution was undoubtedly a turning point not just in the politics of the Muslim world as it also had serious implications for the relations between the Muslim and Western worlds. It sparked warning flashes of an imagined or even an impending threat to Western interests in a region whose oil industry the West had invested heavily in. As a political uprising it posed an imminent threat to the political future of the oil sheikhs with whom the West had traditionally formed alliances.

Given all this, the revolution attracted widespread coverage in the Western media. Pictures of a black-turbaned Ayatollah and irate *mullahs* became regular features in Western journals and on television. To members of the general public the fundamentalist *mullah* turned out to be the normative representation of Islam. In the American press, Said (1981) remarked that the Iranians, after the American hostage crisis, were reduced to 'fundamentalist screwballs' responsible for the 'war against civilisation by terrorists', Iranian was now synonymous with obscenity.

The phenomenon of holding hostages for political purposes has become highly salient in our recent history and clearly, the detention of all the members of staff in the American Embassy in Tehran as hostages caused a great furore in the Western media. Yet one can hardly reduce hostage taking to an exclusively Iranian phenomenon. Many guerrillas fighting for a liberation cause, as well as revolutionaries in different parts of the world have a history of hostage taking.

Still it remains that the Iranian Revolution, when mentioned, evokes memories of the hostages. This might be due to the extraordinarily long period of time the hostages were held captive (444 days) coupled with the fact that the wide, at times highly sensationalised, media attention kept the issue alive. Timing also had a part to play, the hostage affair coincided with the presidential elections and it was widely believed to have caused President Jimmy Carter to lose that election. Following not long after was the taking of another group of Western hostages in Lebanon - allegedly by pro-Iranian

militants. Not just Americans, but also Europeans, these hostages received the sympathy and attention of a much larger public. That some of them were Western journalists also helped to sustain public attention.

The hostage issue provided further ammunition for a media campaign against Islam that was already underway. Television programmes, caricatures and best sellers, were just a few of the spin-offs from the mass-mediated coverage of the hostage saga.

### **3.1.3. The Salman Rushdie Affair**

*The Satanic Verses*, written by Salman Rushdie and published by Viking/Penguin in 1988 provoked a sense of outrage among Muslims throughout the Muslim world as well as amongst Muslims in the West. Muslims view the book as blasphemous (see chapter seven for a more detailed analysis). Their case, they say, was not one against freedom of expression to which many of Muslim spokespeople stressed their commitment, rather it was to renounce and to oppose filth and sacrilege:

*The Satanic Verses neither threatens Islam, nor is it a book of criticism. It is incapable of being either. The point Muslims are trying to make is that it is pure and simple filth, motivated by no purpose other than to outrage and, surely, make money out of this. It is an insult to human dignity and it abuses and prostitutes the noble and cherished principles of freedom. The human society, despite all differences and negatives, is held together by the transcending principle of civility and respect for dignity. It is this principle of civility and dignity that Muslims are so keen to uphold and have it recognised in a practical sense.*

*(Faruqi 1989)*

A highly controversial work, *The Satanic Verses* came to be viewed by most Muslims as a book that has caused much misunderstanding and hostility against Islam in the West (Ahsan and Kidwai 1991).

Uniting almost the whole of the British Muslim community in opposition to it, a wide-ranging protest campaign was undertaken by two major multi-party Muslim organisations. As part of that campaign Muslims took to the streets in demonstrations

where copies of the book, held to be blasphemous, were burned. This symbolised their opposition to it and expressed their wish to have it withdrawn from publication. Meetings with high-ranking officials from the British government were attended by representatives of the Muslim community where their point of view was conveyed to the government. The media heated hot debates on the issue with speakers for and against the publication of the book. The Muslims' argument, as well as that of those who supported them, centred on the importance of protecting sanctity against blasphemy. Emphasising the freedom of expression as a basic human right, the most popular demand expressed by Muslims asserted that the law protecting Christianity against blasphemy should be extended to cover other religions such as Judaism and Islam. Those who were opposed to the view of Muslims considered the issue as one of a basic human right which the West's liberal tradition of freedom of expression had granted and maintained for centuries. As such, they considered the Muslim protest a serious threat to their liberal tradition of freedom of expression.

British political leaders were divided over *The Satanic Verses*. Though there is little doubt that pronouncements by political leaders condemning *The Satanic Verses* were politically manipulated, they reflected a greater openness to understanding the reasons behind the Muslim protest. The former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher recognised the offensiveness of the book by admitting that there was no doubt about the genuine sense of outrage and injury felt by Muslims over the book (Ahsan and Kidwai 1991). The deputy leader of the Labour Party and Shadow Home Secretary, Roy Hattersley comments on *The Satanic Verses* accepted that 'indeed passages within it are a blasphemy against the Islamic religion'. At an Eid (Muslim festival) reception in Birmingham he added: 'I very much regret the publication of this book and look forward to the day when it is no longer on sale' (Ahsan and Kidwai 1991).

Other leaders of the British community showed their strong support for Rushdie and were led by people like Michael Foot (ex-Labour Party leader), Anthony Burgess

(novelist), Robert Kilroy-Silk (newspaper columnist and television producer). The media of mass communication were equipped with a rapid preparedness to side with Rushdie in defence of the freedom of expression. This is a freedom that is much cherished by journalists. Images of Muslims as the Nazis of Britain, Muslim protests as the tactics of gangsters, and even calls to unite against Islam were highlighted and widely publicised (Ahsan and Kidwai 1991).

The *fatwa* issued by the Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini sentencing Rushdie to death took the affair to a new phase involving the intervention of Western states. Demonstrations against the publishing of the book continued unabated. Diplomatic relations between Britain and Iran became distinctly cool.

*The Satanic Verses* has undoubtedly widened the scope of interest in Islam in the West. Many people have become alerted to aspects of the Islamic faith of which they were previously ignorant. The Muslim campaign has definitely moved Islam steps ahead in the Western public sphere.

On the other hand, *The Satanic Verses* and the Muslim reaction to its publication has caused more harm than good to the image of Islam among the Western public. To many people in the West the representations of Islam which resulted from the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and its aftermath were, by no means, positive representations. They reaffirmed a widely publicised representation of Islam as an intolerant, theocratic, and fundamentalist phenomenon.

In the final analysis one must take into account, when dealing with the Rushdie Affair, that it is an extremely complex issue. The initial clash between Muslims and publishers over the publication of the book very soon assumed a new dimension as the Muslim response was contested by other parties in the Western community. When Ayatollah

Khomeini sentenced Rushdie to death the whole issue changed completely into one of sovereignty over territory and a state's duty to protect its citizens.

Quite apart from the political and legal dimensions which the affair had assumed, many people in the West denounced the *fatwa* by asserting that sanctity is not protected by sentencing to death a citizen of another country. Unravelling the historical and cultural dimensions of such a stand can only be attributed to a clash between two value systems. In the West, ever since the time of the Renaissance Western communities have embraced individualism. Seen against such a background the Western stance in the Rushdie Affair was obviously based on a commitment to preserve and to protect rights of the individual. On the other hand collectivism is highly cherished by Muslims. Given this, the Rushdie Affair was seen by Muslims as a crime against Muslims. For them it was correct, so to speak, to have the individual punished for the sake of the community. The clash between individualism and collectivism was reproduced in the clash between rival ideologies during the late Cold War.

### **3.2. Fundamentalism as a New Representational Pattern**

According to Sardar (1993), representation and binary opposition are two powerful tools in Western culture which enable their users to categorise others in terms of their own categories. Sardar's point is not an entirely new one, both Karl Marx and Bill Warren had earlier indicated that Europe has created a world after its own image (Halliday 1996). Such a notion comes in the context of the still loosely defined, though increasingly popular, post-colonial and post-modern studies which came into existence as a critique of the still dominant Enlightenment and modernist discourse in social, literary and cultural sciences.

As vague as post-modernism and post-colonialism, fundamentalism is a fashionable notion associated with forms of orthodox religious beliefs and practices. The term as it

is used by academics, the media, and politicians in the West as well as elsewhere in the world has certainly transcended elitist discourse to become a salient component of every day popular culture. Such popular pressure has urged the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to conduct - sponsored by a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation - a multi-volume study investigating the roots and manifestations of fundamentalism. The first volume of *The Fundamentalism Project* appeared in 1991 entitled: *Fundamentalism Observed*. The on-going study deals with fundamentalism as a global, trans-religion phenomenon which can best be described as including together a host of militant, bigoted and strict implementations of the fundamentals of religion as opposed to modern, liberal and secular beliefs and lifestyles. There is no doubt that the idea of sponsoring such a huge study was prompted by the growing resurgence of extremist forms of religion within the West itself as well as in the other regions of the world. In this regard essays contributed to the first volume of the project cover forms of fundamentalism including Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Confucian. Other volumes deal with fundamentalism and society, fundamentalism and the state, etc. Admitting and reiterating that the term fundamentalism is so controversial as to warrant closer attention, the project examines fundamentalist movements which it profiles as confrontational and identifies with references to the following forms of *fighting* (Marty and Appleby 1991a):

1. Fundamentalists *fight back*. That they are both militant and reactive.
2. Fundamentalists *fight for*. What they fight for begins with an inherited or adopted world view. Whether through passive or active means, fundamentalists fight for their conceptions of what ought to take place.

3. Fundamentalists *fight with* a 'repository of resources' which can be seen as weapons. They are selective, and reinforce their identities by adopting the pure past.

4. Fundamentalists *fight against* others who are enemies from without or within the group.

5. Fundamentalists *fight under* God in whatsoever meaning He might be made to stand for.

As we can see from such explanations, fundamentalism, when associated with religion, connotes a negative meaning, rather a stereotypical one. From a social representations' perspective ideas cannot exist in abstraction. For them to become familiar, Moscovici tells us, they are anchored to what we know already and objectified. So, fundamentalism must have a soil in which it can take root and then identified. Religion, and particularly forms of it which are seen to be extreme and uncompromising, provides fertile ground. Fundamentalism, when associated with Islam, not only matters in the context of this study, but also is indisputably the market leader as far as religious fundamentalism is concerned.

### **3.3. Roots of Islamic Fundamentalism as a Representation**

The prevalence of Islamic fundamentalism and its dominance, at a later stage, as a representation of Islam is certainly an important development within the historical process of explaining Islam in the West. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the representation of Islam over the centuries is both continuous and discontinuous. Over the many centuries during which the two poles i.e. the West and Islam have come into contact with each other, there has been, most of the time, a highly negative image of Islam in the West. The same applies to the image of the West in the world of Islam too.

That is, negative images of the cultural other are mutually self-sustaining especially in times of crisis. We have come across examples of this in the review of representations of Islam at the time of the Crusades. 'The Infidel' was the mythical image of the Muslim during the Crusades. Then came the 'Turks' as a new symbol for Islam when the armies of the Ottoman Empire reached the gates of Vienna in the 17th century. Later when Arab oil became the main commodity of trade between the Orient and the West, the image changed. Following the threat posed by Arab member states of the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) to the West two decades ago, the image-making machine of the West represented Islam in the caricature of an Arab sheikh - an uneducated, super rich, overweight man clad in long nomadic garb. But it is the recent encounters between the West and Islam ( notably the Iranian Revolution, the holding of Western hostages and the Rushdie Affair) through which Islamic fundamentalism set in the overriding representation of Islam in the West.

The emergence of fundamentalism on the public scene as a label for orthodox, non-compromising religious beliefs and practices is viewed by most historians as a twentieth century phenomenon. Islamic fundamentalism, to a greater or lesser extent, is linked to the Islamic revivalist movements which appeared in the Arab world - the heart of the Muslim world - towards the end of the first quarter of this century. Historically, such revivalist Islamic movements began partly, one might claim cautiously, as resistance movements to Western imperialism early this century, but as they gathered momentum they capitalised on the failures of the post-colonial nationalist movements to achieve their objectives. People in the newly independent Muslim countries were dreaming of brighter futures under their national governments. The Islamic revivalist movements, for the myriad reasons that brought them into existence and the many circumstances that surrounded them, have adopted a strict version of a return to the fundamentals of Islam. They call for the implementation of *Sharia*, not just as a legal framework but as a whole lifestyle. They also see the revival of *Jihad* (struggle in the service of God) as a complementary aspect of Islam in practice.

Although Islamic revivalist movements are believed by many to be identical to fundamentalist movements, Marty and Appleby (1991b) tend to support the view that the two, though they may have much in common, are yet not identical. Fundamentalisms, they say:

*... may indeed arise within, or in other cases lead to, a religious revival that features a general cultural and social but not explicitly political return to Islamic paradigms and juridical sources. But fundamentalisms ultimately do move towards the fundamentals, the determining principles and doctrines, not only of religious belief and practice, but especially of the polities in which they find themselves; that is, they are inherently political.*

*(Marty and Appleby 1991b, p.xiv)*

Muslims, on the other side of the divide, who fit into the frame provided by the Western representation 'Islamic fundamentalism', are equally angered with the term and they oppose it with some vigour. Addressing an audience at the University of Oxford, the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohammed (1996) advocated fundamentalism as being about adhering to fundamentals, and fundamentalists are, therefore, the best Muslims.

Whether one view or the other is correct is not, however, the question now. What is evident is that Islamic fundamentalism is well entrenched as a representation of Islam in the West as well as elsewhere. In pursuit of an explanation as to why this is the dominant representation, one may reasonably suggest that there have been historical reasons stemming from the West's experience with its own religious (mainly Christian) establishment and from the historical course of the encounter between it and the world of Islam. The Islamic revivalists (Muslim fundamentalists) also have their contribution to make to the construction of the representation of Islamic fundamentalism. In this respect, it might be worthwhile to review, in some detail, two works on contemporary Islamic revivalism as fundamentalism: one by the American academic; Esposito (1992), and the other by the British academic; Halliday (1996). The two works adopt a critical

approach that challenges many of the assumptions underlying the Western discourse on Islamic revivalism.

### **3.4. Islamic Fundamentalism: Myth or reality?**

In his 243-page book *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* Esposito (1992) has laboriously exposed, given an account of, and analysed the contemporary tide of Islamic revivalism and dealt - within this context - with the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism. He devotes a whole chapter to throwing light on Islamic fundamentalism as it relates to the West and vice versa.

Esposito views the post-Cold War epoch in the West as witnessing the vanishing hostility towards Communism which was "transferred to or replicated in the new threat of Islamic fundamentalism". Without regard to the diversity of its social and organisational backgrounds, Islamic fundamentalism is being projected by the media, by analysts and by government officials in the West as well as in the Muslim world as an all-encompassing global threat. Aware of the West's fear of Islam many governments in the Muslim world, which are implicitly or explicitly in alliance with Western governments, seek the support of Western governments in their fight against their Islamist opponents. Unfortunately such an attitude leaves outsiders in the dark about some of the most enlightened Islamic theses which several Islamist movements adopt and attempt to put into practice. It must be noted, further to Esposito's aforementioned remarks, that such Muslim governments are now selling to Western governments the notion that Islamic fundamentalism is already well established in the West through Islamists from Middle Eastern and other Muslim countries forced to seek refuge from persecution in their own lands - Ayatollah Khomeini, for example, lived in exile in a suburb of Paris for some fifteen years. Hence fundamentalism is now a threat to the West from within, rather than just from without as had been the prevailing view until quite recently.

A highly selective representation of Islam, Esposito tells us, ‘that fails to tell the whole story, to provide the full context for Muslim attitudes, events, and actions, or fails to account for diversity of Muslim practice’, is the standard stuff of articles and editorials on Islam in the Western press. Nothing but stereotypes are, or ever will be, the product of such a highly selective attitude. Esposito apparently comes to terms with Said's work on Orientalism in which the latter (see next chapter) claims that Orientalism is more a thesis about the West than it is about Islam. Esposito also views representations such as Islam's war with modernity, Muslim rage, extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism as obscuring and distorting the full picture of Islam.

A telling example of selectivity breeding a stereotyping of Islam is Bernard Lewis's prestigious Jefferson Lecture in the US in 1990. In *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Lewis portrayed an image of Islam where rage, violence, hatred and irrationality reigned supreme. The text of the lecture later appeared as a lead article in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled *The Roots of Muslim Rage*. Lewis's reputation as a highly respected Middle East expert accorded the lecture, and the subsequent article, widespread publicity. The selectivity in his treatment of the topic and the sensationalist stereotypes it engendered, Esposito concludes, only reinforces the image of Islamic activists (i.e. fundamentalists) as medieval in their lifestyle and their mentality. To Esposito, Lewis is a selectivist who obscures or distorts the full picture. However, Lewis is under fire from Esposito not so much as an isolated case as because he is a typical symbol of a mentality and a dominant construction of Islam which is common to several Western experts. They are, after all, but the latest breed of Orientalists (see next chapter).

In similar vein, Islam is represented as a monolithic phenomenon, ‘believing, feeling, thinking and acting as one’ in Esposito's words. Such an approach assumes that from Jakarta to Morocco and from Stockholm to Pretoria, Islam is one, and as such it has one spokesperson be he Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini or Sudan's Hassan al-Turabi or

Algeria's Abbasi Medani. Khomeini, for purposes of accuracy, is *a* spokesperson, not *the* spokesperson. The construction of a monolithic Islam constitutes a trans-historical, trans-cultural approach - an approach which is totally opposed to the thesis in this study that both historical and cultural influences remain as powerful determinants of our representations as well as being of significant influence in shaping the objects of our representations. Islam as monolithic is a construction that conceals beneath a cloak of facile generalisation a heterogeneous, dynamic and complex human reality, as Said (1995) remarks. Islam's territorial jurisdiction extends from inside the borders of China and Russia to the Central, South and South East Asian regions, and from the Middle East to West and Southern Africa. It also extends from the Balkans to West Europe with its ever increasing migrant Muslim population. This huge geographical expanse which encompasses a hybrid of languages, cultures, races, socio-economic activities and life-styles makes it difficult to conclude that Islam, in reality, is a single phenomenon.

A deep-seated reason why many in the secular West deplore Islamic fundamentalism is the gross claim, by Muslim fundamentalists, that Islam works to bring public life into the fold of religion. This, however, is one reason that brings it into a collision course with the West. The latter's own historical experience with the religious control of public life was horrendous. The long struggle to separate government and religion in the West, which was prompted by the heavy handedness of the Church in the Middle Ages when it assumed absolute authority over public life, still sets the alarm bells ringing against any possible return to such times. Islamic fundamentalism, undoubtedly, is seen in the context of images passed down over the centuries. Nonetheless, as Esposito points out, there is an important difference in the genres of religion to Muslims and to non-Muslim Westerners. For the majority of Muslims, Islam assumes authority over public life, while many Christians, by way of contrast, regard Christianity as a private affair between man and God.

The divorce between Church and State was followed in the West by a golden age. First there was the Enlightenment - a contrast with the darkness of the days when public life was dominated by the Church. The Enlightenment then gave birth to modernity with all its progressive achievements. This seems to have established in the Western mind a conviction that religion, once it embraces public life, heralds backwardness and appeals to darkness in order to prevail. In Esposito's own words "the modern notion of religion has its origins in the post-Enlightenment West". As a result, from a modern secular perspective the mixing of religion and politics is regarded as abnormal, dangerous, and extremist. And hence this becomes part of the Western representation of Islam. Being anti-secular, apparently clashing with modernity in many respects, and static, Islam, constructed as fundamentalism, is also represented as undemocratic, repressing women and non-Muslim minorities. This is so because modern democracy and modernity were both the products of the divorce between Church and State.

Following from all this, Esposito continues, Islam is viewed by many in the West as a triple threat: "political, demographic, and socio-religious". Citing Buchanan (1989), Esposito draws attention to the demographic threat that Islam is presumed to pose:

*For a millennium, the struggle for mankind's destiny was between Christianity and Islam; in the 21st century, it may be so again. For, as the Shiites humiliate us, their co-religionists are filling up the countries of the West.*

(Buchanan, 1989)

New waves of migration from many countries of the Muslim world - from Bosnia to Chechnya and from Somalia to Algeria, where civil wars, natural disasters, and economic hardship loom - are unleashing new demographic realities in the West. With inter-conflicts between Islam and the West, or with intra-conflicts within the Muslim world itself in which Western citizens and/or Western interests are the victims, a definite threat from Islam exists for many Westerners like Buchanan.

With all the vigour he manifests in refuting the West's construction of Islam as fundamentalism, Esposito leaves untouched those factors on the Muslim side which encourage such a construction. Among these factors is the fact that most parts of the Muslim world remain, as we approach the 21st century, struck by economic and technological under-development, politically unstable and riven by conflict. Although some Muslim countries have already started to develop processes through which peaceful political participation can be exercised, many are far from reaching such a stage. Political opponents are denied freedom of speech and freedom of association, or participation through an electoral process. Even more, they are subject to persecution and subsequently forced to seek refuge in other countries, mostly in the West. Coupled with this is the huge scientific and technological gap that leaves most parts of the Muslim world outside the universal scientific and technological community. With the disappearance of the 'second world' the only models left are those of the 'first' and the 'third worlds'.

Unlike Said, Esposito's account of the roots of the representations of Islam as a fundamentalist phenomenon does not include an analysis of power alongside his analysis of culture, the political agenda and bias (i.e. selectivity). Power, to say the least, is a psychological pre-requisite for victimising the other. A powerful West is much better able to construct negative stereotypes of others in the world. This said, a reservation needs to be entered about not dealing with the West as though it were a monolithic phenomenon. Apart from contributing towards a construction of the representation of the other, power is perhaps even more important in regard to the diffusion of representations. Powerful media, for instance, are able to construct representations as well as to diffuse them beyond national borders.

Another aspect of the clash between Islam and the West, presumably urging the latter to represent Islam as a fundamentalist phenomenon is the West's individualist culture as opposed to Islam's collectivism. Whereas collectivism, on the part of Islam, urges a

greater moral authority and causes communitarianism to thrive, this is perhaps seen, in many respects, as a breach of individual and civil rights in the West's individualist culture. Individualism has arguably engendered the whole culture of civil liberties and human rights - a culture which is apparently gaining increasing momentum, particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War.

While Halliday's *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and politics in the Middle East* (1996) sees Islam as coming into sharper focus for many in the West since the 1970s or, more particularly since the Iranian Revolution, it refutes the notion that Islam is a threat as being both misleading and confusing:

*The mere fact of peoples being 'Islamic' in some general religious and cultural sense has been conflated with that of their adhering to beliefs and policies that are strictly described as 'Islamist' or 'fundamentalist'. It has been assumed, in other words, that most Muslims seek to impose a political programme, supposedly derived from their religion, on their societies.*

*(Halliday 1996, p.107)*

Behind an image of Islam as a menace (to the West), Halliday tells us, are historical as well as contemporary determinants, from the Crusades to Bosnia and from the Iranian Revolution to the hostage crises. The end of the Cold War, terminating a long-lasting conflict between the '*capitalist democratic* West and *a dictatorial* Soviet-dominated East' (researcher's italics), has revived the historical conflict between the Christian West and the Islamic world. Adopting a critical position similar to that of Esposito, Halliday's analysis encompasses an ideological element. In this respect, by replacing the demonised Communism, the Islamic threat is seen by Western Europe as 'some ideological substitute for the Cold War and the confrontational disciplines it occasioned' thus satisfying a psychological need for 'a menacing, but subordinated, other'. So, Halliday sees that on the part of the West, constructing Islam as a threat relates to or apparently serves the interests of those who hold power in the West -Christian,

capitalist, imperialist, or whatever they may be. By according some influence to power in constructing representations, Halliday comes closer than Esposito does, to Said.

Further still, Halliday ascribes a greater role to Muslims themselves in assisting the present constructions of Islam in the West to assume the form they do. The view from the Muslim world is shaped by a rhetoric that matches that of the West which in many ways appears to support the dominant image rather than challenging it. Discourse presented by the leaders of Islamic revivalism from North Africa to Iran and to Sudan is believed by Halliday to perpetuate constructions in the West of what he calls anti-Muslim propaganda. That is, the opposition to Western values of democracy, secularism, the rule of civil law, equality between men and women, and equality between Muslims and non-Muslims; commitment to long-term struggle against the West; and racist generalisations about Jews, the West and Hindus. Rejection by Islamic revivalist discourse of national identification, seemingly in favour of a trans-national identification, and the practice of power by Islamic regimes in a manner grossly contradicting that of the West, does add more fuel to the fire and confirms some Western stereotypes of Islam.

Halliday is distinct in arguing that the stereotyped image of Islam is to be viewed in the light of a historical interpretation. There is no such thing as a trans-historical conflict between Islam and the West. To him when it is said that Islam sanctions terrorism, this should not imply a necessary link between Islam and terrorist politics. The accusation of terrorism is valid in the case of Islamic groups, just as it is valid in the case of Irish separatist or Sri Lankan groups. Nor was it Islam, Halliday notes, that led the field when terrorism, in its contemporary sense, came into existence in the 19th century. The construction of Islam as monolithic is also viewed by Halliday as having been assisted by both trans-national, trans-historical Islamist discourse as well as by popularisers and demagogues in the West who adhere to anti-Islamic propaganda. Islamists contributed to this by projecting Islam as an unchanging, timeless, essential system. Their Western

opponents make their own contribution to the construction of Islam as having a monolithic genesis by conceiving it as a trans-historical threat.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

This century will eventually be best remembered, among other things, for the renewal and intensification of the ancient confrontational encounter between the West and Islam. Its opening had witnessed the emergence of Islamic revivalism with the intention of replacing Islam on the public agenda of the Muslim world not only as a religion in its Western, post-Enlightenment sense, but as an all encompassing lifestyle. The post-World War II era came to mark the independence of almost all the formerly colonised Muslim countries from the grip of the imperial West. Power was transferred to pro-Western national governments, with tremendous hopes of political stability and economic prosperity. When the prophecy failed to materialise Islamic revivalist movements assumed the vacant ground.

In this new situation the West, as it appears from Islamic revivalist discourse, is held responsible for a large share in the injustices to which Muslims are subjected. From the seventies on the collision between the West and Islam heightened, reaching the peak by the end of the Cold War. However, this was the time when newly constructed representations of Islam began to take shape. Islam, more specifically Islamic revivalism, was then represented as Islamic fundamentalism.

The construction 'Islamic fundamentalism' as a representation of Islam, seen by many analysts in the context of the West's entrenched tendency to live with an enemy, has, so far, become the norm since the end of the Cold War. The discourse of Islamic revivalism, several of the policies and practices of Islamic governments, and a hostile attitude by Islamic revivalists towards the West may have contributed significantly both

towards the recent construction and consolidation of the representation of Islam as a fundamentalist phenomenon.

## Chapter Four

### The Cultural Other:

#### E. Said's *Orientalism* in the light of Moscovici's theory of social representations

Following the preceding chapters on theoretical and historical aspects of both social representations and Islam, the present chapter explores a particular Western tradition of constructing knowledge about Islam. The proposal here is to set the work of the Oriental scholar, Edward Said, in the context of Moscovici's theory of social representations.

The primary focus of Said's writing in recent years is the representation of the cultural other in the West. Highly salient in his work is the representation of Islam in the West - or what he calls Orientalism. This is a form of knowledge constructed by scholars in the West that enables them to understand the cultural other i.e. the Orient. It is in terms of the cultural other that they seek to establish their identities in their own eyes as Occidentals. One is dealing here both with Tajfel's theory of social identity and with Moscovici's theory of social representations but at an inter-cultural, rather than at an inter-personal level.

Tajfel's social identity theory, understood at a cultural level, is relevant in that both the West and the Orient represent two quite distinct cultural entities. The identity of each can best be understood by contrast with the other. One is dealing with a self/other system at the level of cultures rather than at the level of persons. Tajfel's theory, however, does not go beyond such an identification. It cannot provide a theoretical framework for how culture and identity interact in a historical context. Since Said is concerned with Orientalism as a form of knowledge in the West concerning the East, it relates more closely to the work of Moscovici than it does to the work of Tajfel. The

work of Moscovici and of Said can best be understood as contributions to the sociology of knowledge. This could not be said of the work of Tajfel.

Although Said makes no direct reference to Moscovici throughout his book on Orientalism, it is not difficult to identify a common theoretical background. Said bases much of his work on French social science. Whilst Moscovici chose Durkheim as ancestor, Said chose Foucault. But Said develops, or rather, transcends Foucault's notion of discourse by adopting Moscovici's notion of representations. His usage of representations is much closer to Moscovici's social representations than to Durkheim's collective representations. This is because Said's representations are of a dynamic nature and that they work in close association with changing life circumstances.

Said attempts to formulate a theory of knowledge which is not merely epistemological but also sociological. In his sociology of knowledge, culture is a constituent element whose influence in shaping representations is crucial. For his part, Moscovici dedicates his research on social representations to the creation of a social psychology that is immersed in culture (Moscovici 1981a). While Moscovici's work focuses on the processes explaining how social representations form and develop (Farr 1987), Said's is devoted to studying a particular case i.e. Western representations of the Orient, using social representations within an inter-cultural comparison. With its focus on the representations of the cultural other, Said's work is, in fact, a genuine contribution towards the expansion of the scope of social representations.

Moreover, Said makes another novel contribution to research in social representations by investigating the role of power in the construction and transmission of representations, as we shall see later in this chapter. Power contributes to the construction of representations in that it is always a powerful culture that influences how a representation is formed. Said believes that it is a blend of interacting powers, a hybrid power system comprising political power, moral power, intellectual power and

cultural power which gave birth to Orientalism's invented Orient. The notion of invention or in Said's own words, orientalisation of the Orient, is similar to, and an endorsement of Moscovici's notion of labelling:

*Indeed, representation is, basically, a system of classification and denotation, of allotting categories and names. Neutrality is forbidden by the very logic of the system where each object and being must have a positive or a negative value and assume a given place in a clearly graded hierarchy. When we classify a person among the neurotics, the Jews or the poor, we are obviously not simply stating a fact but assessing and labelling him.*

*(Moscovici 1984, p.30)*

This is, however, one point where Said relates to the theory of social representations. An invention by the West for the West, the orientalisation of the Orient, also sheds some light on the Cold War's East-West divide. Such a divide was created or invented, and therefore it was a representation produced in the historical context of the Cold War. I remember the American novelist Norman Mailer, saying in a BBC interview that they (the Americans) were made to believe that Russia was the evil empire. Now seeing presidents Clinton and Yeltsin walking hand in hand, they find the Russians to be good and friendly people. Using social psychological jargon one can say that the hitherto evil empire was a representation which had no correspondence with the real Russia. It is also to be mentioned that the empirical studies of this thesis are influenced by the East-West divide following the end of the Cold War.

#### **4.1. An Account of Said's *Orientalism* (1978)**

Time and again the West has dealt with Islam and the world of Islam through peaceful means such as trade, travel and intellectual interaction as well as through confrontational encounters such as war (Hourani 1993). As we highlighted in chapter two, interaction between these polar opposites goes back many centuries. However, each culture's knowledge of the other began to take shape and to accumulate right from the start of such contact. I am concerned, in this thesis, only with the representations in the West of Islam and not with the representations in the Muslim world of Judaeo-Christianity. A

full historical review of the nature and intensity of encounters between Islam and Christianity was made in chapter two.

As a form of Western knowledge or, for the purposes of this study, as Western representations, Islam became the subject of a systematic body of theory and of intellectual practice known as Orientalism. But before going too deeply into the issue, it must be noted that Orientalism included the study of the peoples, cultures and religions of the Orient in general. Its subject matter included, among others, nations in the Far East like China and Japan, nations in Southern Asia like India as well as Muslims in North Africa, the Middle East and beyond. Interestingly, it should be noted that designations such as the Far East, the Middle East and the Orient reflect the ethnocentrism of the Western perspective. Representations of the cultural other, as Said demonstrates in his book, are closely related to power rather than to a mere cultural identity. It was under circumstances of overwhelming power and influence, as this chapter will explain, that the West was able to impose its own categorisation as a universal designation for such locations and nations. Problematic though it is, we shall adopt these categories here since this thesis itself is all about the representations of Islam in the West.

However, Orientalism is used in the present study to refer to the part of the tradition dealing specifically with Islam (see the section on Orientalism in chapter two). Such a specification is not just a technical necessity. Orientalism has, in fact, positioned Islam in centre stage. The study of Islam is highly prominent within the context of Orientalism in that, for many researchers, Orientalism is little else than the Western study of Islam. The Orient was the centre of the old world where all main world religions first came into existence. Adding to its strategic importance were two main factors. Earlier, it was via and around the Orient that all roads to every corner of the ancient world were passing. Later, with a rising expansionist Islam posing a serious challenge to the West, the Orient's importance to the West became even greater. Orientalism, as a tradition,

was born in this latter context. By the eighteenth century when Europe's imperialist campaign was well underway, Orientalism was given a new boost, particularly because it was put, to a great extent, under the service of the empire.

The tradition of Orientalism has spanned several centuries. One suggestion puts its formal beginning as far back as 1245 (Abdel-Malek 1963). It has constructed, successfully, Western representations of Islam across a whole spectrum of disciplines such as anthropology, philology, languages, lexicography, geography, politics and religion.

Following its peak during the epoch of European imperialism, the tradition of Orientalism is no longer as influential. Although its main representations of the Orient are still manifest in the academic and political domains as well as in the media, its popularity is waning. It is succeeded now by the new academic tradition of area studies.

The focus of the present chapter is the book authored by Edward Said in 1978 under the title *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. Edward W. Said is Parr Professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University in New York. An American citizen of Palestinian origin, Said was born of a Christian family in Jerusalem, Palestine in 1935. Said fled with his family to Egypt in 1947-8 where he was educated in British schools (Sprinker 1992). Later he was sent to the USA to pursue his higher education. There he studied English, history and comparative literature at Princeton and Harvard. Spending his life wandering between these three locations, Said's personal experience is highly salient in his work. He himself states this quite positively (Sprinker 1992). Perhaps that was one reason why his role as a political activist was not far behind his role as a committed intellectual. A Marxist intellectual, Said was unable to hide his Palestinian nationalism.

Said served as a visiting Professor at many of the most prestigious universities on both sides of the Atlantic. Said is a regular columnist in a number of Arab and English language newspapers and magazines. As a commentator, he has appeared frequently on Western television and radio. The Western media turn to him on issues ranging from Middle Eastern affairs, culture, music to international relations. In 1993 he was invited by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to give the highly prestigious *Reith Lectures*. These were later published as *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith lectures* (Said 1994a).

As an author, Said has exhibited a restless capacity to produce a steady stream of fascinating works. In almost all his books and in his many articles Said is articulate and writes with authority. His conviction that pure scholarship does not exist has exposed him to a spate of criticism as to the rigour of his own method (Clifford 1988). The scope of his writing ranges from literary criticism to cultural theory and from media analysis to Palestinian affairs. Best known for his authoritative book, *Orientalism* (1978), other published works include: *Covering Islam* (1981), *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious scholarship and the Palestinian question* (1988), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *The Politics of the Dispossession: The struggle for Palestinian self-determination* (1994b).

*Orientalism* is a treatise which exposes and criticises Western representations of Islam as they appear in Western discourse about Orient. Among his many books, Said's *Orientalism* enjoys a place of special importance as it represents an exclusively novel critique of the established Western tradition of Orientalism. For many, it marked a new turn in the path of social science regarding the study of the relationship between the self and the other in the context of what he sees as a strong relationship between knowledge and power.

It is not our intention in the course of this chapter to deal with Orientalism<sup>1</sup> as a form of Western history, philology, or other academic discipline. Our concern is restricted to how *Orientalism* exposed and provided a unique critique of Orientalism as a representation of its object, Islam.

#### 4.2. In the Wake of *Orientalism*

A 368-page study, *Orientalism* was first published in both the USA and Britain in 1978. Since 1980 it has been translated into French, Arabic, Japanese, German, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Catalan, Turkish, Serbo-Croat, Swedish and other languages. Some of these translations have been published in more than one edition (Said 1995).

*Orientalism* comprises, in addition to an introduction, three lengthy chapters: The Scope of Orientalism; Orientalist Structures and Restructures and Orientalism Now. Four subtitles follow each title. The 1995 edition of the book contained an afterword devoted to reviewing and answering critiques of the book. In each chapter theory, method and analysis co-mingle in a fashion that makes it sometimes difficult for the reader to follow the thread of Said's argument.

Said's criticism of the phenomenon of Orientalism is based on the notion that 'texts exist in contexts':

*Most humanistic scholars are, I think, perfectly happy with the notion that texts exist in contexts, that there is such a thing as intertextuality, that the pressures of conventions, predecessors, and rhetorical styles limit what Walter Benjamin once called the 'overtaxing of the productive person in the name of... the principle of 'creativity' in which the poet is believed on his own, and out of his pure mind, to have brought forth his work.*  
(Said 1978, p.10)

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<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that throughout this chapter 'Orientalism' refers to the Western tradition dealing with the Orient, particularly in academe, while Orientalism - in italics - refers to the book authored by Edward Said which is the subject of the present chapter.

The above quotation should not only be taken as a guiding principle of Said's thought in studying Orientalism, it should also guide us in determining our point of departure in reading *Orientalism*. The latter came into existence in both an intellectual and a political context of which Said himself was fully aware. Factors shaping such a context were international and regional as well as personal. Some of the determining factors have been explicitly mentioned by Said himself, such as those relating to his own upbringing and his long-standing exile. There were other factors operating at an international and a regional level which should be noted for the sake of completeness.

*Orientalism* is a continuation of intellectual and political trends in the international arena whose roots could be traced back to the early days of the liberation struggle from European imperialism and the beginnings of a search for an identity other than that of the binary opposition between master and slave. It was born, naturally, in the context of such discourses as the North-South divide, Centre-Periphery relationships and decolonisation. Many intellectuals and political activists in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (as well as within the West itself) were involved in these movements. Said himself makes no secret of the impact of prominent figures in this movement on the development of his own thought. He cites the influence on him, when writing *Orientalism*, of intellectuals and political activists like Gramsci, Foucault and Chomsky.

But neither the international factor, nor Said's own experience as a Palestinian in Diaspora, were, in our view, the sole factors that influenced *Orientalism*. The whole region of the world where Said was born and where he still feels he belongs, was also undergoing a liberation struggle and a search for identity even after most of the countries concerned had achieved their own political independence.

Following the 1967 war, in which the Arab armies lost to Israel, the Arab intelligentsia started to rethink radically the issue of their own identity. It was not just their defeat that

prompted such a revision, but also the failed ideologies of nationalism that still prevailed in the region even after independence. In such an atmosphere it was not uncommon for Arab intellectuals to express their disillusionment through almost any available medium. That sense of disillusionment paved the way for reviving a Muslim identity throughout the whole region. This revived Muslim identity served largely as an antithesis to the West, a cultural other seen as the root of all evil.

Since then, a resurgent Islam prevailed and the West was increasingly viewed as a foe rather than as a friend. Manifestations of a resurgent Islam appeared first in the political and intellectual domains as movements of political activism supported by a growing body of Islamic literature. But as the seventies drew to a close, the most vociferous manifestation of the resurgent Islam was the Iranian Revolution.

Under the political and spiritual leadership of the *mullahs*, the Iranian Revolution achieved a decisive victory over the pro-Western regime of the Shah in February 1979. The Revolution's objective was to reinstate an Islamic state, a tradition Muslims had lived without, or were caused to live without in some instances, for centuries. The Revolution's enemy was the West, the USA in particular. The Revolution was fuelled by a parallel cultural revolution which posed a serious challenge to the then dominant secular culture which had its roots in the European renaissance and modernity. But the day it was born, the Iranian Revolution was, undoubtedly, a distinct addition to the process of decolonisation under the banner of Islam. It was virtually a political version of Said's *Orientalism*.

It can scarcely be surprising then that such a transformation generated a whole discourse critical of the Western phenomenon of Orientalism within which *Orientalism* rightly fitted. For instance, another similar book appeared the same year as *Orientalism*. Written by the Tunisian philosopher and historian at the University of Tunis, Hichem Djaït's, *L'Europe et L'Islam* (Djaït 1978) shares with *Orientalism* the

same concerns. An English translation of Djait's work, *Europe and Islam*, emerged later in 1985 (Djait 1985) with an Arabic translation following a decade later in 1995 (published by Darul Taleea'a in Beirut). *Europe and Islam* covered two main issues. The first one was Europe's image of Islam which the book reviewed under French intellectuals and Islam; European Scholarship and Islam; and Islam and German thought. The second issue dealt largely with Islam and with Europe as two distinct historical structures, providing an illuminating anatomy of both.

Hence *Europe and Islam* is a book about Islam as it is constructed by the West as well as being about Islam and about the West considered separately. It strikes a common ground with *Orientalism* in being, to a large extent, a study of the social representations of Islam in the West as revealed in the writings of Western intellectuals. Both books deal with one and the same phenomenon. Both were written by intellectuals from 'the Orient' with a remarkable knowledge of the West and who had even lectured at prestigious Western universities.

Now that we have reviewed some of the circumstances forming the context which gave rise to *Orientalism*, the question that logically follows is what is *Orientalism* all about?

#### 4.3. Representing Orientalism

Although it is a study of Orientalism in the context of history, *Orientalism* was not written, Said tells us, as a historical narrative of the Western phenomenon of Orientalism. Apparently, in *Orientalism*, Said focuses on the underlying circumstances that generated the phenomenon of Orientalism as well as the implications for the Orient of the Orientalism that such circumstances had created. A historical narrative of Orientalism is, simply, not a sufficiently novel scholarly contribution. Over the long history of Orientalism, many studies of it have been conducted from a strictly historical

perspective. For Said, a simple historical account of Orientalism is not his primary concern:

*It has seemed to me foolish to attempt an encyclopaedic narrative history of Orientalism, first of all because if my guiding principle was to be 'the European idea of the Orient' there would be virtually no limit to the material I would have to deal with; second, because the narrative model itself did not suit my descriptive and political interests; third, because in such books as Raymond Schwab's *La Renaissance Orientale*, Johann Fück's *Die Arabischen Studien in Europa bis den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*, and more recently, Dorothee Metlitzki's *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* there already exist encyclopaedic works of certain aspects of the European-Oriental encounter such as make the critic's job, in the general political and intellectual context I sketched above, a different one.*

(Said 1978, p.16)

By way of a beginning, Said puts forward three definitions of Orientalism which he sees as interdependent (Said 1978). First, for him Orientalism is an academic discipline dealing with teaching, writing about and researching the Orient. An Orientalist, under this guise, could be an anthropologist, a sociologist, a historian, a theologian, a philologist or even a researcher on the Orient under the newly embraced notion of area studies. Another definition he offers is that Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident'. A third definition, which corresponds most closely to his own thesis, is that Orientalism is a Western style of thought for dominating, restructuring, and expressing authority over the Orient.

Now, it is clear that the first definition indicates nothing so special about Orientalism as to warrant a laborious critical study such as *Orientalism*. Meanwhile, the second and third definitions bring us closer to Said's oppositional discourse. That Orientalism is a form of knowledge based on a distinction between the Orient and the Occident implies the existence in Orientalism of a binary opposition between the self and the other or between 'us' and 'them'. According to *Orientalism* the 'us' which, in this case, is the Occident orientalises, restructures and dominates the 'them' i.e. the Orient.

Said employs for his sweeping analysis both a method and a theory drawn from a set of historical generalisations. He sets forth three qualifications for identifying the phenomenon of Orientalism as a point of departure (Said 1978).

1. That the phenomenon of Orientalism does not deal with a correspondence between Orientalism and the Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient. The Orient, therefore, is an invented entity, an orientalised Orient.
2. That cultures and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their configurations of power also being studied. And that the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power and domination of the one by the other.
3. Although Orientalism is a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient, the sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse, its very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability, are worth noting and treating with respect.

Before entering into the theoretical and methodological domains of his analysis, it must be stated that Said restricts the subject matter of *Orientalism* to the Anglo-French-American experience of the Arabs and of Islam. Such a delimitation makes it clear that he intends to exclude a comparable Orientalist discourse dealing with such regions of the Orient as India, Japan and China. A further delimitation is that the Orientalist discourses of Germany, Italy, Russia and Spain, representing a significant component of the Western phenomenon of Orientalism, are not included in the subject matter of *Orientalism*. One reason for this, Said tells us explicitly, is that both France and Britain served as the colonial powers dominating the Orient in his study whereas the other

European powers did not. Why American Orientalism is, therefore, included despite the fact that the USA did not share with France and Britain their colonial experiences of the Orient is because the American Orientalist discourse took over that of Britain and the France after World War II. Moreover, British-French-American Orientalism virtually transcends, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the rest of Orientalist discourses contributed by other Western powers.

Said's exclusion of the German Orientalist discourse in *Orientalism* is not something that goes unnoticed. Although he admits the "European pre-eminence" of German Orientalism in the last two-thirds of the 19th century, his exclusion exposed him to much censure but:

*... the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual, the way Egypt and Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton, Disraeli, or Nerval.*

(Said 1978, p.19)

Major works in German Orientalism, Said states, are based on research using Paris libraries, and the job undertaken by German Orientalists was to elaborate the techniques employed by analysing Oriental material acquired earlier by imperial Britain and France.

Justifying his exclusion of the German and of some other versions of European Orientalism on the grounds that such countries had no imperial experiences with the Orient of his study, does not, however, allow Said to escape criticism. Such an argument exposes a clear methodological paradox in *Orientalism*. That German Orientalism, as a product of a non-imperial power, was exclusively scholarly, or at least a classical form of Orientalism, contravenes Said's own thesis that there is no such thing as objective scholarship (a presupposition we will deal with later in this chapter). Said emphasises the notion that objective scholarship does not exist by according to the German Orientalist discourse some kind of intellectual authority over the Orient.

According to him, the idea of purely scholarly work as disinterested or abstract is hard to understand (Said 1978). If this is the only reason then too little justification is offered for excluding German Orientalism. However, there may be some sense in saying that the German Orientalist discourse is excluded on the grounds that the historical circumstances that prompted its production led to its being different, in one way or another, from the French-British-American form of Orientalism.

A final delimitation that Said makes is that the Orientalist discourse which he analyses only covers the period from the late 18th to the early 20th century. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in the late 18th century represents the point in time when Orientalism enters the picture for the purposes of Said's analysis. The time when Orientalism was at its height, i.e. from 1815 to 1914, coincided with a period of unparalleled European imperialism where direct colonial dominion by European powers expanded from about 35% of the earth's surface to about 85% (Said 1978). What matters here is that this latest qualification excludes centuries of Orientalist discourse from being the focus of analysis in *Orientalism*. This omission menaces the integrity of Said's theoretical and methodological analysis. That is because the Orientalist discourse produced before that period of time, admittedly having no link with the Empire, would then lack the driving force that caused later Orientalism to dominate, restructure and express authority over the Orient. In this particular case, Said's historical generalisations fall short of providing an interpretation of how earlier Orientalist discourse fits, or does not fit, within his overall context.

Based on the definitions, qualifications and delimitations we have just highlighted, Said samples the huge body of Orientalist discourse - which we cannot help also but to sample. By doing so, he intends to provide evidence for what he calls orientalisation of the Orient. Using social-psychological terminology, Said works to expose Orientalism as a representation of Islam. Exposing Orientalism's authority over the Orient, *Orientalism* begins with two quotations; the first from Karl Marx's *The Eighteenth*

*Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented...' and the second from Benjamin Disraeli's *Tancred*: 'The East is a career...'

Through these quotes Said was clearly intent on demonstrating the authority Orientalist discourse had accorded itself in representing the Orient. To him, representations of the Orient constructed by Orientalism stem from such a hegemonic attitude. This supposed authority is highlighted even more clearly in the following extract from a speech delivered to the British House of Commons by Arthur Balfour:

*First of all, look at the facts of the case. Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show the beginnings of those capacities for self-government... having merits of their own... You may look through the whole history of the Orientals in what is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-government. All their great centuries - and they have been very great - have been passed under despotisms, under absolute government. All their great contributions to civilisation - and they have been great - have been made under that form of government. Conqueror has succeeded conqueror; one domination has followed another; but never in all revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government. That is the fact. It is not a question of superiority or inferiority. I suppose a true Eastern sage would say that the working government which we have taken upon ourselves in Egypt and elsewhere is not a work worthy of a philosopher - that is the dirty work, the inferior work, of carrying on the necessary labour.*

(Balfour 1910, p.17)

Lord Cromer's *Modern Egypt* also gives expression to Orientalism's air of superiority:

*Sir Alfred Lyall once said to me: 'Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim'. Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind.*  
(Said 1978, p.38)

In Balfour's statement, the authoritative representation of the self versus the other or of 'us' versus 'them' is fairly self evident. Whereas the Western self exhibits, among other qualities, a capacity for self-government, the Oriental lacks, amongst other qualities, self-government and only has a history formed by absolute government and despotism. What is worth noting here is not the representation, which is the way the

Oriental is seen by an Orientalist, but it is the authority to represent, in such an authoritative manner, a cultural other.

Possessing the authority to represent (an) other, e.g. another nation that "cannot represent itself" according to Marx, also authorises one to transform the representation into (the) fact, with all the consequences that this may imply. One could apply to Balfour's statement the mechanisms by which, according to Moscovici, a representation is formed. An image of an unfamiliar Oriental is first formed, for the sake of familiarisation, by anchoring it, from the point of view of what is familiar to the West, to a lack of ability for self-governing, to a profession for absolute government and despotism. Authority is then asserted in that that early form of making the unfamiliar familiar then becomes objectified in '*the fact*' rather than being a representation of what is out there seen from a '*Western point of view*'.

However, the same applies to Sir Lyall's representation conveyed to Lord Cromer, of the Oriental mind, which '*lacks accuracy*', something that '*easily degenerates into untruthfulness*'. But the hegemonic authority over the Oriental, from the point of view of representations, is even clearer to grasp in this example. The Oriental mind lacks accuracy and degenerates into untruthfulness vis à vis Lord Cromer's '*the European*':

*The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth...*

(Said 1978, p.38)

Hegemony, which is central to Said's thesis of the Western representations of the Orient, first appears in the above statement in representing the self, the European, and

then in representing the other, the Oriental, from the standpoint of the representation of the self. Yet, there are three more factors to be added to Said's analysis, which ascribe more power to this hegemonic representation of the Oriental which are: Lord Cromer's political power and influence as the British colonial governor of Egypt - the most important country in the Arab Orient; the absolute, indiscriminate nature of the representation and the static, ahistorical nature of the representation.

The driving force behind such hegemonic representations of the Orient, Said remarks, is their cultural strength. And, in the light of such a cultural strength, many interests have been inspired and have become embroiled in sharing the task of representing the Orient. Such interests include scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description etc. Also under the influence of such a cultural strength representations have been the vehicles through which imperialism, positivism, utopianism, historicism, racism, Darwinism, Freudianism, Marxism, Spenglerism are all conveyed.

But Said introduces, in the context of Oriental discourse, another power represented by the power of the text or what he depicts as the textual attitude. For him, two situations favour a textual attitude. One is when one encounters something unknown, threatening and distant in which case one way out of the impasse is the resort not only to previous experience but also to what one has read about such a situation. The other is, Said says, success. One example he cites is a situation - unlikely though it may be - where one encounters, say, a lion. If one has earlier read that a lion is a fierce animal and one finds that to be the case indeed in real life, then one might be encouraged to read more by the same author and believe what he or she writes. An author, in turn, picks what readers' experiences bring about. Such a process of exchange where a reader's experience in reality is determined by one he has already read about, and that what a writer writes, in turn, is influenced by readers' experiences is what Said terms the dialectic of reinforcement. Backed by expertise, by the authority of academics, institutions and

governments, such texts create not only knowledge, but the very reality they appear to describe, and produce, over time, a tradition or, what Foucault depicts as discourse. At this point we can understand, according to Said, how Orientalist discourse acquires its power from its cultural strength on the one hand and from Orientalist discourse, pressure, and its textual attitude to the Orient on the other. Furthermore, Said adds a slightly dubious dimension of power to Orientalism. That which he calls the silence of the Orient gave Europe its apparent success. Orientalism acquires further strength from a silent Orient (like the fierce lion that never talked back) available for the realisation of European projects that involved Orientals but for which they were never responsible. But how this works, or has worked, as a mechanism conducive to empowering Orientalism remains, however, unclear.

Said, then, establishes the link between Orientalism, as a scholarly discourse and empire, and what it became during the 19th century when Orientalism accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution. Such a metamorphosis is manifested in the statements of Balfour and of Lord Cromer which we highlighted earlier as well as in many other relevant examples *Orientalism* provides. This development in Orientalism has, however, made the history of what Said describes as the transition from a mere textual idea of the Orient to a realised practice, or the likelihood that Orientalism's ideas about the Orient can be put to political use. It has brought out into the open what Said depicts as a matching of the Oriental sphere and the sphere of empire, a development he describes as provoking 'the crisis in the history of Western thought about, and dealings with, the Orient' (Said 1978), a crisis that continues to this very date. We will examine below in what sense it is a crisis.

#### 4.4. Questioning Objective Scholarship

Well before the bomb of *Orientalism* exploded in the late seventies, Anouar Abdel-Malek triggered almost the same questions that Said would eventually come to deal with

(Abdel-Malek 1963). Abdel-Malek chose to identify his research problem in relation to the wider domain of the human and social sciences which, in his view, needed an alteration, an extension and a transformation which would not be just narrowed to the field in the light of the growing role of new methodologies such as the Marxist methodology and other related ones which allowed greater syncretism and flexibility. Shifting to Orientalism, which was undergoing a crisis as his essay assumes, Abdel-Malek started by posing questions such as: what kind of scholar is the Orientalist? What are his/her motivations? What occupies him/her? What objectives does he/she set himself/herself to attain? But, without going too deeply into Abdel-Malek's pioneering essay, the point behind the reference made to him is that he was tacitly questioning the existence of objective scholarship, an undertaking which Said elaborated and examined in greater depth.

Said was also concerned about developing a methodology to handle a critique of Orientalism. That is, perhaps, the most innovative and illuminating side of *Orientalism*. Further still it is the part of *Orientalism* where a great deal of controversy resides. In search of an appropriate methodology Said started by questioning the existence of objective scholarship i.e. nonpolitical, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief scholarship (Said 1978). It is Said's opinion that an ambition such as producing nonpolitical scholarship might exist only in theory. But in practice, Said believes the reality is much more problematic. Political significance emerges in scholarship produced by humanists who write in, say, literary criticism as much as it does in scholarship with direct policy implications such as political economy. The political significance of scholarship stems from the fact that a scholar is tied to a set of life circumstances, to a class, to a social position, to a society, steel wires to which he/she is tied and from which he/she cannot be detached. According to Said, such relations continue to influence one's professional contribution, which, in the case of the scholar, is scholarship. Even if one endeavours to achieve the greatest degree of relative freedom from inhibitions, the said relations may have an effect on one's scholarship.

Furthermore, Said dismisses as invalid the specialist argument that the work of, for example, a philosopher is devoid of any political nature. He sees such an argument as blocking the larger and more intellectually serious perspective of scholarship.

Said, however, sees that the non-existence of objective scholarship is particularly true in the case of Orientalism:

*For it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware of, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.*

(Said 1978, p.10)

Orientalism, as *Orientalism* exposes it, is therefore a cultural and a political fact. It has all the coercive force of a Durkheimian fact. It is an intrusion, Said says, of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts. In accordance with such an analytic description, Orientalism undertakes not only to create an Orient of its own, but also it is a discourse produced in an uneven exchange with a whole range of powers, including political power, intellectual power, cultural power, and moral power. It is hence a representation of the Orient that has less to do with the Orient than it has to do with the West itself. As a form of non-objective scholarship governed by a set of life circumstances, Orientalism, Said explains, is a dynamic exchange between authors as individuals and political concerns emanating from their geopolitics (of the French-British-American empires) which inspired the substance of Orientalist scholarship. This is further supported by the theoretical framework of intertextuality. Said contends that texts exist in contexts. These combine, we are told, superstructural pressures such as conventions, rhetorical styles, and predecessors with facts of textuality.

By the same token, Said's own account of Orientalism must have been shaped by circumstances engulfing his own life. These include the salient Marxist analysis he develops as a critique of Orientalism. He was also aware of being an Oriental, brought up and educated in two British colonies. Hence he became the subject in whose life Western culture has been influential. Also inspiring him to write *Orientalism* was the stereotyping of the Orient in the West, where he has been living for a long time now, and his own experiences with such matters. In writing *Orientalism*, Said could hardly hide his emotions as a Palestinian:

*The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America, is disheartening. There exists here an almost unanimous consensus that politically he does not exist, and when it is allowed that he does, it is either as a nuisance or as an Oriental. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanising ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny...*

(Said, 1978 p. 27)

This said, Said's questioning of the existence of objective scholarship, so central to his thesis, is highly paradoxical. It goes without saying that an absolutely objective scholarship might exist as an ideal but not as a reality anyway. Such a generalised claim as the non-existence of objective scholarship poses several serious problematics which *Orientalism* leaves unanswered. The first problematic is how much distance can a scholar keep, when writing, between his personal space, such as personal ambitions and expectations, his socio-economic position, national pride, and basic elements in his culture, on the one hand and the subject matter of his scholarship on the other? Knowledge, as with social representations, is not independent of the influences which surrounding circumstances place on the individual scholar. A great deal of knowledge presently at our disposal must have been inspired by surrounding factors in the first instance. Whether, under certain circumstances as such, non-objective scholarship appears to disappear might also be true. A dominant culture and/or political circumstances might create the sort of knowledge they like. Yet applying such a rule to a tradition such as Orientalism with all the diversity of its subject matter and its

centuries-old history, the way Said does, may perhaps not meet the conditions of rigour which scholarly work requires. Orientalism flourished before the 18th century's European colonial race as well as throughout the imperial epoch thereafter. Therefore, no acceptable justification may stand up for Said's indiscriminate conclusion that Orientalism was the creation of imperialism.

Another problematic is whether there exist limits between the individual and the universal, or the particular and the universal (Young 1990), in the production of human knowledge. That is, however, an age-old question which has always been the subject of debate among scholars, especially philosophers. The fact that all human beings share a common ancestry, implies the existence of a basic common ground or shared ideas between all human beings across the nations, cultures, social classes and so on and so forth. That there is something such as individuality may make a difference to the said shared ground. Then whether it is universality or individuality or combined universality and individuality that determine our knowledge is the question to answer. It may, however, not be far from correct to claim that both factors work together even though, at a given time, one may outweigh the other. Here one can also notice that Said's apparent denial of the existence in the Orientalist discourse of the Orientalist's individuality opposes his call for a critical consciousness of the intellectual which he accords scholars like Chomsky or himself. Examples as such include even those Orientalists whom Said singles out, someone like Massignon:

*In reading Massignon one is struck by his repeated insistence on the need for complex reading...*

(Said 1978, p.269)

A third problematic is that if Orientalism is basically criticised for being a representation influenced by culture and power, Said's critique of it was equally subject to similar influences. Said's claim that objective scholarship is impossible, as one understands it, is not a question about a particular representation, rather it is about all sorts of

representations. Thus it applies, if one is prepared to concede, to Orientalism as well as to the critique of Orientalism.

#### **4.5. Representation, Knowledge and Power**

The question which the critique of *Orientalism* inspires, at this juncture, is whether or not there is a binding thread between representations, knowledge and power. However, attempting an answer to such a question requires: a. to establish that knowledge is representation, or, at least, representation is the mechanism by which knowledge is acquired, developed and transmitted and b. that power is a constituent element in constructing knowledge.

One way of articulating an answer to the above question(s) is to question the empiricist paradigm that presupposes we possess direct observational access to the ‘reality’ of the world (Rouse 1987). Using a representational approach, we will be forced to say that the world is independent of our representations of it and, accordingly, we may not accurately touch the ‘reality’ of it as we represent it. Following this line of argument we may conclude that our knowledge of the world is a representation, a mere representation. But this conception of knowledge creates an epistemological dilemma since, for practical purposes, we need to deal with a ‘truth’, with a ‘reality’. We are then left with one of two options: either that, and for purely practical considerations we should deal with a representation as a ‘reality’, or, that a ‘reality’ other than the representation of it does exist and that we should develop the necessary mechanisms which will enable us to get hold of it. Moreover, this revives the now traditional saga of the individual versus the universal or the relative versus the absolute in human and social sciences. Now, so far as what we described as an epistemological dilemma remains valid at the theoretical level, it is in our view that knowledge is representation. This is particularly valid when we deal with knowledge as human and social sciences. And this applies to Orientalism as well as to the critique of Orientalism.

Said emphasises that representations are the product of a hybrid system of power. They are a manifestation of a state of hegemony and predominance. As for Orientalism he basically deals with it as a kind of intellectual authority (Said 1978). And authority, Said says, is formed, irradiated and can be analysed. It is on the exteriority (the surface) of Orientalist discourse that such authority resides. However, this exteriority is a representational product. Representations, therefore, are not natural depictions of the Orient, they are not the "truth". In the case of Orientalism, the exteriority of the representations emanates from a truism that the Orient cannot represent itself. Orientalism fulfils this function - or, rather, did fulfil this function in the days of empire. For Said this is how knowledge is a manifestation of power.

The methodological device on which Said bases his analysis of the authority of the Orientalist discourse comprises what he calls *strategic location* (italics in the original), which is 'a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about'. Said also employs a *strategic formation* (italics in the original) which is 'a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large' (Said 1978). From the outset it is clear that Said sees representations as an ensemble of the authority of the writer (strategic location) and the text(s) (strategic formation). This process does not take shape 'in the abstract', as the writer necessarily assumes knowledge of the Orient and further believes that textual knowledge on the Orient is interrelated, to an audience and to institutions, and to the Orient. This is a form of knowledge on the Orient, regardless of whether it is natural (reality) or constructed (representations).

But the 'rise, development and consolidation' of this accumulated knowledge (representations) was influenced by a dominant culture in the way we highlighted earlier. Unlike Foucault, Said does not believe, from an empirical standpoint, that the

individual text or author counts for very little. His analysis reveals a 'dialectic between individual text or writer and a complex collective formation' to which his work is a contribution. According to Said, Orientalism is the product of a dominant system of political power which interacts unevenly with the cultural power, intellectual power and moral power. This, however, is particularly true when Orientalism came under the influence of, and became an instrument at the disposal of the empire.

Compelling questions are again out there. The notion to which Said adheres is that knowledge and power are closely related and cannot be resisted for many reasons. It acquires more intellectual acceptability when Said defines power structurally as a hybrid system of relationships and exchanges, so that a combination of powers influence knowledge through a system of exchanges. Nevertheless, as Lele (1993) observed, such a conception of power, with the West seated on the power throne for centuries, demonises all Western knowledge as hegemonic. Whilst this may be true in some cases, to generalise it would menace the theoretical rigour of Said's work.

Said tries to resolve the conflict by setting an ethical requirement so that such a "corrupt" and "blind to human reality" scholarship as Orientalism can be contested. To achieve this, scholarship armed with vigilance and consciousness is needed. But such standards, though plausible, are non-operational. In establishing the link between knowledge and power it is conspicuous that Said was intent on articulating a new type of knowledge regarding Western knowledge of which Orientalism is part and parcel. But the Western knowledge which produced Orientalism also produced Said's critique of Orientalism as well as many other critical works which denuded American-European ethnocentrism.

The 'knowledge as a manifestation of power' paradigm, as Said tells us, may need some fundamental qualifications to render it scholastically acceptable. One question that arises in this regard is who owns the power in the West? This is a question to which a

simple answer is misleading. It is clear that it is not all of the West that is in possession of such power, and that, using Said's own argument, it is not all of the West that produced that hegemonic Orientalist discourse. It is, however, worth noting that even Said himself, has recently clarified, in several speeches which we had access to, his thesis on Orientalism about the West by saying that he never talked about the West as one and the same entity. In fact it was in the West, and by certain forces which own the 'cultural, political, intellectual, moral etc.... powers' that Orientalism came to existence. Such forces may represent such a structure that today's political discourse depicts as 'the establishment'. These days, in the West in particular, it may be claimed, it is the so-called establishment that possesses the power, and it is this power that determines the shape of representations. Is it then the establishment that Said means when he talks about a hegemony and a predominance? The answer may or may not be an affirmative yes. If the answer is yes, it may be a simple, far from conclusive answer to a complex question.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

First it must be highlighted that there are theoretical similarities between Said and Foucault, to whom Said admits he is indebted. In this respect it is even worth noting that both of them undertook to study representations though in quite different contexts. Foucault studied the representations of the other within the same culture (madness) whereas Said studied the representation of the cultural other (the Orient). Foucault (1994) uses the notion of discourse (a way of talking and thinking about something) where Said opts to use the notion of representations. Foucault looks into the way culture establishes its internal system of binary oppositions by means of discursive formations whereas Said explores representations of the cultural other through his methodological device through which he depicts strategic location and strategic formation. To Foucault, names are mere labels for discursive statements whereas for Said, representations are inventions and mere exteriority. Nonetheless, Said's notion of

representation derives very much from Foucault and from the French scholarship in the human and social sciences where the theory of social representations was first born.

Said's use of representation is more in keeping with Moscovici than with Foucault as we stressed earlier in this chapter. *Orientalism* might, however, suggest a genuine development of the theory of social representations. Firstly, this can be achieved by employing the theory rather than just understanding the other within the same culture such as the mentally ill, the ethnic minority or the opposite gender to understand further the cultural other as Said rightly did. Secondly, it can expand the concentration in social representations research on the processes and mechanism through which social representations form, to explore the role dynamics such as culture and power play in shaping representations. Such expansions may end up with the theory as a truly interdisciplinary approach to research in social science rather than an exclusively social psychological theory.

All in all, it must be emphasised that *Orientalism* has pulled the lid off a once unchallenged scholarship and placed on the agenda genuine issues for innovative research.

## Chapter Five

### Shifting Paradigms: Methods of research in social psychology

In many ways the issue of the methods employed in social psychological research is one of a shifting paradigm, by which we mean a change in methodology in response to changing theoretical trends. This is especially true in the study of social representations which is well established as a research area right at the heart of social psychology. A major reason for these changes is the still unresolved debate as to whether psychology is a natural or a human and social science. Conceiving of social psychology as a natural science, as the behaviourists do, implies the adoption of experimentation. But behaviourism *per se* is not identical to experimentation. In its Skinnerian form it relates to the behaviour of the individual organism - it has its own particular psychology of science. Whilst it is called the experimental analysis of behaviour, it is experimental in a very peculiar sense. Experimentation, in turn, isolates psychology from its context in culture and society by imprisoning it within the walls of the laboratory. The introduction, later, of new areas of research such as social representations (Moscovici 1963), and societal psychology (Himmelweit 1990a) gave added momentum to the shifting nature of methods of research.

When Moscovici broke the silence with his cry 'what is social about social psychology?' with the subsequent answer 'not very much' (Moscovici 1973), he actually meant to reinstate the issue of methods on the agenda of psychological debate. Along with Moscovici, Himmelweit and Gaskell advocated a similar change of agenda by saying:

*If social psychology does not become more broadly based, more genuinely interested in the insights of the other social sciences, and more genuinely willing to engage in what*

*might be called high risk research, then it will continue as now to be largely invisible to policy makers, other social sciences, and the educated public.*  
(Himmelweit and Gaskell 1990a, pp.12-13)

## 5.1. From Descartes to Hegel

The search for a more socially orientated method of research in social psychology must not disregard the privileged status experimentation has enjoyed for some time. The dominance of experimental method as represented by behaviourism, followed the dominance, though for a much shorter time, of Wundtian introspectionism towards the end of last century (Farr 1984). Wundt used introspection to analyze the contents of consciousness. Introspection was an endeavour to investigate mental events and therefore to develop a mental science. Questions arose as to its rigour. Introspectionism received some defence from Farr (1984) who remarked that Wundt's new laboratory was both highly controlled and strictly circumscribed, and was therefore quite unlike earlier forms of introspection.

Succeeding introspection, behaviourism exerted a strong influence on the methods used in research in social psychology. Under Watson, psychology sought to become a branch of natural science. Behaviourism is an off-shoot of the Cartesian paradigm that favours experimentation and limits the investigation of social phenomenon to the highly artificial environment created within the walls of the laboratory. The adoption of behaviourism, therefore, imposed a number of limitations on research in social psychology. Within the man-made environment of the laboratory an experiment can hardly avoid being influenced by the experimenter as well as by the experimental setting. Culture (see chapter one for a detailed account) and the wider social environment are always ignored in a laboratory setting although a truly social science can never disregard their influence in shaping social reality. Moscovici (1981) sees social psychology as a science of our own culture and holds the view that it should be the anthropology of our modern world.

To Gergen (1973) social psychology is historical. Being a historical phenomenon is yet another challenge to experimentation as an appropriate method for studying social psychology. On both sides of the Atlantic behaviourism was, and still is, overwhelmingly privileged as the most popular theory justifying the dominance of experimentation over other methods. This dominance took the form of what Merton called ritualism, described by Farr (1993a) as the situation in which methodology becomes methodolatry. With the power of English over other languages in research, behaviourism could be described as representing absolute hegemony! Given all these limitations, behaviourism has, to some extent, left social psychology disarmed, disabled, and impoverished. It narrowed the scope of the social in social psychology, and left some areas of social research out of the reach of social psychologists.

It is probably the continuing saga of developing an appropriate method of social research that has led Marková (1982) to take the issue back to its roots and to revive Hegel as opposed to Descartes. Behaviourism is based on the Cartesian paradigm and the former gave birth to experimentation. Marková represented Hegelianism as an antidote to Cartesianism. The Hegelian paradigm, obviously, favours a more socially orientated methodological approach in social research. The assumption underlying Marková's work is that a paradigm carries within it its own method. This is what Kuhn (1962) and Farr (1993a) emphasized by asserting that adopting a paradigm implies both theoretical and methodological commitments.

The Hegelian paradigm emphasizes the historical and contextual nature of social phenomena. The formation of a social phenomenon in the light of the Hegelian paradigm is a product of the dialectical nature of entities. An individual, to Hegel, is both an entity and a product of other entities. He or she is that mixture of percepts, cognitions, beliefs, and emotions which are common to a community and also a single entity within his or her community. The formation of social phenomena is achieved

through the individual's activity and through his or her participation in the wider culture (Purkhardt 1990). Hegelianism is also, in a sense, a genetic (i.e. developmental) approach to the the study of social phenomena. Time and therefore, also history, are important in the Hegelian but not in the Cartesian paradigm.

A socially oriented methodology stemming from the Hegelian paradigm, is potentially a complement to, if not a substitute for the experimental approach. Further effort is needed to assist it take shape. Once it has taken shape it would benefit research in social psychology considerably. Douglas (1980) in her study of Evans-Pritchard, described British psychologists as failing to develop a sociological dimension to their thinking whereas their French counterparts failed to benefit from the methodological advances of the British. With this gap in sight, a combination of the English and French traditions probably constitute a promising bridge.

## **5.2. Social Representations and Social Psychological Research Methods**

If there is one thing in common between academe and the Church it can only be the incontrovertible conviction of both in their respective methods and procedures leading respectively to scientific and theological conclusions. Consequently, academics stick so rigidly to these orthodoxies that they help, in some cases, to perpetuate the obsolete theories of yesteryear (Farr 1993a). In so doing they not only write off the possibility of developing new methods necessary for the furtherance and updating of our scientific knowledge but, even worse, they imprison new scientific theory within the fences of pre-existing methods. The same old wine in a new bottle will not necessarily inspire an appreciation of the original contents, and therefore narrows the scope of investigation.

Social psychology as mentioned earlier in this chapter is, no doubt, one of the areas of research that suffered from being a branch of psychology. This is generally true of psychological forms of social psychology. Conceived of as a natural science,

psychology was the object of the overused method of experimentation. This was, and still is, true of its offshoot social psychology. The overuse of experimentation has left social psychology, to a great extent, void of any social content. Fortunately there are also sociological forms of social psychology which are not so impoverished because they developed under the blanket of sociology.

The remark above is by no means a new one. Social psychologists like Gergen (1973), Elms (1975), and Rosnow (1981) have observed earlier the crisis in social psychology. To them this crisis has been one of theoretical paradigms, categorization and methodologies. The crisis was, and still is, more apparent in the Anglo-Saxon world where social psychologists show unquestionable loyalty to experimentation. This, perhaps, might have been the reason why social representations developed as a theory outside of the Anglo-Saxon world.

In the French-speaking world, and particularly in France, the notion of a social social science was embraced. This notion has given way to the emergence of social representations as a new field of study. Late last century Durkheim created the study of collective representations as part of the sociological tradition of research. His conception of collective representations, according to Moscovici, is static as opposed to the dynamism of social representations:

*The social representations with which I am concerned are neither those of primitive societies, nor are they survivals in the sub-soil of our culture, from prehistoric times. Those are of our current society, of our political, scientific, human soil, which have not always enough time to allow the proper sedimentation to become immutable traditions.*  
(Moscovici 1963, p.18).

The study of social representations is a new research tradition in social psychology with a clear-cut social nature. The theory of social representations is a sociological form of social psychology. Social representations are a product of both experience and culture,

and this fact separates them from social phenomena that can be studied in a laboratory.

The phenomenon of social representations takes shape and changes through a dynamic process on a day to day basis. It is understandable that a new theory, which is apparently based on assumptions other than existing ones, requires the development of new methods as well. Some social psychologists argue, in essence, against the existence of a method independent from a theory. This is in agreement with Farr who attributes to positivism the conception that methods, in regard to theory, assume a neutral nature:

*It is the myth of positivism, as a philosophy of science, that methods of research are neutral with respect to theory; it is crucial that there should be a suitable match between theory and method.*

*(Farr 1993a, p.18)*

Our assertion that social representations are different from the sorts of phenomena studied in the laboratory, should not broker the meaning that researchers of social representations do not use experimentation as a methodological tool. Various methods have been used by researchers of social representations ever since the theory was introduced as part of a package of social psychological phenomena. Nevertheless, each method has its limitations as well as its merits. Later studies have advocated the introduction of a multi-methods approach that comprises a blend of methods, (Flick 1992).

Amongst the studies already conducted in social representations the set of methodological approaches used include; experimentation, in-depth interviewing, questionnaires, content analyses of the mass media of communication, participant observation, opinion polls, analyses of documents, and multi-dimensional scaling. They were used either in the form of a single method or as part of a multi-methods

approach. The following section highlights the methodological approaches that are commonly used in the study of social representations.

### **5.2.1 Experimental Method**

Some researchers who study social representations use experimentation as a methodological tool. But the laboratory experiment when used to investigate different aspects of social representations has always been criticised on account of the artificial environment within which it is conducted. Nevertheless, some social psychologists have expressed their support for the use of experimentation to study social representations in one way or another. For instance, Farr (1993a), though not objecting categorically to the use of experimentation, sees that social representations cannot be studied exclusively in the laboratory. Marková (1982) has also admitted the use of experimentation as a methodological tool for studying social representations but in a new theoretical framework. For a laboratory experiment to be acceptable in some form as a research method in a Hegelian framework (i.e. a social social psychology), Marková claims, it should be based on Hegelian assumptions. Regardless of these limitations experimentation has already been employed to investigate social representations. In Aix-en-Provence, Codol (1984) and Abric (1984 & 1986) employed this very method in studies which were described by Farr (1987) as constituting an important contribution to the methodology of research in the social sciences.

In the light of what is said against experimentation there is also something that can be said in its favour. In a laboratory setting whatever findings an experimenter comes out with as social representations, they are indicators of the existence of a sort of social representation. For representations to be labelled social is the function of the number of individuals who carry them. One of those holding such an opinion is Codol (1984) who asserted that representations may be termed social less on account of whether their

foundations are individual or group than because they are worked out during the process of exchange and interaction.

There is little or nothing an experimenter can create in the cognition of his subjects that they did not originally possess. A laboratory experiment might not reflect the extent to which a representation is embeded within a community of other cognitions. However, although a laboratory environment differs from the one in real life, it cannot generate an absolutely non-existent representation. The use of experimentation should not be favoured because:

*Despite the limitations associated with the experimental paradigm, experiments do have their place in social representations research for they provide an analysis quite unlike other methods suggested by Moscovici. We would be wrong to dismiss a methodology which has been extensively developed and utilized and, in some circles, is the envy of other social sciences.*

*(Purkhardt 1990, p.81)*

It should be favoured because it has got something to offer in the study of social representations. As an integral part of the theory of social representations, the theory of minority influence rests almost wholly on experimental studies. Thus, experimental method has a complementary role together with other methods in the context of a multi-methods approach.

### **5.2.2. Content Analysis of the Media**

Content analysis of the mass media of communication is a common method used in social psychological research by those studying social representations. It was first used by sociologists in America many decades ago.

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications (Berelson 1952). It is seen as a collection of techniques for providing interpretations of texts and similar products. For investigating social representations, content analysis of the media, of in-depth

interviews and of research documents, is a proven method. It has been particularly popular amongst French-speaking researchers in social representations. As early as 1961 Moscovici employed content analysis for the investigation of the social representations of psycho-analysis in a total of 253 different journals, magazines and newspapers. And so did Chombart de Lauwe ten years later in search of social representations of the child in her study *Un monde autre* (Farr 1993a).

The justification for using content analyses in studying social representations is two-fold. First as Farr (1989) observed, stereotypes are to be found in the media as well as in people's minds. The media, especially the newspapers, with their regular appearance enjoy a much closer relation to the oral culture of the masses in the street. That is because they are a reflection of the everyday concerns of the masses. A successful and popular newspaper is one whose task is to mirror the concerns of its community of readers with all the complexities contained therein. Given this characteristic, the representations to be found in the media tend to be less artificial than those expressed in interviews. They are, at least, articulate and being public they are also shared. The tabloid press, in particular, attempt to convert social representations into collective ones.

The very nature of the media makes them a fairly rich source for investigating social representations. Secondly, content analysis of the media (as opposed to methods seeking social representations through direct contact with people) investigates non-reactive data (Webb et al 1966). The merit the method of content analysis has over the others mentioned above is that people often behave differently when they become aware that they are the objects of interest to the investigator (Webb et al 1966). Meanwhile the frequent appearance of the press, mostly on a daily basis, does not allow journalists much time to formalise their language and the substance of their representations. This is probably the reason why the press is often criticized for displaying or reporting hastily prepared portrayals and images of the events they cover. The word stereotype comes, originally, from the print media.

On this point, little or no difference between social representations in the media and those elicited from the utterances of people seems to exist. Another area of research where content analysis of the media is exceptionally useful is in the study of the transformation of social representations. A content analysis of the press spanning a relatively long period of time might, perhaps, enable the researcher to explore the transformation of social representations over that period of time.

### **5.2.3. Questionnaires**

Unlike the aforementioned methods, the questionnaire is a research method of only limited use in the study of social representations. It is similar to the interview in that both seek to elicit social representations from the informants' answers to the questions of the researcher. But interviews are more applicable to social representations because they are much less structured than questionnaires. Although the questionnaire is used in the study of social representations, its main weakness lies in the fact that it is usually of a highly structured nature. Attempts to avoid such a limitation include the use of open ended questionnaires. Nevertheless the researcher is under the risk of missing an opportunity to elicit representations arising from the answers of the informant. In a face to face interview such a risk is minimal.

A questionnaire seems to share a common characteristic with the laboratory experiment. That is the limitation imposed by the artificiality of the setting in the case of the latter and by the pre-structured nature of the former. While the subject in the experiment is imprisoned within the walls of the laboratory, the respondent to a questionnaire is hedged in by the fences of structured questions. An open-ended questionnaire, which is more like a semi-structured interview is a possible answer.

Questionnaires could be used in the preparatory stages of research in the form of pilot studies. A questionnaire thus, assists the researcher to visualize the possible areas and themes where representations might be dwelling. Oddly enough, research practice is usually the reverse of this - the open-ended social representational type of interview usually precedes the development of a highly structured questionnaire.

#### **5.2.4. Interviewing**

An interview is a social interaction, and essentially a technique or method for establishing or discovering that there are perspectives or viewpoints on events other than those of the person initiating the interview (Farr 1984). It is a fairly common technique of social research.

A widely known study of social representations where interviewing was used is Herzlich's *Health and Illness: A social psychological analysis* (Herzlich 1973). In her study, Herzlich selected the open-ended interview as a single, and certainly most appropriate, method for collecting data. Interviews, like questionnaires, could be criticized for heavily influencing the interviewee's accounts by the presence and strategy of the interviewer. But an interview is different from a questionnaire in more ways than one. First, because of its open-ended structure and second, being a face-to-face encounter it allows the keen interviewer to build on the interviewee's accounts for a more elaborated investigation of social representations. If the first point is conducive to the elicitation of all the representations an interviewee affords to make, the latter safeguards the accounts of the interviewee against being influenced by the accounts of the interviewer in the way that a questionnaire does not. On Herzlich's study referred to above, Farr noticed that:

*Herzlich's use of the open ended interview helped to ensure that her own representations of health and illness in no way constrained those of her informants. Instead the accounts that she elicited were structured by what her informants thought of themselves.*

*(Farr 1993a, p.30)*

Although it is a popular research method amongst those studying social representations, the interview, too, has its limitations. An interview is a 'one man/woman show' as a typical interview can hardly be conducted by people other than the one who did the job first. Individual differences between interviewers mean the job is done differently by different interviewers. Sample size is yet another limitation. However long the period for conducting a particular piece of research is, a single researcher cannot interview a large number of interviewees. It is a highly labour intensive method of research. In research on social representations a larger sample seems to be an advantage. Although samples tend to be quite small in relation to surveys, opinion polls etc., the larger a sample is the more the social in social representations is confirmed.

#### **5.2.5. Participant Observation**

By the introduction of a participant observation technique to social psychological research, psychology has come closer to anthropology and to sociology as well. Participant observation seeks to uncover, to make more accessible, the meanings for people of their everyday lives (Jorgensen 1989). A participant observer is a member of the community whose interactions and behaviour are being observed. It is different from observational studies in the laboratory in the sense that it is not detached from its social and cultural environment. Yet for social psychologists like Farr (1993a), participant observation has always been used by psychologists without their having recognized it. He saw the experimenter in a laboratory setting as both a participant and an observer. Hence many of the artifacts in experimenting are of a social nature because an inherently social situation is construed as though it were not social.

Participant observation, as it has been used in social representations research, is meant to, or has actually led to, the transfer of research from artificial or semi-natural settings to natural settings. It allows the researcher a broader observational scope as opposed to

the interview, for instance. In social research where the experimental method usually alienates its research topic from its home environment a participant observational method can be the alternative which enables the researcher to conduct his/her study in a context that is indigenous to the topic of the research. Furthermore, within a participant observational context a variety of elements including verbal pronouncements and behaviour, work jointly to produce and confirm representations.

Similar to participant observation in this respect is discourse analysis which has recently entered the already existing package of socio-psychological methods of research. Taking into consideration all the confusion enshrined in a new term, discourse analysis, in its most open sense, is the analysis of all forms of discourse including both spoken interaction (formal and informal) and written texts of all kinds (Potter and Wetherell 1987). Given this broad definition, what is common to discourse analysis and participant observation is the use of discourse, within a social context, as data for analysis. It also encompasses analyses of the contents of the mass media of communication.

Nevertheless, participant observation is, probably, not cost-effective in terms of the relatively long period of time usually taken to complete a study employing it. Jodelet's study on social representations of mental illness (Jodelet 1989) is a good example of this. It took Jodelet a couple of decades to complete this study from the position of a close participant observer. Two factors are keenly considered in today's research community: the maximum validity of the research together with the minimum expense in terms both of time and money. The latter is one reason why participant observation is so rarely used in the study of social representations (Purkhardt 1990). The involvement of the researcher as a participant in the research process, though placing him or her at the centre of the process where social representations form and transform, might, as well, serve as yet another limitation. A participant observer is more exposed to the

charge of a lack of objectivity than when a considerable distance is maintained between him and the subject of his research.

#### **5.2.6. Group Discussion**

Group discussion is probably the least popular amongst methods of research used in the study of social representations. This might only be because it has not yet been sufficiently developed. Group discussion is distinctly part and parcel of the methods that could be used to effectively explore social representations. Earlier, Moscovici (1963) defined social representations as the elaboration of a social object by the community for the purpose of behaving and communicating. To elaborate on an object is to make it more familiar through a process of conversation and discussion. For communities where direct contact is the main means of social interaction, group discussion is the natural forum in which social representations are formed. It is different from interviewing in that the group, rather than the individual, is the unit of analysis (Tafoya and Farr 1992). It is also different from opinion polling because it is in one way like an open-ended questionnaire where argumentation supporting one's opinion is allowed. Group discussion is also a form of participant observation. As in the laboratory experiment, the researcher participates in an on-going process by creating the frame of reference within which representations take shape. Until recently, there were just a few social representational studies which used group discussion. An early example is Aebischer's study of women's gossip (Aebischer 1985). However, it is now becoming gradually more popular.

Group discussion is a natural context in which social representations form and circulate. It could be criticized for being a laboratory-like setting but the groups involved are usually natural rather than artificial. The strategy which is becoming increasingly popular amongst researchers in social representations today, for validating the results of an investigation and for better understanding the complexity of social representations, is

the use of a multi-methods approach. Within such a global strategy group discussion is of central importance for research in social representations.

#### **5.2.6. The Multi-Methods Approach**

Like any new theory, social representations challenged past methods and theories in social psychology. Moscovici (1963) dismissed the concepts of public opinion and image as being purely descriptive and static. He emphasized the importance of employing methods and theoretical approaches other than those then in use to understand the impact on the public of the spread of scientific and technological knowledge.

In spite of the fact that Moscovici mentioned the need to introduce new methods, he did not take the trouble to specify which methods to use in the study of social representations. With the link between theory and methods being a frequent issue of debate within the community of scientists (Farr 1993a), researchers endeavoured ceaselessly to adopt appropriate methods for studying social representations. As indicated earlier in this chapter, some researchers chose to paint a new veneer on the same old ideas; others by reviewing the literature recirculated some forgotten methods and thought; yet others thought in a more radical way that a new paradigm requires the invention of new methods.

When the issue is one of method, there is no single royal road to the study of social representations (Farr 1993a). This is why recently, the notion of a multi-method approach to the study of social representations was introduced (Flick 1992). There is no doubt that the use of a multi-method approach is gaining support among researchers in social representations. Flick (1992) advocates the use of a multi-methodological approach as an alternative to the dominant single royal road approach. Earlier, French social psychologists like Moscovici (1961) and Jodelet (1989) laid the foundations of this approach. Verges (1987) and Purkhardt and Stockdale (1993) echoed the French

call later. Verges cited that an opinion poll, a scale of attitudes or a life history cannot stand alone as the only method of collecting the necessary information. He called for the incorporation of a set of methods for the collection of information as a single method can only be partially useful for the study of a representation. For Purkhardt and Stockdale any single method of research used to describe or to represent a complex social phenomenon encompasses associated limitations and biases. The objective of Flick in employing a set of methods in the same study was to realise a further and much more in-depth understanding of social representations.

Flick (1992) challenged the novelty of the notion of a multi-methodological approach and, amongst its other uses, he proclaimed that it had been used earlier under the label of triangulation. By triangulation Denzin (1978) meant the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon for the sake of validation (Flick 1992). Flick acknowledged that Denzin, in a later development, qualified his position on the objective of triangulation. There, Denzin ended with triangulation (multi-methods approach) as a device for furthering understanding rather than as a statistical device for checking the results reached through the employment of statistical tests.

The employment of the multi-methods approach in the study of social representations can enable researchers to achieve both a validation of the results arrived at and a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. Validation is arrived at, in this case, by employing more than one method for investigating the same element of a representation (e.g. an attitude). Something like this is found in Jodelet's study of the social representations of mental illness when she used interviewing and analysis of documents (Jodelet 1989). On the other hand, a comprehensive perception of the phenomenon could be achieved by the employment, in the same way, of more than one method for grasping more than one element of a representation (e.g. images and their implications). The latter is also found in Jodelet's study (mentioned above) where participant observation was used in addition to interviewing and the analysis of

documents. Participant observation was a methodological device through which Jodelet was able to observe the implications of the cognitive components of representations in real life social milieux.

### **5.3. Methodological Design: Theory and application**

This study is about the social representations of Islam in the West. In this respect, Islam is dealt with as a cultural other. The smaller and more precise focus of this study is the social representations of Islam in Britain. In addition to the review of both the theoretical and historical aspects of the topic in question, three empirical studies are conducted. These are: (a) a participant observational study of some members of the British security forces, (b) a content analysis of the press, and (c) group discussions contributed by members of the public.

The interaction between the West and Islam goes back many centuries (see chapters two and three). This interaction took a variety of forms ranging from the military expansion of the one into the other, missionary activities in both directions, colonialism, academic and economic interests, up to coverage in the mass media. It has always been a mixture of dialogue and of hostility, and it has never ceased to develop in either the one direction or the other.

In fact, the study of the interaction between the West and Islam is nothing novel, nor is this study intended to be extraordinarily exceptional in this sphere. A sizeable number of studies focussing on Western perceptions of Islam have been conducted. But most of them do not fall within the theoretical, nor the methodological context of the theory of social representations. With such a large issue one is faced with the question of how to begin. As Said once observed:

*The idea of begining, indeed the act of begining, necessarily involves an act of delimitation by which something is cut out of a great mass of material, separated from the mass, and made to stand for, as well as be, a starting point, a beginning.*  
(Said 1978, p.16).

With the question of beginnings and delimitations in mind, the intention is to focus this study on a recent period of interaction between Islam and the West. It is the period that spans from the early 1970s to the present day. There are various reasons for limiting the study to this particular segment of time: it is the period during which the Muslim world has been perceived by the West as being immensely relevant and antipathetically troubled, and problematic (Said 1981). This perception was determined by a series of events. To mention a few, there was the oil crisis in 1974, following the 1973 war between the Arabs and Israel, the Iranian Revolution, together with the resurgence of Islam throughout the Muslim world and, to a lesser extent, in the West.

Later, towards the end of the 1980s and the start of the 1990s this Islamic resurgence intensified, realizing a greater influence on the relations between the West and Islam both by way of dialogue and by way of hostility, with the latter sentiment more frequently occupying centre stage. On the wider world scene, the beginning of the 1990s witnessed the end of the Cold War with the entire collapse of the Communist bloc. This has ended up with a uni-polar world order under the indisputable leadership of the West. In this post-Cold War world the West has, many theorists tend to believe, sought a new enemy. Islam, the theory goes unchallenged, is a front-runner.

This last quarter of the century has seen the Muslim world on the boil from Morocco at the western extremity through to Indonesia and the Central Asian Republics of the ex-Soviet Union in the east. An uprising in Palestine led by Islamists, and believed to have been one factor why a Middle Eastern peace process became operational, represented a new Islamically-motivated threat to Israel. In Algeria, aborted election results hindered the Algerian Islamists from an imminent parliamentary victory. The Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union have pulled out of the Union seeking self-

autonomy. The Western troops were deployed in the very heart of the Muslim world in the second Gulf War ostensibly to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, but perhaps, at the same time, to wield a big stick in the face of a disturbingly resurgent Islam. Inside the West, another manifestation of the confrontation was the mass action by Muslims in the West who took to the streets, in the late eighties protesting over the publication in Britain of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Last, but not least, the bloody events in Bosnia, have raised the spectre of a resurgent Islam within a European context.

In the West, these events stimulated a wide range of academic and political comment, received extensive media coverage, and intensified the presence of Islam among the indigenous communities. Crises provide ample material for the augmentation and transformation of representations, and the present is such a time of crisis.

In considering this extended account the main objective of this study is to explore what the representations of Islam are in this time span and to ascertain whether or not they persist. The data one is strictly restricted to analyzing and dealing with comprise media coverage, a personal experience, and group discussions all taking place within the time frame from 1988 to 1995. With respect to geographical coverage the study is confined to Britain, on the assumption that it is a leading force within Europe, and within the West in general, in dealing with Islam and therefore, such a study may help to clarify the phenomenon under investigation.

One more aspect to be mentioned, apart from the personal incident that compelled the researcher to embark on this study, is the researcher's status as a Muslim academic temporarily resident in the West. This is yet another factor that increases the temptation to conduct this particular study. This personal element may result in a biased study but with every possible methodological precaution taken to avoid such a bias, the researcher's cultural background as a Muslim scholar living for some time in the West, might enable him to distinguish what is representation from what is reality.

### **5.3.1. Methods and Procedure: Application**

Three main methods are used in this study: participant observation, content analysis of the press and discussion groups. A general description of these methods and how they are used in the investigation of social representations was made earlier in this chapter. Moreover, in each of the three empirical chapters a full description of the method and procedures involved will be provided. The employment of these three methods is an attempt to reach, through a multi-methods approach, a maximum degree of validity for the results of the investigation as well as to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This is because reliance on a single method usually encompasses clear limitations and shortcomings.

**Participant Observation** is particularly useful in giving access to settings that are not usually in the public domain. In the present case, as explained above, it contains the operation of the UK security forces in an international context relevant to the object of study in the present research. The data to which we had access would not normally have been accessible to a social scientist.

In the interrogation, the researcher was the person interrogated. Nevertheless the content of the transcript (Appendix i) adequately covers the areas of interest the researcher himself would have chosen had he been the interrogator. As an observer the researcher is in a position to read the text within the context within which it was constructed. Texts, as Said (1978) noticed, exist within contexts. This context stretches back to the time when the researcher was arrested and forward to the time when he was released (see chapter six). The general atmosphere with respect to Islam in the West at the time of the researcher's arrest is also part and parcel of this very context. It was conceived of as one of heightened international terrorism.

The transcript was prepared at the time by a 'true' participant observer i.e. the legal clerk who was present during the interrogations. The researcher has chosen to make this document public to provide the reader with an independent account of the sequence of events described and commented upon in chapter six.

To analyze the interrogation document the general atmosphere characterizing the interactions between the West and Islam at that time will be, at first, identified and described. As the interrogation is centred on two allegations: one about Islamic fundamentalism and the other about terrorism, the review of the atmosphere will highlight, particularly, the extent to which the two items prevail in the West with respect to Islam. The fundamentalism that is such an integral part of the West's representation of Islam is linked to fanaticism and to terrorism.

A general survey of the transcript will be made to identify instances where representations of Islam are made. As in the next chapters on content analysis of the media and group discussion, such pronouncements become the topics for analysis.

**Content Analysis** is employed to explore social representations of Islam in a selected sample of British national newspapers. The sample selected comprises four dailies: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, and the weekly: *The Observer*. Two tabloid newspapers: *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror* and two middle-sized ones: *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Mail* are also included in the sample. As explained above, the section of these newspapers surveyed is letters to the editor. The letters reflect the views of respondents to the Muslim campaign of protest against the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The campaign began soon after the publication of the book late in 1988 and continued vigorously for more than a year thereafter. Letters written during a twelve-month period, from the first of January to the end of December 1989, are surveyed and content-analysed.

Phase two of the content analysis involves the quantitative enumeration and analysis of the collected items by date of publication and by newspaper.

A third phase of the analysis follows a more thematic order. All the items selected in phase two are sorted according to the topics they cover. This phase is based on a coding manual formed of items finally determined through a pilot coding manual. The pilot coding manual determines which themes are relevant, which should be grouped together, and which can be discarded. This phase is intended to provide us with a range of themes forming the substance of representational framework.

A fourth and final phase will be based on a selected sample from the data organized in the order shown in the previous phase. This is a shift from random sampling to thematic sampling. The finally selected sample will not be made according to the time of occurrence but with respect to the theme it entails.

**Group Discussion** is employed by inviting five 'family size' groups representing different undergraduates, postgraduates, technicians, librarians and secretaries at the London School of Economics and Political Science. All are non-Muslim British citizens.

As mentioned earlier, discussion groups represent an important setting for the formation of opinion. A discussion group is a thinking society in miniature, it is rather like a melting pot where opinions are voiced and take shape. Although group discussion is not yet widely used in the study of social representations, it does have potential as a promising research method in this area.

The topic for discussion is what Islam means to the participants. It is intended that intervention by the researcher (who serves as a moderator to the discussion as well) will be limited to the minimum possible. This is to avoid influencing the discussion one way

or another. A strong belief exists that data collected through such a technique are valuable in their own right.

The proceedings of the discussions are audio-recorded and then transcribed. The analysis of the data in this empirical study is based on this transcript. The data of each group are sorted on a thematic basis similar to the one described in chapter five. Finally, a comparative analysis of the representations of the different groups is made.

The methods applied in the three studies comprising the empirical part of the present thesis are used to ensure the validity of the findings. As the topic of the research is the same in each empirical study, the employment of three methods may enable us verify the validity of such findings. The final chapter explores the inter-relationships between the three empirical studies and other related comments on the entire thesis.

## Chapter Six

### **The Social Construction of a Terrorist: How Islam is represented by some members of the security forces in Britain**

This is the first of three chapters forming the empirical studies conducted as part of this thesis. The intention behind three empirical studies is not only to yield three different sets of data, but to do so using three different methods of research. The use of a multi-method approach in research on social representations serves, as explained in the previous chapter, a number of purposes aimed at the verification of the research results (Sotirakopoulou and Breakwell 1992).

The data relate to an incident which took place five years ago<sup>1</sup>. Following enrolment at the LSE's Department of Social Psychology the researcher's initial decision was to conduct a comparative doctoral research on political behaviour with Sudan (researcher's country) and Britain as case studies. As explained later in this chapter, an encounter with the British security establishment led directly to changes in the scope of the proposed study. A crucial factor in what appears to have precipitated the suspicion of the security forces that the researcher was a 'terrorist' was, perhaps, the representation of the researcher as a Muslim fundamentalist.

Nine long weeks which I spent in a cell in a high security police station and a prison in London provided me with sufficient time to rethink my research priorities. Those days witnessed, among other happenings, the ending of the Gulf War which sparked off a tense atmosphere in relations between the West and Islamist movements - an atmosphere which eventually resulted in increased mutual animosities between the two parties. Then, Western hostages held for some years in Beirut were released from unknown detention sites. Shortly thereafter, violence erupted in Algeria

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter is a personal account of events surrounding the detention of the researcher by security men from Scotland Yard, as such, much of the study is related in the first person.

following a seizure of power from the Islamic Salvation Front after their electoral victory, allegedly on the grounds that if the Front came to power it would pose a threat to democracy.

Under such circumstances it appeared both timely and worthwhile to conduct research on the way in which Islam is represented in the West. More incentive came from the fact that Western academe has, for a long time now, developed its own research tradition of Orientalism which is dedicated to a representation of the Orient by the West for the West (Said 1978) and, for several complex reasons, for the rest of the world. Although some voices in the Muslim world have recently been heard calling for a research tradition aimed at exploring representations of the West in the East, it is still too early to say whether or not this goal will materialise. As an 'oriental subject' and a Muslim, I hope this research represents a modest contribution in initiating a new research tradition.

## **6.1. Some Methodological Issues**

Though it raises some methodological issues, the uniqueness of the data analysed in this chapter is beyond question. Many studies in the field of social psychology, and of social representations in particular, tend to play safe by analysing data that are already at hand. As a result, areas of research where the collection of data involves high risk, high cost, or even a challenge to the status quo remain out of reach. Although the data analysed in this chapter became available by sheer coincidence, they come from one of the rarest sources of data in social research. These data are from the records of Scotland Yard's Special Branch (SYSB).

The data under analysis comprise an interrogation (Appendix 1) conducted by two SYSB officers with the researcher five years ago. It is understandable that the

interrogators were supported by a network of researchers, translators, and advisors all working behind the scenes. A record of the interrogation was taken in writing by a third person who was introduced to me as a Legal Aid solicitor. The SYSB officers had their own copy of the transcript. After each session, a brief scanning of each of the two transcripts was made and my approval of it as a correct record was recorded on cassette. The copy of the transcript I am using here was made available to me by the solicitor appointed by the London School of Economics after I decided to challenge the order of deportation (mentioned later in this chapter). The transcript is included here so that the reader (and my examiners) have access to an account of the interrogation which is independent of my own account.

It is misleading, perhaps, to describe it (the interrogation document) as a transcript because it was not a transcript of the actual interrogation. These tapes were never made available to the suspect or his legal representative. It is an agreed account of the topics covered in each of the interrogation sessions. It is not the sort of verbatim transcript that a discourse analyst might work with. It is more impoverished than that, though it is a unique and historically interesting document.

Another document (Appendix ii) analysed in the course of this chapter is the statement issued by the Home Office (HO) explaining the reasons for my deportation. One further document (Appendix iii) analysed here is a correspondence from my solicitor after a long phone call she had with one of the officers handling my case. In this correspondence, the officer revealed to her aspects of his own and his colleagues views on the case. I also use a complete record of the case which I compiled personally. This corpus of data comprises the context within which relevant texts are to be read.

Although at the time unaware that the case could become a possible topic of study for my research, I was in the 'fortunate' position of being a participant observer: a participant within the small community of the SYSB. There, I was actively participating in a process intended to establish some facts leading to a conviction for planning an act of terrorism. I was also an observer on the other hand, actively observing the scenario of the construction of an alleged terrorist.

My role as a participant observer in this study is similar to that played by Jodelet in her study: *Folies et Représentaions Sociales* (Jodelet 1989). It is also similar to the roles of the participant observers in Festinger et al's study *When Prophecy Fails*, (Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter, 1964). In the latter case, the researchers actually joined a messianic sect predicting the end of the world. I found particularly useful the methodological appendix in which they discuss the problems of being a participant observer.

Apart from the analysis of the interrogation document, as part of the role of the participant observer, I intend also to highlight and critically examine the series of events relating to the initial representation by the SYSB of myself as a terrorist. Included in this was their search for any possible evidence among my belongings; their insistence on deporting me despite the absence of any evidence of involvement in terrorist activity; the long period I spent in jail without being granted the right of bail and the sensitivity of the media in covering the case. This mix of security, legal, and political combinations are all part and parcel of the process of seeking to confirm an already constructed social identity of an Islamic fundamentalist terrorist.

The systematic analysis of the interrogation document itself is carried out along thematic lines. In so doing, each relevant theme in the document will be examined against the overall background of the case.

Some questions might be raised concerning the representativeness and the objectivity of such a study. Firstly, it might be argued that this single case cannot be used to study the social representation of a suspect terrorist held by an institution as large as the SYSB. That argument would make sense if the officers of the SYSB acted according to their own particular conceptions and understanding. But it is highly unlikely that any institution, especially a security institution, develops its own conceptions and understanding. Such an institution, arguably, develops a common mind or a consensus shared by almost all its members. For this reason it may be surmised that the SYSB representations of Islam appearing in this study represent those of the institution and not just those of the officers encharged with my particular case.

Secondly, with the researcher himself accused of terrorism, it could also be argued that the analysis of the data about the whole case can scarcely be objective. In return, I must agree that in such a research context one can hardly avoid being less than fully objective. Nevertheless I am keen to counter such a tendency as far as I can. The main guarantee that my account is not an entirely subjective one is the transcript of the proceedings produced by the legal clerk which is reproduced for the reader as Appendix i. The employment of a research method i.e. participant observation, that is widely accepted and used in social research is one more device to limit subjectivity. As far as the reader of this thesis is concerned, there are two observers - namely, myself and the legal clerk. However, the reader is advised to read appendices i, ii and iii even before reading this chapter. They are produced in the thesis so that readers may have independent access to an account of what happened.

## 6.2. A Suspect Terrorist's Criminal Record

The case investigated in this chapter goes back to Thursday, July 25 1991, when a friend (Mr Mat) and I were visiting an acquaintance in his flat in West London. Our host, Mr Abim, is a high-ranking Sudanese official who had recently arrived in London on an unofficial visit, and our visit was pre-arranged. Ours was essentially a courtesy call, but we thought of having a conversation about the current political situation in Sudan in addition to other related matters.

We arrived at Mr Abim's flat at about 7.15pm. He was in the business of receiving us when the whole atmosphere suddenly changed. All at once, we were completely surrounded by armed men in uniforms. Our stunned silence was broken by an order from one of the team to stand up, he was pointing to my friend and myself. "This man is in danger and therefore, we want to search you," he said. As the mystery unravelled, we became aware that the men in uniform were from Scotland Yard's Special Branch.

Mr Mat and I were carefully and comprehensively searched from head to toe. Mr Mat was released because he had diplomatic immunity. A day later, Mr Mat's boss (Sudan's ambassador to London) was summoned to the Foreign Office where he was subjected to a strong protest by HM Government against allegedly illegal activities on the part of a junior diplomat. The ambassador was also told that if this diplomat did not refrain from such activities in the future, he might be dealt with as a *persona non grata*.

Accompanied by four officers, I was driven to Paddington Green High Security Police Station. Immediately upon my arrival I was taken to Interview Room (1) where I answered a list of background questions such as my name, date and place of birth, nationality, type of stay in Britain and address. During this time I was clearly

instructed not to move and when I was asked to sit I was told to seat myself in a certain manner.

Eventually, I was given a reason for my detention. "Mr Haroun, you are here because you are a suspect under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)," an officer told me. "This means that you are accused of preparing, instigating, or committing an act of terrorism," he added. Asked to stand up again, two officers carried out another comprehensive round of searching my person - again from head to toe. Photographs were taken and finger prints obtained to furnish a record of the suspect terrorist with its basic requirements. I was also given new clothes to change into since the old ones were required for forensic evidence. I was taken to cell (12) and this is where I stayed for the next eight days. A senior officer presented me with a Qur'an - an early indication of what was taking place in the minds of my self-imposed hosts? Meanwhile, my flat was raided by the police and thoroughly searched. A lot of seemingly irrelevant belongings were taken away - some of which became topics of an elaborate discussion in the course of the interrogation.

Friday, July 26 1991 opened with an interrogation which started after breakfast. The interrogation was conducted by two SYSB officers. A third man was introduced to me as a legal adviser from Legal Aid whose task, I was told, was to advise me on legal affairs. It goes without saying that he was recruited (and presumably paid) by my interrogators. The interrogation lasted a total of twenty hours spread over three days. Each day we had 3-4 sessions lasting over two hours each. One of the two officers asked the questions while the other took down in writing the details of the interrogation.

As can be deduced from the text of the interrogation, as well as from making reasonable inferences, there seem to be two underlying hypotheses on which the interrogation was based:

1. The interrogated is a Muslim fundamentalist with an established connection with the Muslim fundamentalist government in Sudan.
2. He was involved in a terrorist plot to assassinate the visiting official.

In accordance with these hypotheses the interrogation was, arguably, an attempt to construct the image of a terrorist. My interrogators had a frame (Goffman 1974) both in regard to Islamic fundamentalism and in regard to terrorism - and I was placed in both frames. Their representation of Islamic fundamentalism provided the motive for committing terrorist acts.

Detailed questioning over a long period of time did not sway the men from their insistence that I was, truly, a terrorist. The officers were so obsessed with transforming the myth into a reality that, despite the absence of any evidence, they sought to have me deported on the grounds of my being up to no good at the time.

However, I insisted on challenging such a representation as it had legal, as well as, social implications for my future. The legal implications included my not being allowed to return to any of the European Union countries and most likely, being excluded from visiting the USA. My acceptance of deportation would be interpreted by the authorities and by members of the public as well, as an admission of guilt. Not once did the security men admit their failure to label me as a terrorist. They kept searching for evidence of guilt. The new allegation was one of being involved in

espionage on my fellow students. Again it was centred on a presumption of terrorism, inspired by a conviction of my being an Islamic fundamentalist.

The appeal procedures included making a representation in person before a committee formed of three judges; three friends were allowed to give testimonies on my behalf. A solicitor was allowed to assist me in preparing my case but not allowed to represent me before the committee. With her assistance, a bundle of documents totalling 188 pages was made available to the committee in advance of the meeting. The meeting (whose recommendation is not binding on the Home Secretary) was convened on September 24 1991 in the Home Office's main building in London (St Anne's Gate). This appeal procedure was similar to ones set up in the UK during the Gulf War to handle the appeals of Iraqi and other Arab citizens who were issued with similar deportation orders to mine. Waiting for the tribunal to convene, I spent eight more weeks in cell (28) at Wormwood Scrubs Prison in West London.

Three days before the appeal, I received the following statement from the Home Office:

*Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun*  
*Home Office Statement*

*Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun was born on 1 January 1960. He is a citizen of the Sudan. He entered the United Kingdom on 28 February 1991 to study at the London School of Economics and was given leave to October 1992.*

*Haroun is known to have connections with and to be active on behalf of National Islamic Front in monitoring the activities of the Sudanese students in the United Kingdom and planning counter measures against them. The current regime in Sudan is led by Lt General Bashier (sic) who overthrew his predecessor in a coup on 30 June 1989. Lt General Bashier relies heavily on the support of the Muslim Fundamentalist National Islamic Front who have become active within the Sudanese Government. Recent intelligence from several sources indicates that the Sudanese regime is prepared to consider violent action against its opponents.*

*(Appendix ii, p.318)*

The statement was, to all intents and purposes, an endorsement of the existing allegation although this time, the target of the researcher's planned attack was different.

Time passed, on Tuesday September 24 1991 the hearing was held. As a result, the order of deportation was annulled. With my freedom restored, among the few things left from that ordeal now is this research project which is inspired by my experience in custody.

### **6.3. A Historical Background: The wider frame of an Islamic Sudan**

As shown in chapters two and three, encounters between the West and Islam go back many centuries in history and new developments on the world scene continue to shape the nature of the interaction between the two poles. Of the recent developments the end of the Cold War in the 1990s was a major milestone in relations between the USSR-led Eastern Europe and the USA-led West. However, this was not such good news elsewhere in the world. The triumphant West, once it had ended its opposition to the European East, only shifted its scrutiny to the Muslim East. By then it was openly claimed that Islam appeared to pose a threat to the West. Whether or not the threat had any basis in reality is worthy of investigation. What is beyond question is that the portrayal of Islam as a threat to the West had already raised serious implications. The end of the Cold War is thus an important frame within which the case studied in the present chapter must be viewed.

As chapter three highlights, it is conspicuous that Islam is currently undergoing a phenomenal tide of revival all over the Muslim world. This revival is influenced in many ways by the fading away of the Socialist as well as the Western-oriented, experiments of polity in the post-independence Muslim world (Esposito 1992). This

is a liberal interpretation and other interpretations are equally plausible. On the international level, the Islamic resurgence can be interpreted as contributing towards the creation of a state of political, cultural, economic, and social diversity. But, with the legacy (and the mentality) of the Cold War still alive, there may be a tendency to see things the way they were yesterday rather than how they are today.

The Cold War spawned many functions, institutions and whole armies of personnel designed to fight the ideological cause on both sides of the divide. In this army of Cold War warriors there were security forces, media people, academics, and even businessmen and women. The Cold War had created its own world of assumptions, concepts and understanding - such a legacy can hardly be scrapped at a moment's notice, and the scores of personnel involved are not easily disbanded. A search for a new role became a necessity, which in a sense, was probably expressed in the need to find a new enemy. The new enemy was Islam.

A smaller frame within this wider frame is the Sudan, a country to which the suspect terrorist belongs. The largest country in Africa, Sudan is located in the far most north-eastern corner of the continent with geo-political borders shared with nine countries and a coastal border on the Red Sea. According to the 1993 Sudanese census, the population is estimated to be well over 26 million of which the majority are Muslims. However, Christians and animists represent sizeable minorities.

Islam was embraced and expanded in Sudan since the 14th century, following the fall of the Christian kingdom of Maqurra (Trimingham 1949). From the 16th to the 19th century several Islamic sultanates existed. But the most significant event in the history of Islam in Sudan was the eruption of the Mahdist Revolution towards the end of the 19th century. The Mahdist campaign brought into existence an Islamic state that remained in power for 13 years, only to fall to the invading Anglo-Egyptian

armies. The Anglo-Egyptian rule in Sudan lasted till 1956 when the country achieved independence, marking the era of national government.

The Sudan which forms the focus of this study is the Sudan after 1989. Only six years previously, the government of President Numeiri started implementing *Sharia* (Islamic law) and earlier that year a civil war erupted in the southern part of the country with the Socialist rebels claiming originally to be fighting for a new united Sudan (Khalid 1987) but later coming to centre on southern demands. In the 1986 parliamentary elections, it was clear that the three major political parties (the Umma, the Democratic Unionists and the National Islamic Front) all advocated political programmes with clear Islamic orientations. However, when the multi-party system relaunched after the elections, it failed to hold and Islamically-oriented army officers eventually seized power in 1989. In the neighbouring Arab and African countries, as well as in the West, the regime in Khartoum became branded as a Muslim fundamentalist one.

A consistent area of Western focus on Sudan has been its human rights record. Whether or not Sudan's human rights record is one of the worst records in the world is not in question here, but since 1989, media accusations have painted the tarnished image of a country where the systematic abuse of human rights is practised. Human rights organisations, the Church, parliaments of the European Union, and the United Nations have all joined in the trend to besmirch Sudan's human rights record. On its part, the Sudanese government dismisses this campaign as the politicisation of the non-political issue of human rights.

Since 1989, the media have mounted an extremely unsympathetic coverage of Sudan in which the civil war is portrayed as one waged by a Muslim North against a Christian South. Heavily influenced by such media portrayals, the SYSB

interrogators took for granted the allegedly religious nature of the civil war in Sudan. It was clear that some of their questions were based on what they believed was a religious war within the Sudan. Such a representation is the product of a frame within which the Sudan had already been positioned: a frame of Islamic fundamentalism. The Western media and the Western political establishment also read a great deal into Sudan's decision to maintain normal diplomatic relations with Iran, Iraq, and Libya. For its declared regional loyalties, Sudan now finds itself in position where it seeks constantly to distance itself from accusations of supporting terrorism.

Within the twin frames of the demise of the Cold War and the creation of the Muslim fundamentalist Sudan it was only too easy for the SYSB to identify in the person of the researcher a new target. He was known to be a supporter of the government of Sudan, and he made no secret of this fact. He himself is a devout Muslim and, in the classification of the SYSB, that would place him under the 'Islamic Fundamentalism' banner. On the basis of having connections with the Muslim fundamentalist National Islamic Front (NIF), the suspect was considered even more likely to be a Muslim fundamentalist. With the NIF backing 'the current regime in Sudan' and intelligence indicating that 'the Sudanese regime is prepared to consider violent action against its opponents' (Appendix ii), the SYSB's evidence pointed very firmly in the direction of the suspect being a terrorist.

#### **64. The Suspect, the Police and the Representation**

In analysing the case of the suspect terrorist there are three terrains one needs to deal with simultaneously: the suspect; the police; and the representation. All three, in reality, are inter-twined, and so they must be inter-related in this analysis to ensure that all carry the same significance. This approach involves an investigation of the text (interrogation and other related documents) as well as of the context (historical

and circumstantial dimensions). In this regard, it is to be noted, actual happenings shaping the record of the case seem to have lost their significance as important clues in their own right. Instead, they have become subsumed within hypothetical frames or pre-existing convictions or, in the jargon of the social psychology of social representations.

The interrogation reveals a persistent desire on the part of the police to fit the suspect in the frame they already had devised. This was conspicuous in the transcript of a phone call which the suspect's solicitor had with the police officer in charge of the case (Appendix iii). In that call, the police told the solicitor that the circumstances which led to the arrest of the suspect started when they received information that the life of a Sudanese national might be at risk during a visit to the UK. Further information resulting from the communication led to Mr Abim matching the 'profile' of the would-be victim of an assassination plot. This provided the frame that governed the entire case from then on. Under such circumstances the police were resistant to accepting findings brought about by the interrogation which they found inconsistent with, or, even, contradicting, the frame they had already constructed. The force of their constructed representation was that of a conviction as Festinger et al identify the significance of that term:

*A man with conviction is a hard man to change. Tell him you disagree and he turns away. Show him facts or figures and he questions your sources. Appeal to logic and he fails to see your point.*

*(Festinger et al 1964, p.3)*

One important point in this respect is that social representations, once constructed, are likely to resist change. This may be particularly true when other factors (such as the media, dominant culture, and, possibly in this case, professional training) serve as anchors which strive to secure the established representation. The theory of social representations has not yet provided adequate answers to how a representation can acquire such a power of resistance to change. Also, it falls short from explaining

adequately how an established representation becomes transformed. However, representations held by the police present us with a good case for exploring the dynamics of an established representation's resistance to change.

The SYSB officers had their own frame. In accordance with this frame a link between the suspect and the Sudan government was established. The suspect was going to act on behalf of the Sudanese government, the police believed, because he was associated with the Muslim (fundamentalist) organisation, the National Islamic Front - a political party allegedly backing the government. As one chosen to act on behalf of this government, the SYSB investigators seemed to have believed that the suspect could well have been assigned to kill a high-ranking Sudanese official, Mr Abim. This we shall refer to as Operation Abim (OA).

Soon after my arrest, and before the interrogation proper commenced, a team of security men raided my flat in search of whatever material evidence they could find to provide evidence of an already framed terrorist. The raid, alas, was a huge failure and so was the interrogation. Refusing to admit their failure, the security men sought to have me declared *persona non grata* - once again without sufficient evidence. But the appeal, which I decided to make, ended again with a declaration of my innocence. I was thus granted the right to continue my stay in Britain and to resume my studies.

#### **6.4.1. The Interrogation: Reading the text**

The interrogation, the lengthy duration of which necessitated the police obtaining an extension from the Home Secretary, was conducted by two officers supported by a think-tank of others sitting behind the scenes and monitoring. It consisted of seven sections each of which was designated to cover an area of concern fitting within either of the two frames identified above.

The questioning and other related business conducted by the police (e.g. the raid on my flat) were not carried out with the intention of constructing a representation. Instead, the intention was to confirm the already constructed representation: Islamic fundamentalism and the ostensible threat it poses to an individual's security. The police continued to maintain this representation even when the evidence yielded by the interrogation led in quite the opposite direction. In those novel circumstances, which logically should have led to my release, the police then sought to confirm their established representation from outside their particular line of inquiry to fit the suspect to the profile. Advancing their case, they charged me with planning counter measures against fellow countrymen on behalf of the National Islamic Front (Appendix ii). For that charge, they had no evidence except for the working out of the questionable logic of their constructed representation.

Throughout the seven sections of the interrogation, it is possible to detect several connections and constructions which the police wished to establish. These include the following:

1. That the suspect has strong connections with the Sudanese government (hence the sponsorship of his studies), no problems leaving the country and visits to the London Embassy on a regular basis etc.
2. In a Muslim fundamentalist social sphere, women, as opposed to men, are educated separately; they are not allowed to work even when academically qualified to do so; and are forced into arranged marriages etc.
3. The construction of a scenario for killing Mr Abim.

4. The establishment of concepts relevant to the case serving to confirm an *a priori* representation of Islamic fundamentalism.

The interrogators and their supporting team saw the suspect as a reliable agent of the Sudanese government and, therefore as a privileged citizen. His privileged status included being awarded a scholarship to study in Britain with full sponsorship. As such, his travels abroad were not hindered by the government:

*Q: You have been studying psychology or teaching the subject for a long time, and you have received financial assistance from the Sudanese government. It regards you as a reliable person, is that correct?*

(Appendix i, p.272)

The overriding notion was that the researcher's work as a teaching assistant in the University of Khartoum was a mere cover for extraneous duties. His presence in Britain must surely have been to carry out under-cover activities...

As a matter of actual fact, I am an academic by training. My appointment as a teaching assistant at the University of Khartoum, on the basis of competence, took place several years before the present government came to power. I am also a practising journalist, and I was a publisher too.

When I first thought of pursuing graduate studies in Britain three years ago, all the relevant correspondence was conducted by my employer, the University of Khartoum (U of K). The follow up of the progress of my course is carried out regularly by the U of K authorities. The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) where I am a full time student, keeps a record of all aspects relating to my studentship. Part of this record is, evidently, correspondence with the U of K. I receive my allowances from the government of Sudan, (my sponsor) and while in Britain these allowances and tuition fees are paid through the Sudanese Embassy in

London. This is a system adopted by all governments all over the world. After my arrival in Britain, I used to visit the Embassy frequently, which is only a quarter of an hour's walk from the LSE. These are simple facts used by the SYSB to reinforce the frame they had already set up in their minds.

The supporting evidence of a cover is entirely circumstantial. The suspect travelled considerably since graduating in 1984 - to a number of Arab and Muslim countries in addition to Britain. For the SYSB men, with their Western cultural background, a holiday would normally be very much a central theme in life. However, when it came to considering the suspect's holiday arrangements, it merely fuelled their suspicions - possibly a sign of western ethnocentrism. Moreover, a young graduate from a Third World country (sic), travelling to a number of countries must surely have been a privileged member of his society which would indicate an even stronger connection with his government. And as a privileged citizen of Sudan, what would the government expect of him?

*Q: In return for supporting you for three years did the Sudanese government make any further demand on you?*

*(Appendix i, p.270)*

The representation of the suspect's job as a cover was there waiting to be supported by a confession from the suspect. To the SYSB, the suspect was able to travel extensively by virtue of being Muslim, under a Muslim fundamentalist government, with which he had a special connection! The prefabricated conclusions were only too evident. They had probably recognised, as part of the cover job, that the suspect was:

*... active in monitoring the activities of the Sudanese students in the United Kingdom and planning counter measures against them.*

*(Appendix ii, p.318)*

And as one advances in one's study and reflection on the issue of Western ways of representing Islam, one gradually discovers that contemporary Islam is widely represented as a fundamentalist phenomenon. At a certain stage such representations can become a stereotype, where the stereotype is seemingly what Festinger et al call a conviction (Festinger et al 1964). Rather than being mere cognitive schemata, stereotypes are social representations (Augoustinos & Walker 1995).

A social representation as a stereotype surfaces in the interrogation when it deals with the issue of Islamic fundamentalism as a social sphere. This stereotype probably started with correct information. The Sudanese government is dominated by the Islamists in a country where the major political forces are distinctively Islamised. It is also correct that the suspect is a devout Muslim and a supporter of the present Sudanese government. What remains a huge conceptual mistake is to use such correct information within a stereotypical representation of Islam to incriminate a patently innocent person.

The stereotype of Islam is a complex representation formed over a long period of time, by various agents as explained in detail in the first three chapters. As the stereotype operates in such a way as to consolidate the representation in question, the stereotype of Islam has been consolidated and put into practice by both the Western community and Western states. The SYSB was, and still is, no exception. Once a stereotype is there, no room is left for deconstructing it or even reconstructing it in the light of any new information. Let us examine this against the stereotype of Islam in the minds of the SYSB men. Historical images or, say, representations were easily recalled: With reference to the suspect's fiancée:

*Q: When you marry her will she still be working as a civil engineer?*  
(Appendix i, p.279)

'She' is the suspect's wife (then fiancée) - a Muslim woman the stereotype of whom in the historical Western representations of Islam is as a member of a harem (albeit an updated version of the one featured in *A Thousand and One Nights* (Burton 1886)) or of a housewife bound to the confines of her home, comforting her husband and bringing up her children. She is not allowed to do any outdoor work, no matter what qualification she obtains. According to the representation held by the SYSB, Islam stands for strictly separating men from women in education:

*Q: Where does she study?*

*A: In Khartoum.*

*Q: I understand that in Khartoum there is a university for ladies only.*

*A: That's not correct.*

(Appendix i, p.278)

The interrogation reveals yet another stereotype of Islam. That is its allegedly sharp discrimination against non-Muslims. Islam does not, according to this view, observe what is seen as a modern principle of citizenship:

*Q: Does the government consider you reliable because you are Muslim?*

*A: What do you mean by being reliable?*

*Q: I mean that the regime in Khartoum is predominantly (...) that you as a Muslim have never had any trouble leaving the Sudan, would it be as easy if you were a Christian?*

(Appendix i, p.272)

Thus the frame OA contains: the suspect's travel plans; his contacts with the Embassy; his correspondence with a brother-in-law working as a police officer at home; his membership of various academic and charitable organisations; attendance at Friday prayers, and various financial transactions. All this was, at some time or another, the focus of attention in sections two, three, four, and seven of the interrogation (Appendix i). Fitted together, these scattered issues formed a consistent structure supporting, for a while, the image of a suspect terrorist. For instance, contacts with the Sudanese Embassy in London might have indicated that the suspect was evidently carrying out under-cover activities. And so too was his visit to

Germany scheduled for the day after the visit he and Mr Mat made to Mr Abim. Keeping the telephone numbers of a diplomat in Sudan's Embassy in Germany in his diary, and writing to a police officer in the Ministry of Interior in Khartoum could all have been components in a thriller plot consistent with the frame OA.

At this point the construction of the two representations based on the frames of the link with the Sudan government and OA becomes possible. A plausible story such as the following might have formed in the minds of the SYSB officers:

Acting on behalf of the Muslim fundamentalist government of the Sudan - with which the suspect had an undisputed connection - the suspect went to visit Mr Abim. Visiting Mr Abim whose next stop was Bonn, was to confirm certain information and/or to assess the case, or simply to identify him so that the correct man would be assassinated. Then, to travel to Germany next day and be hosted by the acting Sudanese Ambassador. Staying there waiting for Mr Abim's arrival. While still a guest of the Ambassador, kill the man. Mission accomplished! Hide in the Embassy in Bonn beyond the reach of the police. Then flee to Sudan to report to the authorities in the Ministry of Interior where the subject might have already had an appointment.

The appeal of such a story is difficult to resist and indeed, one of the interrogators, with his patience exhausted, offered his own narrative:

*Q: You went to Germany (would have gone to Germany), having purchased a ticket with borrowed money. With no travellers cheques. With no German currency. With nowhere to stay. With no plans once you get there. Having not been there before, and not knowing of anybody you knew would be there. Does that mean you planned your holiday. Give me a straight answer?*

*(Appendix i, pp.316-317)*

A response by the suspect was surplus to requirements because the officer had already answered his own question.

Interestingly, though the whole case centred around it, the concept of Islamic fundamentalism was not even loosely defined by the SYSB men. The interrogators were unable even to stick to an approved definition with which the interrogation could have been guided:

*Q: Is it true that fundamentalist Muslims are in charge of the regime in Khartoum?*

*A: What do you mean by fundamentalist Muslims?*

*Q: I mean Muslims who wish for a strict interpretation of the Qur'anic Law?*

*A: And what do you mean by strict interpretation of the Qur'anic Law, please?*

*(Appendix I, p. 305)*

(Here the junior officer interrupted the progress of the interrogation by asking the suspect not to evade answering the question. But the senior officer exercised more patience in pursuing the line of inquiry.)

*Q: I mean Muslims who are very devout.*

*(Appendix i, p.305)*

After a while, the SYSB men posed the following question:

*Q: Tell me what you mean by Muslim fundamentalism?*

*(Appendix i, p.306)*

#### **6.4.2. Beyond the Text: A representation's resistance to change**

Reading the text of the interrogation calls for some fairly fundamental remarks. Beyond these remarks is the amazing resistance to change which the construction of Islamic fundamentalism reveals. The failure of a prolonged interrogation to establish a security threat to Mr Abim did not appear to count. Nor did the failure of the whole security establishment to define and to stick to an operational definition of the

construction 'Islamic fundamentalism' urge a *de*-construction or a *re*-construction of the term.

Islam, and for our discussion here, let us use it to mean Islamic fundamentalism, is here a trans-historical and a trans-cultural phenomenon. It resists change. National and ethnic divisions amongst its adherents do not effect any change in regard to how Islam is exercised. However, this does not appear to be the case when the subject of discussion is, say, the Judaeo-Christian West. In the latter, we come across classifications such as the English (not the British) culture, the Scottish culture or the French culture. There is also Georgian, Victorian or present day Britain. There is nothing similar, according to the dominant Western representations of Islam, relating to specific forms of Islam.

Putting aside this argument for a while, one also notes that culture comes into play in this case though not in the sense of multi-culturalism. This is what the post-colonial discourse in social theory calls American-Eurocentrism. Throughout this case study, the dominant Western culture was setting the standard by which even a cultural other, i.e. the suspect, was tried. A manifest example of this was when the interrogators questioned the suspect about his plan for a holiday in Germany. According to the norms of a holiday culture established in the West for decades, the suspect's lack of planning caused the SYSB officers' suspicion to rise. The suspect saw no reason for not taking a holiday in the way he normally would. Clearly, Western culture has set the standard. It did, and does so, not for the mere fact of being the Western culture. As Said put it earlier (Said 1978), it is so because of the hybrid system of power it enjoys. It is so powerful to the extent that what is Western, culturally speaking, is, today, what is universal.

Now, it is understandable that the present Western representations of Islam may well be deeply influenced by the 1979 Iranian Revolution and there are many reasons why the overthrow of the Shah brought about a sensational Western construction of Islam. Not overlooking the Iranians' bitter stance towards the West, Islam has become to the West, through the Iranian Revolution, a terrifying fundamentalist phenomenon. The taking of Western hostages; the bombardment of the American marines; the assassination in Paris of Iranian opponents including former prime minister, Shahbour Bakhtiar and, recently, of the Shah's former education minister, and even more recently the vigorous Iranian opposition to the US-sponsored Middle East peace process are but a few of the determinants of the Western construction of Islamic fundamentalism.

Taking all this into account, the idea that Muslim fundamentalists are intent on killing their political opponents seems plausible. It is a construction that resists change, no matter how flimsy the evidence for it in a given set of circumstances. Eventually, such resistance to change in the face of no evidence ignores both the cultural and ethnic differences that exist in Muslim societies. Neither Islam, nor nationalism can divorce themselves from culture and ethnicity (Mortimer 1996). In his illuminating study, *Islam Observed*, Geertz found that in the Muslim societies of Indonesia and Morocco - two quite different, not to say contradictory, cultures existed (Geertz 1971).

Sudan, yet another predominantly Muslim society also raises the question whether or not it is, for instance, incompatible with the norms in Iran. It is not an uncommon observation that the Sudanese are one of the most peaceful societies in the African-Arab region of the world. Though their country witnessed two civil wars, one of which is still raging, the Sudanese people's internal disputes were never seen to have resulted in violence at the personal level. Over the last three decades the three famous

political assassinations in the Sudanese capital (the Palestinian Black September's assassination of two American diplomats and a Belgian, the assassination of an Eritrean opponent by agents of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the assassination of British expatriates in the Sudan Club) were all committed by foreigners.

Nevertheless, with the stereotype of Islam already in place, the SYSB men did not take the trouble to update their knowledge about the country with which they were dealing. Whether out of sheer laziness or from the fact that the construction was too powerful to resist, the interrogation reveals the ignorance of both the interrogators and their supporting team of the most basic knowledge about the country which was, if justice was to be served, of fundamental importance to the case.

Three instances from the interrogation highlight the lack of such basic knowledge on Sudan. At one point the interrogators thought that Sudan is formed of two separate geo-political entities and that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is fighting to preserve a separate southern Sudan.

*Q: At present the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), is fighting in the South to preserve the South as a separate part of the Sudan. By "peaceful co-existence" do you mean the South of Sudan should be allowed to remain separate from the North of the country?*

*(Appendix i, p.305)*

For anybody who has even an inkling of knowledge of the civil war in Sudan, the South has never been a separate part throughout the history of the country, nor had the SPLA claimed, until very recently, any secessionist tendencies. There have been claims by some southern Sudanese rebel factions for self-determination but no formal demands have materialised to the present day. It could also be assumed that in a case such as this, a highly reputable organisation like the Sudanese Studies Society of the United Kingdom (SSSUK), ought to have been known to a team of experts

dealing with an affair closely related to the Sudan. Unfortunately the SYSB team was in complete ignorance as to what the SSSUK was, save for the erroneous view that it might have been set up by the Sudanese government:

*Q: I would now like to show you this. There are copies of your cheque book which is CTB/19. Please look at the cheque number 17. It is dated the 31st July. Is the cheque (...) shows it is SSSUK. What is SSSUK?*

*A: It's Sudan Studies Society UK.*

*Q: What kind of organisation is that?*

*A: It is an academic organisation.*

*Q: Is it organised by the Sudanese government?*

*(Appendix i, p.281)*

The SYSB documents reveal that the interrogating officers' allegation of terrorism centres around the notion of a hit-campaign planned by the Sudanese government with political opponents as targets. One crucial piece of information, missing or overlooked by the SYSB, would have ruled out the need for such a protracted investigation: Mr Abim, a senior government advisor, was in no conceivable way a government opponent.

## **6.5. Conclusion**

It is only to be expected that the security forces will deal with cases of suspect terrorists. Moreover, they provide a valuable service by protecting the community from terrorism and crime at large. In the course of this chapter two observations emerge. Firstly, OA appeared to form a plausible story and, according to our analysis, it aptly fitted within an already established frame: that of Islamic fundamentalism. Secondly, Mr Abim could have been assassinated by anybody with a motive. He had been visited by many Sudanese nationals while he was in London. None of the visitors was suspected to be a possible source of danger to him. The suspect was believed by the SYSB to pose a threat to his life because he (the suspect) was represented as a Muslim fundamentalist.

Interestingly, the statement by the HO explaining why the suspect was to be deported did not include a single word about OA. Instead, it cited: (a) the suspect's connection with the National Islamic Front, which is represented by the SYSB as a Muslim fundamentalist political party and (b) the suspect's connection (as a supporter of National Islamic Front) with President al-Bashir's government, which is also represented as a Muslim fundamentalist government.

It thus appears that the OA frame was only a small frame within a larger frame, namely: Islamic fundamentalism. In actual fact, the frame Islamic fundamentalism was the one where the suspect, the National Islamic Front, and the Sudanese government met. Islamic fundamentalism was, therefore, the constituent factor in all that took place later including Operation Abim itself.

At this point one could confidently conclude that Islam had been reduced by the SYSB to signify Islamic fundamentalism. In turn, Islamic fundamentalism, with all its negative connotations, would determine the way Islam was dealt with by the SYSB.

This chapter is far from conclusive. It is an attempt to apply the theory of social representations to an issue, namely the West and its relation to Islam. This has been studied previously as history, anthropology, politics, international relations, but never, to the best of one's knowledge, has it been studied as a social psychological phenomenon. The principal data, from the point of view of social science, is the transcript of the interrogations contained in Appendix i. The assumption is that the reader will have read that transcript before reading the current chapter.

The importance of the systematic study of Western representations of Islam is not something to be stressed at this juncture. What needs emphasis is what Himmelweit

and Gaskell (1990) called the need for social psychology to become more broadly based, more genuinely interested in the insights of the other social sciences, and more genuinely willing to engage in high risk research.

## Chapter Seven

### **The Rushdie Affair: Overlapping representations of Islam in letters to editors of national newspapers**

This chapter investigates the social representations of Islam that are expressed in letters to the British press regarding the publication by Salman Rushdie of his book *The Satanic Verses* (Rushdie 1988). Further to the findings of the preceding chapter, representations of Islam in Britain are assumed to exist not only in the press, as part of the wider context of the media in general, but they also circulate, assume form and become transformed by those very same media. An analysis of the press is nothing new in the study of social representations, indeed it has been an integral part of the French study of social representations from the very start. Analysis of the press appears to be developing, as a method, acquiring an increasing methodological, as well as empirical, importance within the theory of social representations. In this context, distinguishing between different components of the same medium (e.g. editorials, features, letters to the editor etc.) is becoming increasingly necessary.

In the age of the revolution in information, the media have acquired an indisputably central role in the public sphere (McQuail 1991). The media play a role in deploying and transforming social representations not only within a culture but also between cultures. It is even likely that the power of the media in constructing representations of the self and of the other transcends that of other institutions and traditions which once surpassed it in this regard. This is particularly valid in the case of the Western tradition of Orientalism. Orientalism, once a prestigious field of scholarship, was for centuries an unchallenged authority in the West for representing Islam. It is a fine example of how one culture is represented within another culture. Now, with the growing influence of the media in dealing with Islam, Orientalism is no longer the flagship in the business

of representing the cultural other. It is the mass media of communication which, today, are heirs to what the Orientalists of yesteryear did. Orientalists, to-day, have to adjust to the age of the sound-bite.

### **7.1. The Media and Social Representations**

At no time in history have the media been so influential as they are in our contemporary age. Successive revolutions from oral to written accounts, from manuscript to the print media and from the print to electronic media right into the age of the information super highway, have enabled the media to strongly influence the shape of the world as well as the systems of relationships and interactions between its human and its material components. Such a role transcends the traditional presumption that the media are merely the means of mass communication. The fact is they are both a channel and a message. Literacy, a human achievement which renders the print and some of the electronic media accessible and their messages understandable, is one obvious reason why the influence of the media is soaring. The more literate the person becomes the more his/her need for information increases.

The technological advance of the various media has added to their growing influence. It is both easier and faster to get in touch through the media today, through satellite television and the internet rather than through the print media. Through the televised message and the internet the electronic media are much more readily available than ever before. The media have become systems of control, adjustment and representation. Their long arm is able to encompass events in remote areas of the world, not only bringing such events to one's attention as they happen but also in a manner that is in accord with their own representations. Hence they not only shape our understanding of events, they also control and adjust the way we respond to them. An essay, a photograph or a picture shown on the television by no means reflect the reality of their subjects, rather they are the media's representations of those subjects.

Traditional research on the influence of the mass media of communication accords to them functions varying from the simple “effect and gratification” approach, to selective perception by consumers of the still fashionable agenda setting role (McCombs & Shaw 1995). This is, however, a politico-sociological approach. From a social psychological and a social representational point of view the conception of the media as reflecting a thinking society is, perhaps, peculiarly appropriate to this particular topic of research. In such an individualistic society as Britain, the media's importance in shaping representations is, perhaps, unrivalled.

Social representations theorists stepped into the media's own territory when Moscovici conducted an analysis of the press, in search of how the scientific theory of psychoanalysis became represented within the French Catholic and the French Communist communities (Moscovici 1961). With the media conceived of as both a means and a message as highlighted earlier, it could be argued that they are central to social representations in two respects: constructing and transforming representations, on the one hand, and circulating them, on the other. As the latter function of the media is now widely accepted by social scientists, the other needs to be better articulated. In this regard Billig, in his rhetorical approach (Billig 1993), emphasises the importance of communication to representations, and thus he is in agreement with Jodelet (1984b) in linking communication to the nature of social representations. Argumentation is what the rhetorical approach is all about. It is our view that the media are at their best when generating argumentation as well as augmenting the scope of their diffusion. As will be explained, in further detail later, it may be presumed that by publishing letters to the editor, the role of the press, as a thinking society in its own right, becomes even more salient. It is, arguably, through letters written in response to texts already published in the press that argumentation takes form and the rhetorical cycle becomes complete.

It is quite unfortunate that although several social representational studies using content analyses of the press have already been conducted, almost nothing is written about the theoretical link between the mass media of communication and the theory of social representations. There have been sporadic references to communication in relation to social representations (Billig 1993, Jodelet 1984b) and to mass communication and social representations (Livingstone 1990). Farr has also made a start in this respect in his article on widespread beliefs (Farr 1990), albeit concentrating on the diffusion rather than on the transformation of representations. Some research on the media and social representations has also been conducted in Canada (Repentigny 1984). Mass media theorists are perhaps not yet convinced that the theory of social representations is suitable for studying the role of the media. Meanwhile, social representations theorists, although they have included the media in their research, are still miles away from forging the theoretical link between their discipline and media studies. In what follows I shall confine myself to the print media.

## **7.2. The Western Press and Representations of Islam**

Recent developments in international politics and geo-politics have focused, yet again, the attention of the world's media on Islam. The collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s have pushed Islam to the top of the media's agenda. The West-East bi-polarism between individualism and collectivism of the late Cold War, which had once shaped the world scene is still sustained with Islam replacing Communism. There seems, however, to be a pre-conceived political and cultural categorisation of the world within the context of bi-polarism. After the collapse of Communism, Fukuyama (1992) introduced the notion of the 'end of history': that is the world's history has come to an end with the liberal Western political and economic values setting the standards for the future world. In this context Fukuyama saw Islam, as a minor threat to the victorious West. From an American perspective, Islam has replaced communism on the political front as a threat to world security. On the

economic front the form of collectivism which is opposed to American individualism is Japanese corporatism and other forms of Asian collectivism.

The American conservative political scientist, Huntington (1993) contributed to the on-going cultural debate the notion of a 'clash of civilisations' bringing Islam into a headlong clash of civilisations with the West. The 'clash of civilisations' was seen by many an observer, Muslims in particular, as the launch of a new crusade by the West against Islam. For the media the clash of civilisations inspired increased interest in Islam, attaining a status approaching that of Sovietology at the time of the Cold War. This said, it is necessary to make an important qualification: the demise of Communism and the end of the Cold War do not mark the start of the encounter between the West and Islam (see chapter two). Rather, they indicate a turning point where Western interest in, not to say conflict with, Islam is significantly exacerbated.

Although the intention is not to generalise the results of this research, it is beyond doubt that the media are one of the most efficient means of generating and publicising the representations of any subject within a given society or culture at a particular point in time. This, perhaps, is particularly true in the West today. However, the scarcity of research on the media and social representations mentioned earlier, arises once again in terms of the scarcity of research on the social representations of Islam through the media. This is, by no means, applicable to research on the West and Islam which has been on the increase for several centuries now.

However, a pioneering study on the construction of Islam by the media is Said's *Covering Islam* (Said 1981). Although this work is neither explicitly conducted within the tradition of social representations, nor is it using the jargon of social representations, it is about the social representations of Islam in the West. In Said's own words *Covering Islam*, together with two other books, "treats the modern relationship between Islam, the Arabs and the Orient on the one hand, and on the other

the West, France, Britain, and in particular, the United States" (p. ix). Its subject "is immediately contemporary: Western and specifically American responses to an Islamic world perceived, since the early seventies, as being immensely relevant and yet antipathetically troubled, and problematic" (p. x). Possibly because of his academic background as a professor of English literature, Said tends to use the word 'perception' where social representations' researchers might use 'representation'. *Covering Islam* is, therefore, a book deeply immersed in the tradition of social representations. It is, more or less, a contribution to the growing body of discourse on social representations.

It is no fiction, therefore, to include this chapter as part of the present thesis. This chapter is basically aimed at analysing the content of letters published in the British press following the publication of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* and the Muslim response to that publication. In the case of *The Satanic Verses* the British press in general, and the letters both of support and of protest published in that press, provide valuable data for researching Islam as a social representation in Britain. Where the subject of this chapter differs from *Covering Islam* is that while the latter studies the representations by the Western media of Islam through events that happened to have taken place in the world of Islam, this chapter is about circumstances prompted by the publication in Britain of the book *The Satanic Verses*. Nonetheless, *The Satanic Verses* shook the Muslim world as well as the West. It was a local event, but with global significance.

Another difference between the two studies concerns the prevalence of the broad issue of freedom and civil liberties at large, in this chapter, while the focus of *Covering Islam* is, rather, the economies and the politics of the Muslim world and their impact in the determination of Western representations of Islam. Obviously, there seems to be much in common with respect to the social representations of Islam in Britain between this study of the press, the participant observational study of the British security forces (chapter six) and the following study involving group discussion (chapter eight).

### 7.3. The Rushdie Affair in the Press: Scope and sample

**Scope:** Further to the description of the content analysis of the media in chapter five, the focus of this section of the present chapter is to describe the scope of the yet smaller sector of the media under study here and the procedure employed for conducting the analysis. In the wider context of the media coverage of the Rushdie Affair, the press coverage of it is selected for investigation. In the press, letters to the editor are sampled for analysis. Selection of the press was determined by several factors. These include the accessibility of the print media as well as the wider range of choice they permit. This wider choice is linked to quite different readerships, as between, for example, the broadsheets and the tabloids. The decision to analyse letters to the editor was based on the belief that this section of the press coverage is much closer to Moscovici's notion of the thinking society. That is because they involve a kind of debate between the press and its community of readers.

The letters' page, also functions as an inter-reader conversational activity as one letter might elicit a response from another reader, especially if it is the expression of an extreme point of view. Letters to the editor, therefore, may be likened to a multi-party conversation extended over time and across geographical space. An editorial component in published letters involves the selection of letters to be published as well as relevant titles. Although they are not the subject of analysis in this chapter, titles are, more or less, the construction of the editor or sub-editor rather than of the writer. Of course, this allows one to look into the representation of Islam in the press itself from the editorial involvement in the choice of titles of published letters and to explore the readers' representations of Islam as they appear from the texts of the letters too.

**Sample:** Tabloid, middle sized and broadsheet quality British newspapers are all sampled in this study. Two tabloid newspapers were sampled: *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*. Two middle-sized dailies were also included in the sample: *The Daily Mail*

and *The Daily Express*. Added to these four British daily newspapers: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, and a fifth weekly newspaper: *The Observer* were also selected for analysis. These are the main national daily newspapers for England (see Table 1 below).

**Table (1): Frequency of letters published in each of the seven newspapers**

No	Newspaper	Number of letters	Percentage (Rounded)
1	<i>The Daily Express</i>	16	6%
2	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	21	8%
3	<i>The Guardian</i>	52	20%
4	<i>The Independent</i>	91	34%
5	<i>The Observer</i> *	12	5%
6	<i>The Sun</i>	6	2%
7	<i>The Times</i>	66	25%

\* N.B. *The Observer* is a weekly, rather than a daily, newspaper

The period covered is one year from 1st. January to 31st. December 1989. Following the burning of the book during protests by Muslims in the northern city of Bradford on January 14, and the *Fatwa* by Ayatollah Khomeini issued on February 14, these twelve months (see Appendix v) were crucial in shaping the controversy over the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (Sardar & Davies 1990). The choice of a sample covering all types of daily national British newspapers was meant to permit the sampling of all types of representations echoed by quite diverse readerships. Regional daily newspapers like the *Scotsman*, the *Yorkshire Post* etc. were not included in the sample since the aim of the thesis is to investigate representations which could be

claimed to be nationally shared rather than those which were local or regional. With the broadsheet and middle sized newspapers presumably representing a readership which is better educated, the popular tabloid newspapers are likely to echo popular culture. With both groups of newspapers treated as thinking societies in their own right it must be admitted, however, that the quality newspapers are better established as debating platforms. Middle class, educated readers are also more likely to write letters in support of their views so that they make their voices heard.

#### **7.4. The Rushdie Affair in the Press: Procedures**

Two hundred and forty two letters, forming the complete set of letters to the five broadsheets, were copied from the Archives of the Islamic Foundation, a research institution in Leicester (England), which has been following the Rushdie Affair since its inception. For confirmation of the completeness of this sample a further independent sampling of the letters published in the same newspapers over the same period was carried out by the author by sampling and scanning microfilm reels at the British Library of Newspapers at Colindale, London. The scanning proved that letters copied from the Islamic Foundation's archives comprised the totality of letters published on the Rushdie Affair in those newspapers in the year 1989. The only one letter which was missing in the original set of letters was, later on, added to it. The author spent many hours in the precincts of the Newspaper Library both checking the accuracy of the original sample and extending it by including the other titles.

A survey of two tabloids: *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror* was also made at the British Library of Newspapers at Colindale. This extensive search yielded for the whole of 1989 only six letters, all published in *The Sun*, and these were copied and incorporated in my sample. Two middle sized dailies: *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express* were also surveyed, for the whole year 1989, at the Colindale Newspaper Library. This

extensive search yielded a total of only sixteen letters published in *The Daily Express*, whereas no letters on the Rushdie Affair were published in *The Daily Mail*.

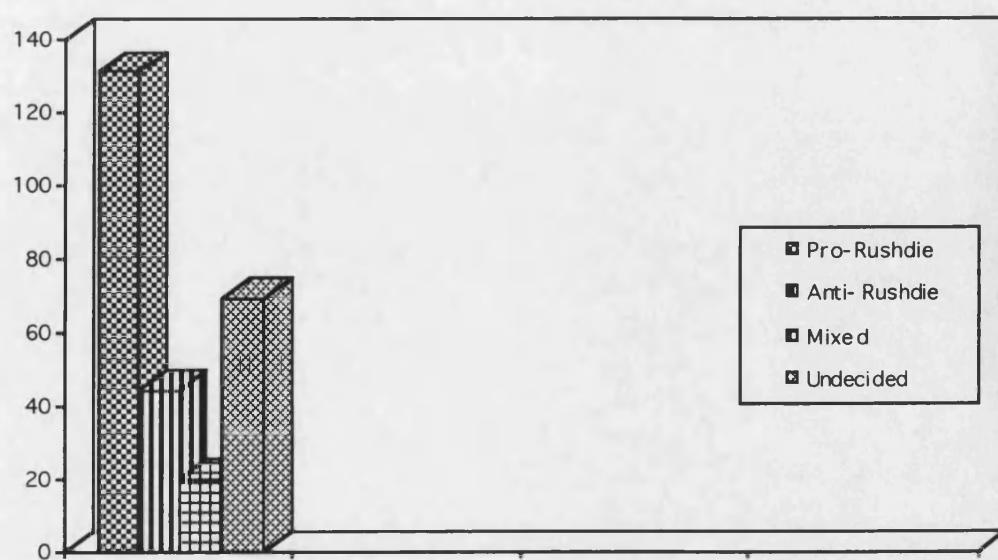
The search covered the whole of the one year period from 1st. January to 31st. December 1989 (see Table (1) below). Before conducting the analysis a few letters written from outside of Britain were removed from the sample on the basis of their authors not being resident in Britain at the time of writing. Whilst I excluded a few letters (only three) which came from abroad I did not exclude events abroad triggered by the Rushdie Affair (e.g. *the Fatwa*). A cursory glance at the assembled letters reveal that they cover various aspects of the Rushdie Affair. Letter writers include Muslims and non-Muslims, left-wingers and right-wingers, politicians, academics, writers and publishers, clergymen, spokespersons for various pressure groups as well as ordinary people. As will be highlighted later in the chapter it is clear that the first three months saw the escalation of the debate which reached its peak in March 1989. 78% of all the letters on the Rushdie Affair had been published by the end of March 1989 (see Table 2 below).

**Table (2): Letters by month of the year (1989)**

Month	Number of letters	Percentage (Rounded)
January	38	14%
February	75	28%
March	94	36%
April	9	3%
May	6	2%
June	11	4%
July	11	4%
August	12	5%
September	0	0%
October	2	1%
November	2	1%
December	4	2%

To arrive at a reasonably operational coding manual, a detailed survey of the 264 letters (see next section of this chapter) was conducted in order to explore the heterogeneity and scope of the issues and arguments they contain. The survey was conducted separately by the researcher and his supervisor. Issues and arguments in each and every letter were sorted. The result was a large number of themes shaping the debate on the Rushdie Affair from different viewpoints. Many well-known public personalities, as well as others whose identities were unknown to both the researcher and his supervisor, participated in the debate. Appendix (v) contains all the data the reader might need to locate the particular letter in the archives at the British Library of Newspapers at Colindale (north-west London) or elsewhere. The five item record is a primary organisation and tabulation of the raw data. These are the number of the letter (according to the chronological order of their appearance in any of the seven newspapers); date of publication; the newspaper in which it appeared (identified numerically); the writer of the letter (surname plus initial) and the classification of the letter as either pro-Rushdie, anti-Rushdie, mixed or neutral/undecided (see Fig. (1) below).

**Fig. (1): Classification of letters to editors**



Letters were classified as mentioned above according to a general rule. A letter was classified as pro-Rushdie if it showed any sort of support for Salman Rushdie or the publication of *The Satanic Verses* (including the defence of freedom, democracy, human rights etc.). An anti-Rushdie letter is one where some reservation about the publication of *The Satanic Verses* is expressed or the writer generally opposes the book e.g. calling for its withdrawal from circulation, or opposing the publication of a paperback edition, calling for the protection of religion against the blasphemy of *The Satanic Verses* etc. A letter coded as adopting a mixed position is one where a position supporting Rushdie's right to freedom of expression is retained while, at the same time, viewing *The Satanic Verses* as an insult to Islam, threatening the social fabric of society, etc. Finally, a letter is coded as neutral/undecided when no pro or anti Rushdie position is expressed or where reference is made only to some other related issues without clearly expressing a position on the Rushdie Affair.

The survey was also concerned with exploring whether, as argued earlier, the corpus of letters reflects a real thinking society. With the thinking society conceptualised as the manifestation of a state of communication and argumentation in order to construct, consolidate or transform social representations (Moscovici 1984), the data would prove that they represent a thinking society on the basis of two features. Firstly if they contain themes and arguments which are both shared and contested and, secondly, if these themes are contributed by a community of individual letter writers. Several themes emerged which set the agenda for the discussion (see the following section on issues and salient arguments) over periods of time spanning several weeks per theme. Letters which evoked two or more responses from others are reproduced in Appendix (vi). Indeed these findings indicate that the corpus of letters as a whole represent a thinking society in its own right.

A coding manual was developed enabling a quantitative analysis of the data. The coding manual contains, in addition to coding instructions, two sections. The first section contains seven points of background information, whereas the second section is wholly devoted to coding a total of six issues and arguments which arose from the data. The background information includes the number of the letter; the newspaper in which it appeared; the date of publication; the letter history (e.g. whether it was published before or after the *Fatwa*); the writer of the letter (classified into nine possible categories - civil liberty activist, mixed, Muslim, politician, writer, non-Muslim clergy, non-Muslim minority group, business or unidentified). They also include the letter classification as either pro-Rushdie, anti-Rushdie, mixed or neutral/undecided and the origin of the letter i. e. whether the letter was a comment; a response to an editorial; a response to a feature article or a commentary; a response to a television programme; a response to a former letter in the same newspaper or a response to a response to a former letter.

The second section contains six salient themes each of which dominated the debate for quite some time. At the outset, they represent the complexity of the issues involved in the debate and, simultaneously, the host of representations which the Rushdie Affair, in the letters to the press, entailed. The themes are the British Law of Blasphemy; Bradford Muslims; British Society; *Fatwa*; Freedom of expression and Islam. Each of the six themes were coded as one of three constructions. Themes were selected according to their appearance in the texts of the letters as well as for their salience. A computer soft-ware package, Statview, was used in the coding and the interpretation of the data. Like SPSS Statview allows a wide-range of statistical measures, and data can easily be manipulated accordingly. It is hypothesised that a quantitative analysis of the salient themes in the letters, according to their classification as either pro-Rushdie, anti-Rushdie, mixed or undecided, may be significant. In addition to this a general review of the data is made in the following paragraphs so that the reader of the thesis will have a clear idea about the content of the letters and become better informed on how the issues entailed in the Rushdie Affair unfolded in the course of the year.

## 7.4. The Rushdie Affair in the Press: Issues and salient arguments

From a theoretical standpoint, the Rushdie Affair, treated as representations manifested in the letters to editors of some national newspapers, is a study in the formation of public opinion. Dealt with as the public expression by many individuals of sentiments, evaluations, or beliefs about societal issues, public opinion “becomes very similar to Moscovici’s social representations”, (Himmelweit 1990b). The content of the letters was virtually unknown to the researcher before he began the process of content analysis. The importance of a process such as this is to highlight all the issues, themes and arguments which are contained in the complete set of letters. I am attempting in the following paragraphs to highlight the issues and salient arguments which a bottom-up analysis discloses.

A bottom-up analysis of the corpus of letters analysed in this chapter, i. e. surveying the content of each and every letter, reveals issues which are widely shared and on which a high degree of consensus prevails, as well as issues which are controversial and of a non-consensual nature. Issues are also supported by or attacked on the grounds of related arguments. The arguments displayed in the letters are, according to Gerbner *et al* (1980), symbolic realities. They are used, in the context of the letters, to support or to negate different representations of the issues involved in the discussion. Such arguments are the conceptualisations, definitions or explanations given to the issues under discussion by a community of readers and writers of letters. What they read and what they write comprise part of the culture.

As far as the data analysed in this chapter are concerned a bottom-up survey was conducted separately by the researcher and his supervisor. The survey involved reading with close attention to detail the set of letters (264 letters in total) with a view to identifying the salient themes and arguments they contain. This laborious job was

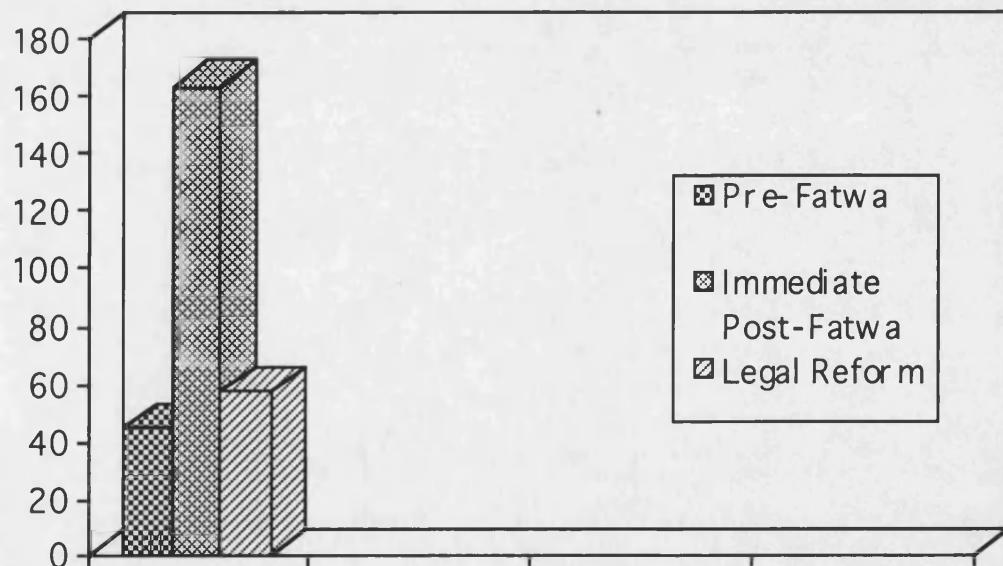
concluded by comparing the results arrived at by each of the two readers. The themes and arguments reported were very similar and they were used in developing the coding manual as explained above. Otherwise, and according to what I will report in the following paragraphs, the survey provides a preview for the development of the debate. Here themes seem to have a life-span - they are born and they perish. Himmelweit (1990b), stressed the need to study the natural history of issues in the field of public opinion. The current study is an example of what she proposed.

A cursory review of the corpus of letters reveals the heterogeneity of the issues involved, the arguments deployed as well as of the social, cultural and political backgrounds of the writers of the letters. In appendix (iv) I have attempted to provide a chronological account of the developments of the Rushdie Affair both within Britain and world-wide. This is because the reader of the thesis needs an overview of the Affair and how it developed over time. This Appendix of the chronological events in the Rushdie Affair is supplemented, in the following paragraphs, by a brief review of the contents of the letters sampled as well as of the backgrounds of their writers. Letters were often initially provoked by events. It was the Muslim response to the publication of the book which provoked the greatest number of letters. The principal events here were the burning of a copy of *The Satanic Verses* in Bradford on the 14th of January, 1989 and the *Fatwa* by Ayatollah Khomeini on the 14th of February, 1989. Starting from the beginning of April the debate shifted to issues of legal reform with respect to whether the blasphemy law should be extended or repealed, the nature of British society as multi-racial, multi-faith, multi-cultural. These three segments mark the way the way the debate over the Rushdie Affair developed (see Fig. (2) below).

Letters to editors are treated as an example of a thinking society in their own right. As a thinking society they are formed of issues, arguments and writers as well. An anatomy of the letters reveals that letters are responded to in terms of comment, criticism or protest. To construct a representation or even transform an established one, as this

study reveals, a whole process of argumentation is involved. Thus, a letter by one individual writer or another or by a group of writers is found to set the agenda for an elaborate discussion. Interestingly, this debate, which was originally stimulated by the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, turned into a debate about Britain's social, cultural, legal, political and diplomatic concerns. Thus, instead of developing along the lines of a binary opposition between Muslims and Non-Muslims, as seemed likely at the outset, the debate produced a rich and highly complex set of contentious issues, involving contrasting classifications and groupings within the context of a common concern about the publication of *The Satanic Verses*.

**Fig. (2): Development of public debate on the Rushdie Affair**



**Pre-Fatwa:** Issues highlighted in the set of letters spread over the period 1st. January - 31st. December 1989 change in accordance with the sort of protest expressed by Muslims as well as by non-Muslims opposed to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. At an early stage, the burning of Rushdie's book by Muslim protesters in the northern city of Bradford, on January 14, represented a sufficiently salient issue to set the scene

for sometime thereafter. From then on, and for quite sometime, references to the Bradford Muslims, the fanatical Muslims in Britain, the Bradford incident, Bradford Pakistanis (e. g. letters 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 31, 35) were not only frequently made, but they also set the scene for a fuller discussion of other issues. Reference to the Bradford Muslims was made by both the pro and the anti-Rushdie lobbies - a divide that prevails over the whole period of time studied here. An anti-Rushdie letter, for example, advocates that the way the Bradford Muslims protested (the burning of Rushdie's book) against the publication of *The Satanic Verses* was a demonstration of displeasure in a free democracy (e.g. letter 12).

However, the majority of references to the Bradford Muslims occur in the context of criticism of or, rather, of opposition to the manner of their protest against the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. The Bradford Muslims, therefore, are deemed to have got "worked up about the alleged content of a book likely to have a local readership at most scores, and those the least likely to be influenced by any religious bigotry it may contain" (letter 6). Bradford Islam is "a particularly backward form of Punjabi village Islam" (letter 3). In similar vein the Bradford Muslims who took to the street in protest against *The Satanic Verses* are deemed as "fanatical Muslims in Bradford (letters 11, 112).

The "Bradford incident" is also described as "a disturbing symptom" of the evil process of sowing the seeds of apartheid by ethnic communities, (letter 31). The salience of the phrase "Bradford Muslims" or phrases with an equivalent meaning was first prompted by the burning of a copy of *The Satanic Verses*, which was the first unusual kind of protest on the part of those who expressed opposition to it. This is likely to be the case since the phrase "Bradford Muslims" dominated the scene until another form of protest, the *Fatwa*, entered the picture, on February 14, which then eclipsed reference to the "Bradford Muslims". In this first phase of the debate the issue was freedom of expression in relation to publication versus Islamic fundamentalism. From a textual

analysis of the letters alone it is clear that the burning of the book was, literally, a provocative act.

Although the Bradford incident at its height was widely viewed as an act of intolerance, the latter was most often associated (by the pro-Rushdie letter writers) with the Bradford Muslims, Muslim fundamentalists, fundamentalist Muslim leaders etc., rather than with the Muslim community or British Muslims as a whole. Sometimes the writer of a letter which carries a mixed reaction to Rushdie (e.g. letter 15) chooses to talk about the protest against the publication of *The Satanic Verses* as one by the Muslims of Britain or the reaction of the Muslim community to *The Satanic Verses*.

However, the anti-Rushdie letter writers, who are mostly Muslim community leaders, Sheikhs, Imams or Muslim academics, display a tendency to talk in the name of the Muslim community (e. g. letter 17), the Muslim protest (e. g. letter 22), Muslims world wide (e. g. letter 32), the Muslim Ummah (e. g. letter 49). To this anti-Rushdie group of letter writers *The Satanic Verses* offended the entire Muslim population of the world. Coming together on such a position, nonetheless, the anti-Rushdie group should not be viewed as being in full accord on all positions expressed in terms of protest, as many letters written by Muslims clearly indicate. There are expressions of a wide range of different opinions on the side of the Muslim letter writers. On the side of those who supported Salman Rushdie a wholesale condemnation of Muslims surfaces, though rarely. In contrast, such tendency to absolute condemnation is, at times, interrupted by protest against generalised statements using the “Royal We”, i.e. claims that the entire British society finds *The Satanic Verses* offensive (letter 154).

**Immediate Post-Fatwa:** Following the stage where the burning of *The Satanic Verses* by Muslim protesters in Bradford had dominated the scene, the *Fatwa* by Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran which sentenced to death Salman Rushdie and his

publishers came into prominence and dominated the scene. Referring to it as the death threat (e. g. letters 74, 112), Ayatollah's incitement to murder (e. g. letter 135), Ayatollah Khomeini's writ (e. g. letter 128), the *Fatwa* played a significant role in shaping the debate on the Rushdie Affair until the end of March 1989.

The freedom which the Ayatollah *Fatwa* threatened was more fundamental, to many writers of letters, than freedom of expression. It is the life of the author which is under threat and not merely his freedom to publish. One is dealing here with a basic human right. The threat sounds medieval to British ears because it is based on a form of religious intolerance and because, in more recent times, Britain, as a democracy, has repudiated the death penalty. Once again it is democracy which is under threat, this time from a form of theocracy. In this respect i.e. the abolition of the death penalty, democracy in Britain differs from democracy in America.

The *Fatwa* raised a host of issues ranging from those of a national nature to ones of an international nature and those of purely British concern to ones which are of purely Iranian concern. The response to the *Fatwa* was an overwhelming opposition to it on the grounds that it breached a basic right to freedom of expression and an established tradition of civil liberty i.e. liberty guaranteed by the civil authorities (e. g. letters 45 & 154). Even some Muslim letter writers, albeit asserting the Muslim concern over the "withdrawal from circulation of *The Satanic Verses*" (letter 91 & 141), joined in expressing their opposition to the *Fatwa*, accusing the British media of misrepresenting Ayatollah Khomeini as the spokesperson for all Muslims. Amidst claims that Islam fears freedom of expression Muslim letter writers were forced to defend Muslims as not "at heart unreasonable" (letter 136).

At times the debate shifts, pragmatically, towards a concern about the established British-Iranian relations which it was feared would be threatened by the implications of the Rushdie Affair and the subsequent *Fatwa* of the Iranian leader. In this respect

continued support to Salman Rushdie was seen as jeopardising British business interests in Iran where some businesses were bound to lose contracts (e. g. letter 129).

At the same time the event was taken up by opponents of the Islamic government in Iran and their friends to vent their grievances and to rally support behind their cause (e. g. letters 58, 52 & 136). Such an atmosphere also caused some renowned British writers such as Sybille Bedford, Elizabeth Jane Howard (letter 119), Dillip Hiro (letter 120) and Norman Lewis (letter 155), to join an earlier appeal by John Berger to Salman Rushdie and his publishers that “In view of continuing loss of life, and the rising tide of racial conflict provoked by the book (*The Satanic Verses*) ... it would add to the stature of both author and publishers if it were now to be voluntarily withdrawn” (letter 155).

**Legal Reform:** Pre-occupation with the *Fatwa* then gave way to a debate on blasphemy where a number of conflicting issues are discernible, varying from calling for an extension of existing blasphemy laws to cover other faiths, to calling for its abolition altogether based on its discriminatory nature and the difficulty it imposes as to its interpretation. In the latter camp are a number who believe the law is a relic of the middle ages. Extension of the law of blasphemy, as Lord Scarman (letter 213) sees it, will only lead to uncertainty and restricts freedom of expression. Instead, the law of blasphemy should be abolished and legislators should concentrate on issues of public order. More radical views were also expressed in support of the abolition of the blasphemy law. To Arnold Wesker (letter 219), blasphemy is impossible to define and “the only protection against religious and political charlatans is to keep the right to question, debate and ridicule all belief”. Wesker even sees an element of power-seeking in the protest against Rushdie as some immature minds are using Rushdie’s book as a means of gaining power. Writers, authors, civil liberties’ activists and others have all, individually or in groups, campaigned, by letter-writing, for repealing the law of blasphemy (e.g. letters 220, 221, 223 & 229). Support for an extension of the law of

blasphemy to cover other faiths was expressed, though mildly, in a letter by a group of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jain leaders under the umbrella of the World Conference on Religion, “it is our hope that inequalities in the law will be redressed and that all minority religions will be fully protected” (letter 192).

The debate on blasphemy raised a number of issues relating to censorship by government watchdogs. These are forms of censorship based on historical precedents or arguments about security. They include a discussion of the obscenity laws. The first incident was one in which a play was denied the right to be performed in public theatres. Reiterating his unconditional support for Rushdie, Jim Allen recalls the ban on his play, *Perdition* (a play which alleges that some Hungarians of Jewish origin participated in the Holocaust), on the grounds that the allegations it made were historically unfounded (letter 110). Another, it is argued, is censorship of works of art displaying sympathy for Irish republicanism as being a menace to public security (letter 149). Those who adopt this point of view accuse the British government of contradiction in that it “supports Rushdie”, but “does not feel the same about Gerry Adams” (letter 111). In a society where two fundamental beliefs clash: the religious one that blasphemy is intolerable and the secular one that restriction of freedom of expression is intolerable, censorship of Irish republicanism indicates that “We don’t have unlimited freedom of expression” (letter 111). A third case of censorship is the trial of *Gay News* in 1977 (letter 79) under the Obscene Publications Act 1959. These incidents of censorship were presented as arguments against censorship rather than as arguments in its favour. Censorship is strongly opposed by most, if not all artists, writers and journalists. Graham Swift (letter 154), advocates literature as “more than free expression. It is creative expression, which does not argue, state or assert, so much as make”. The media, themselves, are scarcely neutral observers in this debate.

The richness and complexity of the public debate aroused by the Rushdie Affair is not limited to the issues reviewed above. Many other issues, both closely and loosely

related to *The Satanic Verses*, arose. The nature of British society - whether it is multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual or otherwise gave rise to a heated debate. Here the issue of secularism enters the scene. "Western secular individualism", explains one letter, "is a poor soil for producing communal identity, cultural integrity and psychological security" (letter 217). Another letter adopts a reverse position since "Modern plural (or "multi-ethnic") society is the product of secularisation" (letter 142). In the context of the debate on the nature of British society the pluralism of British society is defended, and ethnic minorities are not expected "to forgo their identities, traditions and cultures, any more than their religions" (letter 143).

The debate also touches on the artistic merit of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. In a letter to *The Independent*, the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, Max Hastings, who was a member of panel of judges for the Whitebread Literary Award, describes *The Satanic Verses* as unreadable (letter 29). Another letter which stirred a great deal of debate was from Roald Dahl (letter 75), which accused Rushdie of "sensationalism", and described the author as "a dangerous opportunist" - allegations which were not left to pass uncommented upon by a number of letter writers, most of whom were also writers. A wide range of argumentation over freedom of expression with respect to its responsible use, (termed "self-censorship" by some letter writers) was another issue which became highly salient in the debate, especially after concern over the *Fatwa* had peaked. This latter phase in the formation of opinion concerning the issues was confined to a smaller number of letters and extended over several months at a moderate rate of letters per week.

The Salman Rushdie saga is revealing in regard to how a public debate develops (Himmelweit 1990b). It is clear that no single issue or argument prevails unchanged over the time span here under review. Issues and arguments arise according to when and how positions and actions taken by the various parties to the debate (pro and anti-Rushdie, the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Bradford Muslims, authors, writers, booksellers

etc.) occur. Whereas individual letter writers dominated the discussion in the early stages, groups of letter writers (authors, civil liberty activists, artists, feminists, clergymen, booksellers and publishers) tended to dominate at a later stage.

Letters were written either in response to a protest (e. g. the burning of the book, the *Fatwa* ) or as a support for action (e. g. public readings of sections of *The Satanic Verses*, multi-imprints etc.) or in response to editorials, features or television programmes. The debate was, however, not a one way system of communication. Rather, there were Muslims responding to non-Muslims as well as to Muslims in protest over *The Satanic Verses*. Non-Muslims also wrote letters in support of Muslims protesting over the same issue. Non-Muslims displayed a whole range of different, sometimes conflicting, positions towards the arguments of each other. However, this, as well as the fact that some letter writers have contributed to the debate on more than one occasion, is evidence that the letters analysed in this chapter represent a thinking society at work. In the corpus of letters analysed the broadsheets are obviously the main fora for the expression of opinion whereas the tabloids and the middle-sized format newspapers were the fora of only a small number of short, single-issue, letters.

## 7.5. The Rushdie Affair in the press: Results and discussion

**Background variables:** Seven variables in section (1) and six variables in section (2) were coded. Coding was both exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The seven variables in section one are: letter number; newspaper; date; letter history; letter writer; letter classification and letter origin. Apart from letter number variables in section (1) the other variables were represented in terms of absolute (i.e. number of occurrences) and relative (percentage) frequencies. Calculation of the frequencies of each variable in this group of variables serves as a primary source of analysis. In agreement with Krippendorff (1980), the researcher is aware of the limitation of the frequency

calculation in terms of analysis as, apart from their indicative function, frequencies do not mean much by themselves. However, the frequencies shown below are useful in summarising the quantity of work involved, the size and distribution of the sample, the development of the debate, the kind of persons involved in the debate, the positions taken as well as the sort of press coverage which inspired letter writing.

The frequencies of letters published in each newspaper, results show, differ in many respects (see Table 1). *The Independent* had the largest number of published letters with 91 of the overall 264 letters analysed (34%). *The Times* came second with 66 letters (25%), following was *The Guardian* with 52 letters (20%). *The Daily Telegraph*, however, was the daily broadsheet with the smallest number of published letters with 21 overall (8%). The *Daily Express* had 16 published letters (6%), With 12 letters (5%) published in the weekly broadsheet *The Observer*, 6 letters (2%) published in *The Sun* and none in *The Daily Mirror* and *The Daily Mail*.

The frequencies shown above reveal some differences within the broadsheets as well as between the various types of newspaper analysed. Each of the four daily broadsheets has published letters which are more than those published in any of the middle-sized or tabloid newspapers. Even the single weekly broadsheet, *The Observer*, had more published letters than those published in *The Sun*, and given the daily publication of the *Daily Express*, *The Observer* had a higher percentage of letters published per issue than the *Daily Express*. With respect to the particular issue of the Rushdie Affair in letters to the editors of national newspapers the broadsheets appear to provide a wider platform for public debate than the sampled middle-sized and tabloid newspapers do. They better reflect “the thinking society”, at least with respect to the Rushdie Affair.

As shown earlier in this chapter the whole issue of the Rushdie Affair underwent periods of rise and fall in interest. This is clear from the frequencies of letters published

per month (see Table 2). Over 75% of the letters were published in the first three months of the surveyed year (1989). It is, however, quite understandable that this period of the year did not signal the early stages of an issue which took mainstream British society by surprise. It witnessed the most shocking of events like the burning in Bradford of a copy of *The Satanic Verses* and the issue by Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran of the *Fatwa* too. Both the burning of the book and the *Fatwa* menaced two fundamental and well established rights: the right to the freedom of expression and the right to life respectively.

As will be discussed more fully later, feeling the threat posed to some established civil rights may explain why such a large number of writers, authors and other people in the world of journalism, arts and letters went out in protest against such threats and in support of Salman Rushdie. Of all readers writers are more likely to write letters. The fewer than 25% of letters published afterwards (April-December 1989), though small in comparison to those published earlier carry an important symbolic value as they show how the debate diversified. This leads us to the history of the debate (see Fig. 2) which can be divided into three salient stages. The first period (the pre-*Fatwa*) comprised only 44 letters. This was followed by the immediate post-*Fatwa* phase which marks a period where many people became involved in the debate (a total of 163 letters). With this phase also spanning about six weeks the issue of the *Fatwa* served as a trigger for an increased rate of letter writing. In both phases a large number of Muslims wrote letters both for and against Salman Rushdie. This number diminished rapidly afterwards when the debate moved onto issues pertaining to what we call legal reform. Here, 57 letters debated such issues as whether the blasphemy law should be extended or repealed.

Letter writers were classified into nine distinct categories (see Appendix vii). Of the 264 letter writer(s) 92 (35%) were unidentifiable since they only supplied their names and addresses with no mention of their occupations. Of the remaining 172 letter writers who

were identified, there were 64 writers, 46 Muslims, 22 politicians, 15 civil liberty activists, 12 non-Muslim clergymen, 9 non-Muslim minorities, two mixed and two business persons. When letters were classified in terms of the positions their writers took on the Rushdie Affair 131 (50%) were pro-Rushdie, 44 (17%) were anti-Rushdie, 20 (8%) adopted a mixed position with 69 (26%) choosing a neutral position. Furthermore, 104 (39%) letters were written as a direct response to the Rushdie Affair, 73 (28%) responded to a former letter published in the respective newspaper, 46 (17%) were written in response to leaders in the respective newspaper, 35 (13%) responded to a feature in the respective newspaper, 4 (2%) were a response to a response to a former letter published in the respective newspaper and 2 (1%) responded to a television programme.

**Issues and arguments:** Quantitative analysis in this section is not just a primary one as comparisons between the pro-Rushdie and the anti-Rushdie, mixed and undecided are made. A chi-square test was conducted for each of the six variables in section (2) of the coding manual - (variables 8-13) - and variable (6) in section (1) - (letter classification). According to the chi-square test observed frequencies, percentages for both columns and rows, expected values as well as degree of significance/insignificance were all calculated. I will report in the following pages the chi-square value resulting from the comparisons between variable six in section (1) and each of the six variables in section (2).

### **7.5.1 Freedom of Expression in the Context of the Blasphemy Law**

Representations of the British Law of Blasphemy centred on whether it is discriminatory and ought to be repealed, as the pro-Rushdie lobby saw it, or it covers just one faith in multi-faith British society and therefore should be extended. Within a consensus that it is discriminatory there is a divergence of opinion as to whether it should be repealed or extended. The chi square statistic, however, shows no significant

association between the letter classification variable and the British Law of Blasphemy (total chi-square = 14.019, DF 9, p=.12). Those who saw the Law as discriminatory appear to believe that it results in uncertainty, protects majority beliefs or, even, that it is an absurd relic of a former age. There was an obvious contrast between calling for it to be repealed, on the one hand, and advocating that it ought to be extended.

Abolition of the Law was based on the view that it is meaningless in modern Britain; that it is intolerable and that it does not work. Replacing the present Law with a law relating to public order was favoured by some. Others believed that such a law has no place in a non-believing society like modern Britain. Those calling for the extension of the law emphasised its discriminatory nature in protecting only one religion: Christianity. Justice requires that the law should cover other faiths as well.

The absence of a significant association between the letter classification variable on the one hand and the British Law of Blasphemy on the other was quite a surprise. At this point I must concede I have no set answer to such a result. One possible interpretation is that many of those who showed concern over the Blasphemy Law did not link it directly to the Rushdie Affair so much as to the establishment of pure justice. Earlier, the primary survey of the content of the set of letters showed that the debate on the reform of the blasphemy law was central to the overall debate on the Rushdie Affair. Indeed it is worthwhile to read through the arguments which the debate on the Rushdie Affair evoked. There were in fact two main arguments: the largely pro-Rushdie argument that the Blasphemy Law is of a discriminating nature and it should therefore be repealed, and the one that calls for its extension.

Repealing the Law of Blasphemy is thus more conducive to the establishment of justice in a multi-faith society. However, it must be noted that although the majority of those who called for the abolition of the blasphemy law were pro-Rushdie, others also supported its abolition. Some advocates chose a mixed position towards Rushdie

(letters 38, 223). Others, who equally supported the abolition of the blasphemy law were, undecided (letters 42, 170, 213, 215, 232, 236, 242) which indicates that they were more concerned about the establishment of justice than they were about the Rushdie Affair per se.

Those who saw a point in preserving the Law of Blasphemy by extending it to cover religions other than Christianity, (letters 39, 192, 207) were divided in regard to their positions towards Rushdie. They were of a mixed position, an anti-Rushdie position and a pro-Rushdie position respectively. This also supports the argument that the concern of letter writers over the Law of Blasphemy was basically a search of justice regardless to whatever position they adopted towards the Rushdie Affair. The extension of the law of blasphemy indicates a search for justice for all faiths. The contradiction this encompasses, as the advocates of abolition argue, is that Blasphemy Law, whether covering one faith or all faiths, is a legalisation for the exercise of censorship.

### **7.5.2. Freedom of Expression and Freedom to Protest**

Muslims in the north England city of Bradford were at the centre of the controversy over the Rushdie Affair. The burning of a copy of the book in public on January 14, brought the city Muslims into the spotlight of the world's media and became subject to wide comment by letter writers. The salience of this particular group of Muslim protesters in the corpus of letters to editors of the national newspapers led us to deal with it as a variable coded as either a symbol of fundamentalism, or as having exercised a symbolic act of protest. Coding acts by the Bradford as a symbolic form of fundamentalism was inspired by the frequent reference in the letters to them as being so. Comparing it with variable six (i.e. pro or anti-Rushdie) resulted in a significant association (total chi-square = 20.31, DF = 9, p = 01).

Interestingly, all those letter writers who commented on the protest of some Muslims in Bradford against *The Satanic Verses* by the public burning of a copy of it were strictly decided on the Rushdie Affair. They were either pro-Rushdie or anti-Rushdie. In this part of the analysis one comes across contrasting images, displayed by Rushdie's supporters, between modern and medieval attitudes, between fanaticism, bigotry, intolerance and censorship and intellectual tolerance, tolerant Christian democracy and multi-culturalism. Two conspiracies were seen to have taken place (letter 3): one is an unholy alliance between reactionary Mullah-led Muslim activists in Bradford, "a particularly backward form of Punjabi village Islam" and the pseudo-left "multi-culturalist" movement in Britain. The left was seen as conspiring to remain supine on fundamental civil liberties for fear of being categorised as racist.

The other conspiracy was one of silence by secular-minded and progressive Pakistanis and Indians in Britain. They remain silent for fear of dividing their own minority community. The debate here draws on divisions within British society which I shall discuss in more detail later. It calls for left, right and centre to stand up against the ugly phenomena produced by the Mullah-led Bradford community. The cause of freedom was not just threatened by the left compromising on the Rushdie Affair but also by the right in the government of the day. Mrs Thatcher, herself a fundamentalist (letter 40), was to stand side by side with the left in not supporting Rushdie for fear that she would have missed "all the oil money required for lucrative rebuilding and rearming contracts".

When the reaction to the Bradford book burning protest was likened in a leader in *The Independent* to the Inquisition a Rushdie opponent (letter 4) advocated censorship in that "it was uncensored and unremitting anti-Semitic culture that culminated in the Holocaust". It is an argument which highlights the need for censorship to guarantee social harmony and societal peace. The protest was also advocated as a demonstration of displeasure in a "free democracy" (letter 12). "Reasonable people", says an

undecided letter writer (letter 35) “do not read books they do not like”. The construction of the Bradford Muslim’s protest is clearly one based on the issue of freedom, whether of expression or of the expression of protest. Not all letter writers concerned were in agreement on one construction or another. It is rather a blend of overlapping and, at times contrasting, positions.

### **7.5.3. British Society: Which identity?**

The survey revealed a sharp divide in regard to the identity of British society. In fact, much of the controversy that reflected in this set of letters centred around the theme of whether British society is characterised by multiplicity or by uni-dimensionalism. The chi-square test did not, however, result in a significant association between letter classification and the nature of British society (total chi-square = 5.57, DF = 9, p =.78).

Those who advocated the multiplicity thesis conceived of it in terms of multi-culturalism, multi-racialism, multi-lingualism and multi-faith. In the view of this group British society is basically secular and plural. Its plurality is supported by law. To accommodate the many races it hosts, it follows that rules of co-existence and, therefore, the sharing of a common morality, a civil duty and mutuality of respect are required. The advocates of uni-dimensionalism viewed British society as racist, illiberal, Christian and class ridden. Cultural others could only be accommodated when they accept the need to be assimilated. Minority rights were seen by some as inadequate and a less extreme view calls for minorities to integrate and merge within the mainstream cultural fabric. Sporadic views were otherwise expressed. They included the view that Britain is a free society. Others described it as a two-race society.

Similar to what we saw in the case of the Law of Blasphemy, a lack of significant association between the letter classification on the one hand and British society on the

other is likely to stem from diverse constructions of British society across the categories and within the same category of positions towards the Rushdie Affair. A combination of Pro-Rushdie letter writers (e. g. letters 3, 31, 44, 98, 142, 180, 207, 220), anti-Rushdie (e.g. letters 9, 23, 91, 192), mixed (e. g. letters 19, 23, 39) and undecided (e. g. letters 105, 143, 243, 251) agree in viewing British society as a multi-cultural, multi-faith, multi-lingual and multi-racial.

In one case a Rushdie supporter identifies British society as a “modern plural, multi-ethnic society” (letter 142), which is the “product of secularisation”. Clearly, a contrast is established here between religion and “modern freedoms” which resulted from the defeat of the “political pretensions of the Christian church, and it will continue to depend on defeating the pretensions of other religions” (letter 142). On the other side of the divide an anti-Rushdie letter writer (letter 9) depicts British society as “mono-cultural, mono-religious, mono-lingual society, where small minorities were integrated by adapting to the English way of life”. A letter writer who adopted a mixed position on the Rushdie Affair (letter 23) stipulates that a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-faith Britain should recognise and respect the views of those with whom it disagrees. For this letter writer “White, middle class men give media access to allow genuine, informed debate rather than just filming the marches and the book burning” - an implicit construction is virtually that multi-cultural Britain is one with a white middle class depriving racial minorities of their right to equal representation in the media. Comparison between British multi-culturalism and other western forms of multi-culturalism by an undecided letter writer (letter 143) requires British society to draw closer to the Canadian model of multi-culturalism which emphasises “multi-cultural pluralism” rather than to the American model which emphasises “assimilation”.

#### **7.5.4. The Radical; the Compromising; the Fundamentalist; and the *Fatwa***

The *Fatwa* was largely denounced as a medieval form of fundamentalism and a threat to the right to life by all the pro-Rushdie and most of the anti-Rushdie letter writers (total chi-square = 41.59, DF = 9, p=.0001). It was viewed as appalling, medieval, barbaric, abhorrent and as a kind of bigotry. It represented a violation of law, a form of fanaticism and served as a threat to peace and personal liberty. Sporadic representations reflected diverse concerns: that the *Fatwa* exposes the plight of Iranian writers inside Iran, that it fuels anti-Muslim sentiments or that it is an act of duty.

The *Fatwa* was issued by the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini who declared Salman Rushdie an apostate who deserves the death penalty. The issuing of the *Fatwa* created a series of political complexities involving the Iranian government and many Western governments: the British government in particular. Following its issue the pro-Rushdie letter writers resumed establishing a link between the *Fatwa* and Islamic fundamentalism in a manner similar to their reaction to the book burning in Bradford a month earlier. There was a widely shared representation that the *Fatwa* was the embodiment of an intolerance that threatens Britain's "traditional tolerance", and that "what the Muslim fundamentalists are demanding is nothing less than censorship by terror" (letter 72). In response to moderate Muslims who justified the *Fatwa* as "rhetorical", one pro-Rushdie supporter saw this as "at least" an irony (letter 71). Interestingly, a religious concept was employed, though satirically, in support of the pro-Rushdie's construction of the *Fatwa* as in letter (48): "It is Khomeini's declaration - *Fatwa* - which is an offence, a kind of blasphemy to those who cherish the democratic, rational freedoms the best minds of the ages have argued and fought for".

Anti-Rushdie letter writers, not only used diverse arguments for justifying the *Fatwa* - as some did, but some even disagreed with the *Fatwa* categorically. "Like many,

perhaps most Muslims, I do not support the Ayatollah's verdict, though I am no less angered by the book (Letter 141). Opposed to such a construction was another anti-Rushdie's (letter 49): "Ayatollah Khomeini, therefore, did his duty as a religious leader when he pronounced the death sentence against Salman Rushdie for his crime of high treason against the Muslim Ummah". Some staunch anti-Rushdie letter writers even chose, in opposition to the *Fatwa*, to question the belief held by "many people" that Khomeini speaks for the whole of Islam and for all Muslims (letter 91).

Clearly, almost all those who adopted a mixed or a neutral position towards Rushdie were angered by the *Fatwa*. They saw it as providing the fuel for anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant hatred (letter 70). Three letter writers (letters 46, 129, 169), who were of mixed or undecided positions, saw the *Fatwa* in the light of Britain's diplomatic or business interest in Iran. "There is far more to Anglo-Iranian relations than any single incident" (letter 46). Preserving such interests, then, led to calling for a compromise on the *Fatwa* ranging from the use of diplomatic channels for bringing an end to the *Fatwa* to demanding a law to protect feelings and beliefs from such a "freedom without responsibility". The *Fatwa* thus evoked a spectrum of response ranging from the radical one dealing with it as a serious threat to the right to life through a pragmatic response which equates it with the damage it caused to Britain's business interest to the fundamentalist one which conceives of it as an act of religious duty that should be executed.

#### **7.5.5. Freedom of Expression: Absolute or relative?**

Freedom of expression was so frequently commented on by letter writers, at the outset, that it seemed, as if the entire debate was about freedom of expression. In a sense this is true since the Rushdie Affair was largely about the use and abuse of freedoms and of rights. Writers, authors and civil rights activists went public in defence of freedom of expression. Freedom of expression was defined so sharp by leaving almost no room

for compromise. Letter writers were either for freedom of expression as an absolute value or for its responsible use. Results show that there is a significant association between letter classification and freedom of expression (total chi-square = 149.27, DF = 9, p =.0001).

Proponents of freedom of expression admired it as a sacred principle that symbolises respect for the individual. It is necessary for artistic growth. As a right covering both readers and writers it becomes something of an absolute right as it is presumed to cover, indiscriminately, literature, dogma, propaganda and argument. It ought to grant the right to publish against all sorts of sensitivities. In the meantime the 'yes... but' lobby excluded freedom to express insults as a right to be granted, hence their argument for the responsible use of freedom of expression.

It is remarkable that letter writers who opposed Rushdie were very much supporting the construction of freedom of expression as not being an absolute right. This lobby laboured to convince readers that *The Satanic Verses* is an insult to Islam and to values that Muslims hold dear. "Misusing" the freedom of expression to insult "can only backfire in the long run as it did in the 1920s when freedom of expression of irresponsible opinion, expressed in the waves of anti-Semitic literature, has cost the lives of such a huge number of Jews as well as Christians and Muslims" (letter 22). The history of the Holocaust is recalled and employed to serve the cause of a "censored" freedom of expression. That freedom to "do and say what one likes" is also questioned by another opponent (letter 68) as being a "human right". A responsibility lies with people to bear witness to the fact that, when harmful speech is published, that poison is poison. There are forms of protest against such an absolute freedom of expression based on the cost of exercising freedom of expression. One such example (letter 184) views freedom of expression as "everyone's concern" but in the case of Rushdie, who "earned enough money from *The Satanic Verses*", the cost to the public

purse is high. This is, however, another example where principles call for a pragmatic compromise.

In contrast, Rushdie's proponents as well as a very small number of mixed and undecided letter writers opted, uncompromisingly, for the construction that freedom of expression is an absolute right that should be adhered to strongly. As compromise on freedom of expression requires an admission of censorship, the latter is viewed as dangerous (letter 6). Freedom of speech is so comprehensive and fundamental that it covers freedom of speech on “*all* (italics in original) subjects, including Mohammed and Allah” (letter 69). With the formal censorship of books ended in 1812, any debate that challenges “Holy word or the Christian faith” should serve to strengthen the faithful (letter 185). However, this is a contrasting representation of freedom of expression to the one reviewed earlier which calls for censorship to protect the faithful (letter 22). Censorship of freedom of expression is also viewed in the form of extending the Blasphemy Law. An argument against this form of censorship is that in a plural society “the only acceptable restriction is if the insult is likely to provoke violence or public disorder” (letter 213). Public order, here, could do away with the need to exercise censorship by enacting further blasphemy laws.

#### **7.5.6. Islam between Fundamentalism and Tolerance**

A view that Islam encourages fundamentalism and discriminates against other faiths like Christianity, as opposed to a construction that it is a peaceful, tolerant, religion, was voiced. Some staunch supporters of Rushdie conceived of it as intolerant, troublesome, afraid of freedom, arrogant, offensive to groups such as feminists, liberals or secularists. At the other extreme, those who opposed Rushdie constructed Islam as generous, tolerant and encouraging free thinking. In fact, as a central issue in the debate about the Rushdie Affair Islam was dealt with from various perspectives. A significant

association between letter classification and Islam was reported (total chi-square = 22.79, DF = 9, p = 0067).

There appears to be a shared agreement between Rushdie's proponents and those with undecided position towards Rushdie in their representation of Islam. It is a construction whose general nature is not positive, and sometimes stereotypical. One pro-Rushdie letter writer (letter 100), depicted the Koran - Islam's holy book - as a "book deeply offensive to feminists, liberals and secularists". Such a construction has a pretext. Modern civil liberties, as mentioned earlier in this discussion, are the product of the process of secularisation - itself an achievement of western modernity and the Enlightenment. By way of contrast, with "prophet Mohammed born 1500 years ago, belief does not evolve at the same speed as knowledge in a species such as ours" (letter 130). An undecided letter writer (letter 152) asserts an extreme stereotypical construction of Islam: "Muhammad commanded that all people who would not convert to Islam should be beheaded - unless they were already Jews or Christians". Furthermore, Muslims regard Christianity as blasphemous, and Islam's holy book advises Moslems to avoid friendship with Christians and Jews" (letter 231).

Rushdie's opponents as well as some letter writers with a mixed or undecided position towards Rushdie displayed a tendency to construct an image of Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance. Not just theoretically, claims an anti-Rushdie letter writer (letter 24), but also in actual practice, Islam is tolerant and generous towards non-Muslim minorities - citing some examples in support of his argument. Commenting on a leading article in *The Independent* an undecided letter writer (letter 50) attempted to correct "a number of misunderstandings", contained in the leader, "which are all too common in the western world". "Islam", he continues, "has always been de-centralised, and free thinking has always flourished somewhere within its domains". Reference to misrepresentations of Islam is more frequent among Rushdie's opponents. In this respect there is no corroborative evidence that Islam sentences those who change their

religion to death; rather the holy Koran states: “There is no compulsion in matters of religion” (letter 206).

## **7.6. Editorialising: The choice of titles for the letters section**

This analysis would remain incomplete if the titles given by editors or sub-editors to the letters section of the newspaper were not commented on. Editors not only choose titles for the letters they publish in their newspapers, but they also choose which letters to publish. This is why editors assume an important role in relation to the data content-analysed in this chapter. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, nine newspapers are investigated. As explained earlier, two newspapers (*The daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror*) did not publish any letters on the Rushdie Affair during the surveyed period. For the 264 published letters, a total of 138 titles were provided, understandably, titles were chosen in such a way that they would reflect the content of letter(s). But a title is not just the editor’s own representation of the content of the letter(s). It is also what the newspaper’s editorial policy says. Such are the factors which determine how an editor constructs the title. Editorialisation is, therefore about setting the representational frame of the published letters.

A distinct difference exists in how the tabloid and the middle sized newspapers on the one side and the broadsheets on the other construct their titles. The former construct titles which are plain and direct. Categorisation along racial, cultural or religious grounds surface in almost all titles. Their ten titles are, on average, shorter than those of the broadsheets. They are directed to the rank and file - something which is no secret since such press, which is deemed to be the popular press, addresses the masses in the street rather than an educated elite. Rushdie’s opponents are deemed by *The Daily Express* “*These troublemakers*” who “*should be deported*”. After the issuing of the *Fatwa* the same newspaper writes “*Show these Iranians the iron fist*”. The focus on the issue of freedom in titles of the broadsheets gives way to a confrontational discourse

in the titles of the tabloids and the middle sized newspapers. *The Sun* also writes “*Moaning Muslims should all go home*”. Elsewhere, *The Daily Express* chooses to describe the Muslim protesters as “*Like the Nazis*.

The titles of letters in the broadsheets are reasonably expressive of the fundamental frame in which the letters were analysed, that is, the issue of freedom. Such a frame is inclusively shared by all the broadsheets sampled. Advocacy of freedom, whether of expression or otherwise, was central to almost all titles as shown by many of the letters published in the broadsheets. In this respect different newspapers show the same content. Apart from this, the newspapers’ political persuasion, whether left, centre or right, appears to effect some difference. Here each newspaper has its own house style.

A right-wing newspaper like *The Daily Telegraph* did not lag behind the more liberal newspapers like *The Independent* and *The Guardian* in the campaign for freedom. The 20 titles given to letters included: *Fundamental right* (i.e. freedom of expression), *Time to abolish blasphemy*, *Right to publish* and *When in Bradford*. Concurrently, *The Daily Telegraph* also had its own agenda: constructions in defence of sanctity surfaced as in: *Man’s new freedom destroying sanctity*. Elsewhere, it (*The Telegraph*) tended to maintain a degree of neutrality, declaring *Double standards over book burning*, *Shared extremes in fundamentalism* or *Integration key word in race relations*. Another right-wing newspaper, *The Times*, advocated, but more reluctantly and less frequently, the freedom of expression. *The Times’* general characteristic over the 34 titles was, however, the construction of neutrality and indecisiveness. There were 13 titles reading *The Satanic Verses* only. Titles like *Not simple to test blasphemy*, *Rushdie and the freedom of speech*, *Blasphemy law* or *Dr Runcie and fundamentalism* share almost the same degree of neutrality.

A sharp contrast to *The Times* was perhaps drawn by centre-left newspapers like *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and, to a lesser extent, *The Observer*. Titles by these three newspapers were conspicuously vocal on freedom - the freedom of expression in particular. Indecisiveness played no role in the constructions which the editors or sub-editors of these newspapers provided. As we indicated earlier, the press by its very nature as well as being an industry is all about freedom of expression. *The Guardian's* drive to shape its titles to the group of letters it published as constructions in favour of the freedom of expression is unmistakable in most of its 28 titles. There were titles like *Blasphemy is next to publicity*, *A freedom that is not for everyone* and *A ban on Rushdie's book is no answer to heresy*. *The Guardian* was also clearly opposed to fundamentalism with constructions like *How fundamentalists have tarnished the name of Islam*. There were radical constructions against compromised attitudes by both left and right players in the political arena: *Left and Right in a political dilemma over the Ayatollah's threats*. Like *The Guardian*, *The Independent* did not compromise on the issue of freedom of expression. Its 41 titles included *Hard-won freedom*, *Rally to Rushdie*, *Rushdie and Galileo* and *No deception by Rushdie*. *The Independent's* tendency to question issues in relation to Islam like attitudes towards women and whether Muslims are free to question their beliefs, surfaced in constructions such as *The status of Muslim women* and *Muslims and the freedom to question belief* respectively. Even *The Observer's* six titles did not conceal constructions of freedom as in *Freedom to give offence*.

## 7.7. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight the issue of the press and social representations. The media, the press in particular, are assumed to be an important source of social representations. According to Moscovici (1961), they generate, transform and disseminate social representations. In the West, the media are too powerful to remain

passive by-standers in the process of constructing representations. The Rushdie Affair raises, yet again, the long-standing controversy over the link between social representations (as a form of knowledge) and power. The Rushdie Affair has poured ink aplenty in the press. Letters to the press in response to the publication of *The Satanic Verses* are, possibly, one of the richest forms of press coverage of the Rushdie Affair for investigating social representations of Islam in the West. This was particularly so because such letters represented a thinking society at work, and involved, to a large extent, constructing an image of Islam based on the Muslim response to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. The issuing of the *Fatwa* by Ayatollah Khomeini evoked an even stronger reaction than the burning, by some Muslims in Bradford, of a copy of the book.

The quantitative analysis of the letters to the press was guided by a comparison between pro-Rushdie, anti-Rushdie, mixed or undecided positions of letter writers towards the Rushdie Affair. Freedom, and freedom both of expression and of protest in particular, were, however, so central to the debate as reflected with letters to editors of the national newspapers which were content-analysed in this chapter. Such a focus on freedom brought into the debate a whole range of issues concerning civil liberties, minority rights, multi-culturalism, plural societies, and human rights. Religion was also a prevailing issue throughout the debate. Images from the history of religion, whether Islam or Christianity, were recalled and employed in support of conflicting constructions and arguments. Ideological as well as sub-cultural divisions within British society emerged in the debate. These included left-right-centre divides; minority-majority cultures; and religious-secular divisions.

The Rushdie Affair, as a study of the letters to the press, remains open to further analysis. This chapter is a mere start.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Speaking Out: Social representations of Islam in group discussion**

This chapter aims, through conducting discussions by homogeneous groups and analysing the subsequent transcripts, at exploring the patterns and contents of the social representations of Islam in Britain. The substance of such representations is formed of the descriptions, argumentation and other forms of expression by the group members<sup>1</sup>. By selecting groups of diverse social strata with varying educational levels and comprising different generations active in the British public sphere it is hoped to elicit diverse, yet unified representations of Islam. Diversity is a function of the heterogeneity of the groups while unity is likely to reflect the oneness of the community from which the groups are recruited.

As the last of the three empirical studies, the present chapter is intended to complement the two previous ones. The three studies together are expected to result in a better understanding of the social representations of Islam in modern Britain. In this context, group discussions represent a separate yet equally important method of research. This triangulation of methods (i.e. with the participant observational study reported in chapter six and content analysis of the media reported in chapter seven) is likely to verify the existence of the social representations first discovered in other contexts. Unlike the methods employed in the two preceding chapters, group discussion is based on a different empirical reality. Groups are allowed to speak their minds in regard to Islam with the minimum of intervention by the group facilitator. Coming from the same occupational background (e.g. students, librarians, secretaries etc.), group members are given the freedom to discuss a given issue and to respond to each others' comments. These conditions are thought to generate the rapport needed to keep the discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Transcripts and tapes of the discussions referred to in this chapter are available from the author, upon request: P.O. Box 321, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, University of Khartoum, Sudan.

flowing. A group is itself a social setting which enriches the social nature of the representations constructed in the course of discussion. Group discussion is known to, and employed by, social scientists in social research. Nonetheless its relevance as an appropriate method of inquiry in the exploration of social representations has yet to be established (Farr, Trutkowski and Hözl 1996).

### **8.1. Group Discussion and Social Representations**

According to Farr there is no single royal road, in terms of methods of research, to the study of social representations (Farr 1993a). It was the hope of Moscovici in introducing the theory of social representations to explore, or rather to re-instate, the social in social psychology. However, this gives precedence to theory over method. In this respect, theory leads to the development of methods appropriate to the object of its inquiry. As a theory of social genre the theory of social representations has, therefore, sought methods that are explicitly social in nature. That is why one can argue here that the theory of social representations is not unfamiliar with group discussion as an appropriate method of inquiry. Among other methods, group discussion is now being used in social psychological research perhaps with social representations and research in rhetorical psychology in the lead. Group discussion has, for a long time, been used in sociological research. With the introduction of the theory of social representations by Moscovici as a sociological form of social psychology, it was natural that group discussion would be used as an appropriate method of research. An increasing number of social representations PhD students are now employing it in collecting and analysing their data. In their recent paper *Public Opinion, Group Discussion and the Theory of Social Representations*, Farr et al argue that Moscovici's "thinking society" (Moscovici 1984) could be likened to the discussion group. They view the discussion group as "the thinking society" in miniature (Farr, Trutkowski & Hözl 1996).

The introduction of the notion of the thinking society was certainly vital to an articulation of the theory of social representations. By “the thinking society” Moscovici means to say that societies, as well as individuals, exhibit thinking (Moscovici 1984). He refutes the, until recently, fashionable behaviourist conception that man responds to an act of stimulation rather than being a thinker in his own right. According to Moscovici, man thinks and understands rather than just behaves. In developing the notion of the thinking society, Moscovici was conspicuously concerned about two things: (a) a communicative environment, that is, the myriad of circumstances laying the groundwork for human communication and, (b) the people’s beliefs, ideologies, achievements and social representations. By the former Moscovici was apparently mapping a situation whilst by the latter he was concerned about an infrastructure including culture, ideology, faith, cognition etc. Both factors, it is arguable, concur to render a society a thinking society. The discussion group is a microcosm of this thinking society. Discussion groups are usually those groups whose members know each other and are, therefore, familiar with one another prior to the start of their discussion (Farr, Trutkowski & Hözl 1996). By being so acquainted, embarrassment is reduced to a minimum and spontaneity (i.e. the free flow of discussion) can be ensured.

One of the studies in which group discussion is superbly deployed is Billig’s *Talking of the Royal Family* (Billig 1992). Sixty three families, a total of 175 persons, held independent meetings to talk of the British Royal Family. Billig prefers to call his method interviews though, loose as they were, they are group discussions in their own right. Billig’s sample was quite a large one for a qualitative social psychological study. His interviewer, who did not have a strict list of questions, was instructed to trigger the discussion and to refrain from intervening thereafter unless intervention was needed to revitalise the discussion. This is very similar to the role of the moderator in group discussions.

Billig's study was based on a theoretical background of what he calls rhetorical psychology, which presupposes that thinking is formed within discourse. It assumes that common sense thinking is fundamentally argumentative (Billig 1992). In analysing the data delivered by his 63 interviews, Billig was keen to look for commonalities rather than differences between groups as the latter are more often the focus of attitude research and opinion poll surveys. Commonalities exist, Billig tells us, in both what is said and what is not said in discourse. Unlike opinion poll surveys, Billig was looking for the consensual in common sense which also causes controversy to look controversial. In so doing, Billig was, in a way, looking for the shared culture or the shared in culture. Farr (1990) depicted as culture what social psychologists call common sense and lay explanations, and what cognitive theorists call real-world knowledge, scripts, scenarios or even mental models. This thesis presupposes that culture is not only an essential component of social representations, but that it also influences them (see chapter one). The researcher is acutely aware of the many differences between Billig's study and the study reported here, the former may identify with the latter in emphasising the cultural and the argumentative in group discussions which deliver representations as an end product.

## **8.2. Towards Defining the Problem: Some theoretical notes**

Islam, perhaps, is not so frequent a topic of discussion to most members of the public in Britain. Nor does it form, under normal circumstances, part of gossip or ordinary conversations in pubs, at tea breaks or over lunch. Only Islamic issues of great domestic or international importance, like the Rushdie Affair (see the preceding chapter), the Western hostages in the Middle East or the Gulf War have been, it might appear, high on the agenda of public debate. The history of Islam as a resident religion in Britain does not go back very far. The Muslim community in this country has taken shape only recently, following the migrations of citizens of the former British Empire,

almost all of whose colonies are now independent. Most of these immigrants came either from the Indian sub-continent, Africa, the Caribbean, or the Middle East. Indeed, immigrants from the Indian sub-continent form the biggest single group amongst the Muslim community. With most of them coming from the same regions or the same ethnic background 'back home', they chose to settle in the same areas upon their arrival in Britain. Bengalis, for instance, chose to live in London's East End whilst Punjabis from Pakistan represent the majority of the population in the North England city of Bradford. In such areas there is little doubt that Islam is well placed on the agendas of public debate at a community level as issues relating to Islam arise so often. Such debate usually transcends the interests of local councillors, town hall or mayors and educationalists and helps to set the agendas for the local media, peer groups and other fora of social interaction.

In the preceding chapters two empirical studies were conducted and reported. Their foci are members of the British security service and a section of the British national press. This chapter's focus is slightly different. It is about the way Islam is socially represented in group discussions. Groups who talk of Islam in this study come from the same general cultural background as do participants in the other two studies. Indeed, there are as many similarities between the three studies as there are differences. It goes without saying that all three studies are about forms of knowledge acquired by British subjects, and used by them in identifying Islam at least for the purposes of conversing about it. In Moscovici's own depiction these representations are useful in making Islam familiar to them (Moscovici 1984). The results obtained in the three studies are not claimed to be of universal significance. They remain strictly within their very empirical contexts. Given this, such results may serve as indicators of social representations of Islam in a wider British context.

Each of the three studies is quite distinct. The data analysed here are the arguments used by members of a discussion group who are familiar with each other and who chose,

willingly, to take part in the discussion. The fact that these groups convened willingly, in response to the invitation of the researcher, makes them different from the participants in the other two studies. The suspect terrorist did not volunteer to be interrogated. Those who wrote letters to the editors of national newspapers had a particular point of view they wished to express about the Rushdie Affair, they were self-selected. Members of groups in the present study are not renowned academics, or experts, or area correspondents of the press, who contributed the data of the preceding chapters. They are, rather, ordinary people who are familiar with each other. Their only privilege, in the context of this study, was that they belonged to an academic institution, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where they were likely to have enjoyed more exposure to Islam than many other members of the public. The LSE is widely identified as an academic institution hosting a largely multi-national community of students. A significant number of these students come from Muslim countries like Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Middle East or are British Muslims. An active LSE students' Islamic Society has been organising, for the last few years, debates on Islam to which public figures have been invited to contribute. The participants' willingness to participate in the discussion, and the fact that they know each other, resulted in spontaneity and an easy flow of discussion. In a live debate under similar circumstances argumentation is nowhere better accounted for.

The method used in the present chapter is expected to yield social representations which are closer to those of the ordinary man in the street. Further to Billig's study on the representations of the Royal family (Billig 1992), one would agree with Jodelet that social representations are a form of common-sense knowledge (Jodelet 1988). They are in the media as well as in people's minds (Farr 1990). The representations the present study looks for are, perhaps, the ones emanating from that general culture. They are less likely to be affected by state policy, interest groups or 'big brothers'. They are the sort of social representations which could also be influenced by the personal experience of the individual member of the group. Such influence might be exerted through

interaction with a Muslim in the work place, having a Muslim neighbour, a Muslim husband or by travelling to a Muslim country.

However, this is not to rule out, or to underestimate, the influence exerted by the mass media of communication (see discussion of the media and social representations of Islam in the West in the preceding chapter). By admitting the influence of the media, the influence of state policy, of experts or of a 'big brother' is, therefore, implicitly admitted. Their influence is mediated rather than direct. Indeed, the separation of representations formed by culture from those constructed by the media exist only on the theoretical level. Thus, separation is employed here solely for technical considerations. This said, the social representations of Islam which surface in group discussions may be less structured, perhaps, than those of the members of the security services or the writers of letters to the press which were reported in the previous two chapters.

### **8.3. Procedure: Group discussions at work**

Group discussion, also called focus groups, is a method of research conducted by convening a group of people to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator. Conducting group discussions requires the selection of groups which are thought to serve the objectives of the study. Initially five groups: LSE undergraduate students; LSE librarians; LSE technicians; LSE secretaries and LSE postgraduate students were chosen to form the thinking societies in miniature of this study.

Not only because of the participants' availability in the locality where the research is being conducted were these groups selected, but also the LSE as an educational institution is believed to be conducive to the exercise of open and free speech. Extra-curricular debates convened almost everyday are believed to have spontaneously trained the LSE community to engage in discussion without much fear of reprisal. However, the researcher is conscious of the possibility that debating a topic such as Islam might

have incited a degree of sensitivity on the part of some group members, especially since the researcher, himself a Muslim, acted as a moderator of the discussion groups.

The groups comprised persons ranging in age from well under twenty to over sixty. Participants were not required to provide background information such as their names, their social, educational or even religious background. However, education-wise participants came from quite a heterogeneous background. One group comprised undergraduates in their second year of study; another group were postgraduate students at the School. The groups of librarians, secretaries and technicians had a range of professional qualifications, usually at a sub-degree level, though the group of librarians did contain some graduates.

Five groups of between 4-6 members each, totalling 25 persons, took part in the discussions. The recruitment of participants followed diverse methods. The undergraduates group was selected by calling for volunteers in a second year social psychology class. The secretaries and technicians were contacted individually by phone, and upon their approval they were informed about the time and place of meetings. An advertisement was displayed in the library for librarians. Another advertisement was displayed in the LSE's newsletter and also circulated in the research students' rooms at the LSE.

Each session lasted one hour, during lunch time, in a room at the School. In two cases (librarians and postgraduates) the duration lasted only 55 minutes. That was because some of the librarians were required to report to the service desk at the beginning of the hour, whilst the postgraduates session started five minutes later than scheduled. At the beginning of each session the moderator informed the participants about the research project and that the topic they were going to debate was their view of Islam. Leaving the issue of debate as open as that was, in fact, intentional so that the discussion would flow freely and rule out any likelihood that the debate, apart from being about Islam,

would appear too structured.

Himself a participant observer, the role of the researcher was to furnish the needed interactive nature of the discussion. Participants were told, in advance, that the discussions would be tape-recorded, transcribed and would only be strictly used for the very purpose of research in this thesis. A £10 bonus was paid to each participant following the completion of each session. After the five discussion groups were conducted the taped discussion was transcribed by the researcher and another assistant. Pauses, laughter, giggles as well as uttered debate were all transcribed.

#### **8.4. Interpretation: Extracting meaning out of data**

According to Said knowledge is interpretation, and 'interpretation is first of all a form of making' (Said 1981). Said's 'interpretation' is what we deem social representations, a form of common-sensical knowledge which this thesis is wholly devoted to exploring. To achieve this in the context of this chapter, one is required to determine how the five transcripts of the group discussions could be refined, sorted and, after all, interpreted. Indeed, the data potentially available is too vast to analyse exhaustively in the limited space of the present chapter. With most of the participants prefacing their first contributions with the modest phrase 'basically I know very little', this may indicate that participants had nothing meaningful to say. Conversely, there is a wealth of knowledge in the discussion.

In this qualitative study a thematic analysis is conducted. There are a number of themes which appear consistently across the groups. Group discussions are the thinking societies which give rise to these representations. But it is themes rather than groups that form the units of analysis. Under the cloak of such themes meanings are concealed, and by removing the wrappings representations unfold. In doing so, it is the shared or the consensual nature of representations that are reported. However, exploring the

shared does not mean that the results obtained are claimed to have a universal significance. As mentioned earlier in this chapter such representations remain valid within the context of the present study, albeit conveying, eventually, a hint of the representations of a wider public. Representations of a controversial nature are also reported. With the super-abundance of data it is only the salient themes that will be identified and analysed.

#### **8.4.1. Religion in our own Eyes**

Islam is a religion. Participants across all groups identify it from this angle. As a religion it is not culture: "Of course, it's not a culture, it's a religion" (Secretaries Group, p.17). Conversely, another participant sees it as a cultural agenda. Religion is more than just an abstract notion. In the Western context, it evokes various images, most of them terrifying, memories of conflicts, of persecution, of absolute power. When dealing with religion, its functions have to be defined. In defining its functions this again brings to the fore a whole range of historical and cultural elements. The Western conception of religion as a private matter bears a great deal of importance in this regard.

It should be noted that the discussion was in no set order in that one theme was exhausted before another emerged. Themes are mixed and before one theme is fully dealt with, another one arises. This is the manner in which the construction of Islam as a religion appears in the discussion.

Islam as a religion is seen as both a system of control and a source of trouble. Religions serve to keep societies under control. They are still bad, why does conflict exist everywhere? But with the development of argumentation the antithesis re-surfaces. Religion is not that bad. It is just like money which is not bad in itself. It is, rather, what one does with money that matters:

*- I can't honestly say I'm a very religious person because if you look at the world today*

*all the troubles in this world at the moment are due to different religious factions.*  
- *But most religions are controlling elements. Aren't they there to keep you under control aren't they? They are there to say if you are bad there is a big...*  
- *Well I don't know. It is all about control. It's to keep a structure to keep people not in their place but to keep anarchy at bay I suppose. It's a cultural agenda as well. It's a set of rules as well I guess a set a set of values maybe. Maybe it's more on that level as well.*  
*(Technicians Group, p.6)*

The saga over religion continues. It touches everything, in every direction:

- *Well, a lot of conflicts are caused by religion aren't they? They are not really caused by religion. They are caused by people, aren't they?*  
- *Well, difference is in religion. But people find something to be different about. Aren't they? It would be race, bald people ...*  
- *If religion was such a good thing why there is so much conflict?*  
- *I don't think religion is a good thing. If it gets you through your day, and gets you through your life then fair enough.*  
- *It's like money. It isn't bad a thing. It's what you do with it that's the problem. It's the same with religion. If you are a strict Muslim and you practise and you feel good about it then why not? But ....*

*(Technicians Group, p.9)*

As a system of control, Islam is reconstructed as hegemonic. In the preceding chapter it was noticed that Islam, constructed as fundamentalism, was contrasted with freedom. It is again another sort of fundamentalism: control. Then enters the construction of religion as a source of conflict. It is not only the historical experience of religion that revives into the living Western memory the view that religion is a source of conflict. Many conflicts in today's world are incited in the name of religion - from Northern Ireland to Afghanistan. However, such a profile of religion implies a counter move of control by those who fear its incitement to conflict:

- *The thing I find very frightening is when they (Muslims) mix religion and politics. I mean it happens in a number of countries and it happens in countries with Islam and I just find that really frightening. There is no questioning. This is what it says and this is what you'll do. There is no room for bargaining.*

*(Secretaries Group, p.4)*

The solution to the conflict syndrome is not to mix the secular (state) and the sacred (religion). This is the outcome that was eventually settled in the West beginning with the Enlightenment. But a view widely shared by many Muslims is that Islam is a whole

way of life. As such, it enjoys its authority over both the sacred and the profane. But, by mixing religion and politics, Islam encourages disorder:

- *The thing when you mix politics with religion so deeply it gets so messy any way.*  
(Undergraduates Group, p.4)

Against the received wisdom some voices raise the view that there is power in mergers:

- *That's what is making us a weak society really. Isn't it? Whereas Islam have got government and religion merged so it makes it ...*  
- *No matter what we think or what we know about them, they are powerful in my impression.*  
(Librarians Group, p.11)

Western modernity has resulted in the modern secular world. Secularism is a highly salient feature of Western culture whose influence has transformed both the private and the public spheres. When it comes to representing a cultural other, e.g. Islam, secularism occupies centre stage. It appears in the frequent rejection of the mixing of religion and politics. This is certainly true about the West, as Said (1978) pointed in his book, *Orientalism*, which exposes the ways in which the West constructs Islam under the aegis of Orientalism. To him Orientalism is a Western construction of Islam for the West's own benefit. In agreement with Said, throughout this study, as well as in the other empirical studies in this thesis, when secularism is used to construct Islam the result is a construction influenced by Western culture and for the West's own sake.

#### **8.4.2. Them and Us... the Debate Continues**

As the debate continues, constructions of Islam and of its Muslim adherents unfold. The manner in which such constructions exist is often shaped by the contrast between 'us' and 'them'. The self and the cultural other. Constructions are critical, sympathetic, suspicious, or, an expression of fear. As *an* other Islam, both at home and abroad, stands as different:

- *I still think there is a difference between someone who's a kind of... people in a secular state can take or leave their religion. They use it for their own purposes. They may have a*

*belief in God but they don't have a structured value system around that. Whereas Islam, because of the fact that it forms the bias of Islamic law in Islamic countries, and when people come abroad Islamic communities are very kind of alien in a lot of ways. And they thought that they are very un-secular that tends to promote again the use of a value system to define themselves culturally or whatever. So I think that is something that perhaps makes Islam stand as different from other religions.*

*(Postgraduates Group, p.4)*

Another example where the otherness of the Muslim is bluntly constructed draws on an even broader Western identity which is trans-national. In this context an American, for instance, is one of 'us', whilst a Muslim is *an other*:

*- If somebody come (sic) from a country like America, you know, as an American he is just like somebody else. But if somebody come (sic) from, say, a Muslim country he is prejudiced by having some label attached to him. Based on prejudice like...*

*(Undergraduates Group, p.5)*

In psychological terms the identification of someone as 'us' is, not devoid of a strong sense, even if not made explicit, of pride and power. Man, generally speaking, tends to hide his/her 'us' when it is a source of danger or when it is socially degrading. Moreover, representations, not ruling out an individual element in them, are socially constructed (Said 1993). Associated with power, as post-colonial discourse in the social sciences argues, representations tend to keep the other subordinate and inferior as Said has profoundly remarked in his book *Culture & Imperialism*. Following the same line of argument, representations by the powerful of the less powerful other emanate from such an ethos of the powerfulness of 'us' i.e. the perspective of the in-group as distinct from the out-group. In this context Muslims, a participant from the secretaries group noted, lack personal choice, lack personal freedom and that anyone who is a Muslim has to either toe the line or to be thrown out of the family (Secretaries Group, p.11). Such an assertive statement, regardless of its validity, is based on an unquestionable degree of confidence. It is a confidence that could only be the outcome of a strong sense of power which the participant possesses. Indeed the image of the other as shaped by the horrible happenings in his/her own territory feeds such a store of confidence. Images from the present Muslim world not only indicate a lack of personal freedom, but a lack of personal security too. Another secretary expressed the view that

when news of events in Algeria are heard, one thinks that Muslims are going to go about chopping off people's hands and heads (Secretaries Group, p.9). A post-colonial discourse may argue that such images are even portrayed selectively as news. However, whether selectively displayed or not, does not, in fact, deny their actual existence. Halliday (1996) has argued that if there are myths about Islam they are invented and propagated by practices shared by both the West and Muslims. In this respect they are co-constructed.

The discourse of power continues. Power is also seen to exist on the side of the other in various forms. A librarian sees an element of political power possessed by some unnamed Muslim countries where a lot of wealth like oil is found. Furthermore, there is great coherence between people because of their religion (Librarians Group, p.5). A monolithic representation of Islam ceases to exist, in some instances, where a distinction is made between this Muslim country and the other. That is, there is a country like Iran, a librarian said, where politics and religion are merged, whilst there are also countries like Egypt and Turkey where there is no such merger, and that women are being encouraged into education (Librarians Group, p.11). Surprisingly, but not unexpectedly, a critique of what is, perhaps, seen as an ethno-centric West arises:

*- I think because we live in the Western society, the Western society that's portraying itself as the ultimate supreme being in the entire world and anything that's not "us" is not in democracy, is not seen as culture or something that has anything to offer. The world is so betrayed...*  
*- I think Islam is so different.*  
*- I don't mean strange, but different.*  
(Librarians Group, p.3)

#### **8.4.3. The Media and Islamic Fundamentalism: The construction of an image**

The media remain as a crucial force in shaping and transmitting representations. When the history of today is written the media might well be identified not just as a vehicle for

conveying components of culture. Over and above, they may be seen as a cultural component in its own right. The influence of the printing press, the steam engine or the computing machine, viewed from the perspective of the present day, is their determining of the things to do rather than just how to do them. The same will be true about the media now. It is true that upon their advent, the media with their electronic revolution, appeared beneficial in determining how things could be done more efficiently. As we see them, today the media are determining what we do. Therefore, we see the transformation today, through information technology, for instance, of the capitalist economies from jobs focused on labour intensive activities like heavy industry to knowledge-based industries like the financial services. This is a change more in terms of what we do, than of how we do it. As such, this is a cultural transformation, with the media being right at the heart of it. That is why the media are, and will remain, powerful.

As in the preceding empirical studies, the media emerge, yet again, as an ever powerful source of forming and diffusing social representations of Islam. Surprisingly, the media are both a potent source of representations and a target of mistrust. That they are the source of the constructions of Islam is either directly admitted by participants or is evident from the events and images which represent the content of their voiced representations. There is plenty of evidence of the growing role of the media, both in generating and in diffusing representations. For one, as concluded earlier in this thesis (chapters six and seven), the media have almost taken over, in terms of constructing and diffusing representations of Islam, from academe which had established and sustained for some time the tradition of Orientalism. Academe was, and remains, restricted to a small community formed of experts, government officials, researchers and students. The media, with a global outreach, are, more or less, making their service available to many people in the world. The range of choice, in terms of type of medium from print press to audio-visuals, accords the media an additional influence.

The representation of Islam by the media as a fundamentalist phenomenon does not fail to draw one's attention as one reads through the transcripts of the groups' discussions.

A technician made the following statement:

*- Well, I suppose most of the view you get is through the media. I guess it is not through personal knowledge but it is just what the media actually provides as an example of what Islam is. Millions of people obviously adhere to a doctrine. So from that point of view there may be something that the West fears about the growth of Islam and fundamentalism.*

*(Technicians Group, p.1)*

One undergraduate student believes that one gets the impression from the media that Muslims are, more or less, like a derivative religion, and that there are many reactionary fundamentalists who have some rather extreme beliefs. As a fundamentalist phenomenon, Islam "wants to spread it all to the world" (Undergraduates Group, p.2).

The media occupy a dominant position as a source of representations of Islam as put by a postgraduate:

*- I personally, certainly not through my school, little through my family, other than perhaps through discussion. Certainly at a young age we would discuss things pertaining to Islam, but almost entirely from the media.*

*(Postgraduates Group, p.9)*

Media coverage of certain issues in connection with Islam is frequently cited as serving as a source of some knowledge about Islam. Examples of this are the Salman Rushdie Affair and television programmes displaying Muslim women with head scarves (Librarians Group, pp.4/5). That the media play a role in constructing images of extremism was articulated by an undergraduate who admitted that he relies on the news in the media, and that "the news in the media can find a story in a kind of people like extremists" (Undergraduates Group, p.6). It is perhaps true that some members of the public are viewing the news media as inventing and sustaining the construction of fundamentalism as a news prerequisite. This job description leads us to the construction of the media themselves by the participants. There, trust in the media is wearing thin as they are largely conceived of as having their own agendas.

#### 8.4.4. In the Media We Do not Trust

Trust in the media by participants across the groups is diminishing. There seems to be a tacit consensus that the media portray a negative image of Islam. In some cases there is a belief that the media stereotype Islam. However, there is a curious paradox in this respect. That is, in spite of the diminishing trust in the media, the construction of Islam spontaneously voiced by participants is, mostly, in line with that of the media. This differs slightly when participants talk about their own experiences with Islam as will be highlighted later. So, how could this combination of likes and dislikes be justified? Are the media simply victimised by participants? Or are they so hegemonic that they sustain their influence by having their representations echoed in spite of the diminishing trust in them?

Positions indicating mistrust in the media are often expressed bluntly. They are mostly cynical. A dialogue by participants in the Secretaries Group may furnish us with a good example:

- *Well obviously we don't trust the media. {laughter}... Just because it's... doesn't mean we're... it in any lethal way. I mean I'm certainly not. It just flows in my head I'm afraid.*
- *And I'm very sceptical of the media.*
- *Well, so am I. I just want to know whose interest the media is in at the moment and I'm very... when it comes to representation of ethnic groups and this sort of thing. And so I tend not to trust the media because they've got their own interests. And they tend to think with these ethnic groups, particularly with these ethnic groups in the Middle East that we're not getting a particularly accurate picture.*
- *Do you think they're giving too negative a picture?*
- *Yeah, too negative I would say in my opinion. That it's in the interest of the media not to present us with an accurate picture.*

*(Secretaries Group, p.14).*

An interesting conversation with a lot of argumentation centred on whether or not there is any truth in what the media portray ensues. It includes an anticipation that there might be a bit of truth in that. A link between the media and propaganda is made (Secretaries Group, p.14). A postgraduate student has the view that the media tend to censor and are always going to pick up on extreme cases and fundamentalist principles (Postgraduates Group, p.3). The media are also held responsible for stereotyping Islam (Secretaries

Group, p.8). Attacking the media in various ways is established like a norm shared across the various groups. Besides the construction of the media's message as propaganda, argumentation elsewhere seeks an ideological interpretation for mistrust in the media. A secretary finds an interpretation for the 'frightening' and 'threatening' ways in which the Western press portrays Muslims in that the West needs a threat, and that "capitalism works on a competitor image, maybe that's why we're competing against" (Secretaries Group, p.6). Surprisingly though, this argument comes in the context of a critique of the media, yet it is using the notion of Islam as a threat - a fashionable notion widely promoted, among others, by the media themselves. This is quite like the present situation where the tabloids are becoming increasingly criticised while their circulation figures are far from declining. An undergraduate student sets another pattern of ideological interpretation for the notion of Islam as a threat with the Cold War re-presenting. He views the Cold War's dualism of democracy as opposed to Communism taking the form of a dualism of Christians versus Muslims. Thus Christians portray Muslims as bad, as trying to convert everybody to Islam or as terrorists and extremists.

#### **8.4.5. Personal Experience that Matters**

Participants, when they engage in discussion, tend to claim little or no knowledge of Islam. In most cases they are reticent to start talking about Islam to the extent that an intervention by the moderator is usually needed to rescue the situation. Statements like "in fact I know very little about Islam", or "basically there isn't really all that knowledge of Islam in England at all" are quite frequent. As the discussion goes on everybody seems to have some sort of knowledge of Islam to contribute. Claims of lack of knowledge of Islam fall apart, as the internal group dynamics become operational. Such claims are perhaps needed in similar circumstances to pre-empt any later verdict not in favour of the speaker. It may also indicate an unrealistic estimation of what is worth saying. As atmospheres of humour and of lively argumentation come to prevail, silence and reticence die away.

Turning the page of the media over, personal experience is found to represent a substantial source of knowledge of Islam. Talking about one's personal experience in representing Islam, the influence of the media is difficult to detect. Interestingly, most constructions resulting from personal experience are not in agreement with the ones generated by the media. However, a few constructions concur with those of the media. In many cases, participants tend to emphasise their own personal influence. Emphasising personal influence is to stress one's own individuality. That is why it is argued throughout this thesis that individualism, as a salient Western cultural component, is central to the way in which Islam is represented. Individualism and other elements of influence do not work exclusively. Yet, individualism occupies centre stage in determining a person's position towards other human beings. Revealed personal experiences which helped give birth to one's own construction of Islam are narratives of confession and of an admission of individuality. They preserve the socialness of the environment of the individual as all personal experiences revealed here are all about an inter-relation and an inter-action. They are the personal expeditions to explore the cultural other in the neighbourhood or overseas by travel in Muslim countries.

Throughout the transcripts of the discussions we come across relations with Muslims as work mates which matter as far as the construction of Islam is concerned. The family is another community that inter-relates and inter-acts - processes through which Islam, as representations, come to existence. Working in a Muslim country, accompanying a husband who happens to have had a job in a Muslim country or travelling to one or more Muslim countries all contribute to shaping the image of Islam of which participants talked. One secretary's experience with a Muslim neighbour family made all the difference:

*- Well, a while ago it seemed secretive like a secret organisation until two people who moved next door to me and were Muslims who believed Islam as submission to God. And they were human. And they were like me. I'm trying to think of the right phrase for this: British born? Six generations British born? Put it that way. Quite amazing that they were*

*human. That they could talk. That they weren't just fundamentalist. And they went to the shops as well.*

*(Secretaries Group, p.2)*

A construction full of dramatisation, though. When this secretary was asked whether his first construction was inspired by the way Muslims behave or merely reflected what the media portray, he carried on with vigour:

*- Well, for a while nothing was done to change how I'd been led to view them by the British media. It wasn't for a while that I discovered that they were human. That was quite a shock. That was a period when I was questioning a lot of other things as well.*

*(Secretaries Group p.2)*

Constructions of Islam through inter-relations with Muslims, in some cases, happen to be so friendly, humane and emphasise acceptability rather than exclusion. Such constructions, which are quite common, do not arise from deep inter-action. Yet they are not formed speedily. They are Muslims who are linked to the family such as in-laws or who live locally. As if to set the records right, such participants refer to the media in a manner of protest: "you just get to form your opinion that way. There is nothing really in the media except for these extremists" (Librarians Group, p.2). Inter-relations with Muslims also create an inter-relation with the Muslim space, the people and the geography overseas. What a Muslim friend or acquaintance takes home in vacations also paints the image of that unknown, distant world:

*- My sister's husband is Muslim. He is from Morocco. He is Muslim. A couple of his friends, four people I have forgotten, but we don't sit and around discussing Allah or whatever. But I mean the guy at the LRC, he actually goes back to Iran and apparently, someone was telling me, that they have got shortages over there. He takes a big bag of things over there. But, I mean he takes lots of electrical items over there. He takes a big bag of things over there, but that's the only person I can say I have a relationship with, more so than someone you just meet at the door. He is the nicest, well one of the nicest people I know basically.*

*(Technicians Group, p.7)*

However, travel in Muslim countries results in constructions of Islam on both extreme. Some of those who travelled abroad seem to have had a pre-conceived construction dividing Muslim countries into those which are fundamentalist and those which are not.

Such a classification is informed through prior investigation, since the person in question is a technician who visited three non-fundamentalist Muslim countries (Morocco, pre-Revolution Iran and Muslim parts of India) to photograph scenes there. In Iran he met “very, very religious and strict people but they were the easiest to get on with. Because they were the closest to being a decent human being of all the ones I met” (Technicians Group, p.16). Religiousness, as opposed to being accessible, does not summon up a construction of fundamentalism. Equally, it does not imply challenging a pre-existing construction that divides Muslim countries into fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist. That could be attributed to the notion in Western culture that religious experience is something which remains in one’s private sphere. Should this be true, one would argue that the religiousness revealed by the Iranians during the technician’s visit, one which did not conceal their human nature, may still remain in the mentality of a Western visitor as a private matter that should not, and does not, imply any change to the public image of an entire nation.

There are other examples where unpleasant, or less comfortable experiences, occurred when travelling in Muslim countries. In both cases, travellers were females (a secretary and a postgraduate student). Such undesirable experiences in both cases emanated from the travellers been victimised as women. The secretary who, against her own individual freedom, opted to dress modestly, i.e. from head to toe, was still harassed (Secretaries Group, p.4). The postgraduate student sees travelling in a Muslim country as less comfortable (Postgraduates Group, p.4). Their experiences have eventually coloured their representations of Muslims on the basis of what they had actually encountered in entirely Muslim milieux. This is rather an acknowledgement of real life experience and, unlike the former example of the photographer, a hard experience during a holiday break is not anticipated to result in anything but disillusionment and bitterness, hence the consequent construction of Muslims.

A librarian narrated an experience of her mother, who was living in Iran in the seventies

with an American community, which may deliver a different interpretation. The mother and a female friend who went out in a taxi were mobbed by “very extremist” men. The day was apparently a Friday which is the Muslim day for performing *Salat al-Juma'a* (congregation at Friday Prayer). With a big laugh, the librarian's interpretation of the motive behind such Muslim behaviour was that “these people were trying to repress their own sexuality” (Librarians group, p.17) - a form of control that, in the librarian's mind, might have rendered the men hostile to two Western women ‘unchaperoned’ in a taxi. The association between discipline and religion, involving the practice of self-control and repression, is not an uncommon one to make.

Ignorance feeds mythology, or so it appears when the secretaries group talked about Religious Education which has expanded in the school curriculum to cover a variety of religions, Islam included. A secretary's daughter, who is a secondary school student, is now enjoying two merits: studying Islam at school and having Muslim school friends. This renders her more knowledgeable, or less ignorant as another secretary remarks. To this secretary “the younger generation will grow up probably less intimidated than we are” (Secretaries Group, p.7). By implication, this secretary's generation of British people, at least those who are ignorant of Islam subscribe to the mythological representation of Islam as intimidating. With knowledge and with inter-action with Muslim friends, her daughter's generation of British youngsters will have different representation of Islam:

*- Yes because they'll have friends. There are Islam (sic) children at school so they don't give it a thought. Don't consider who they are or what they are. They just... to talk, to play with them whatever. So they will have a different perspective than us. Be more knowledgeable.*  
(Secretaries Group, p.7)

#### 8.4.6. We, the Feminists

As highlighted in the preceding chapter, individualism is a central component in most Western cultures which have taken shape through a sequence of developments in

Western history. As Macfarlane (1978) and Farr (1996) explain, individualism has influenced, through phases of evolution, ways of political, constitutional and legislative thinking in France, Britain and the USA. Individualism was, in part, inspired by notions of liberty, fraternity and equality; three main slogans of both the French and American Revolutions (Farr, 1996). But it also invigorated, in a sense, values of freedom and equality. With the culture of minority rights deeply immersed in the notion of civil liberties, social notions and formations which arose to advocate such rights may possibly have derived a lot from individualism. Examples of these notions and formations are seen in the rights demanded by and accorded to feminism as well as ethnic and religious minorities. In these three groups a magnified individuality arose as a necessity for self-defence against a dominant other. In the cases of the religious and ethnic minorities it is the minority's common interest advocated against the majority community, while in the case of feminism it is women's rights advocated against what feminists view as a coercive male-dominated society. Indeed, feminism depends heavily on the civil liberties culture and is therefore a derivative of individualism. As we will see in this section of the discussion, feminism arises as a strong element in constructing Islam.

Like women in the Muslim world, some Western women are primarily concerned with the position of women in Islam. In Islam, although men and women are treated on the basis of being individual Muslims, there are, equally, certain codes of conduct for women as well as for men. In one case women are required to wear *hijab* (covering the whole body with the exception of the face and hands, according to the most common Muslim view), while men are not required to adopt so stringent a dress code. With some qualification and under specific circumstances, men are also allowed to marry up to four women at a time. Regardless of the Islamic justification for this, some Muslim women as well as Western women find this confusing. With the advent of the feminist and women's emancipation movements such codes of behaviour became a topic of controversy over the position of women in Islam. This is certainly one reason why

when Western women, in particular, construct Islam, their constructions are generally heavily coloured with their conceptualisation of the position of women in Islam. In a comparative context, an undergraduate student sees Muslim women as being degraded, since men are “wanting women to dress something like heads covered, faces covered” (Undergraduates Group, p.6). In this regard, he continues, “more Western countries are mainly slightly advanced” (Undergraduates Group, p.7).

A female postgraduate student, who had a “much less comfortable” travel experience in a Muslim country thinks that her biggest problem with Islam is the position of women, “this whole idea that women, well we just don’t have a social role,” (Postgraduates Group, p.4). This image was supported by another workplace experience where a female secretary felt she was denied due respect by a male Muslim working under her supervision on the grounds that he was a Muslim while she was a woman (Secretaries Group, p.10). Although a qualification was made that it is not known whether this is a position of some Muslims or of all Muslims, such discrimination remains a strong basis for concern by female participants.

Concern about separate codes of behaviour for women (like *hijab*) is, however, not restricted to women only. Even male participants frequently construct Islam with this point in mind. To one technician, a code of dress indicates politeness, but to another it is “slightly unfair” (Technicians Group, p.11). An extreme construction about the dress of women in Islam was voiced by a female secretary who objects to women ‘dressed in black’ “so as not to be a temptation to men. Let’s keep men indoors, you know, and let women go about normal sort of fashion” (Secretaries Group, p.4). ‘Dressing in black’ so as to reduce temptation for men, according to the same female secretary, is a matter of power, “it is a matter of male dominance you know” (Secretaries Group, p.4). It is the feminist discourse about male dominance reproduced not only in terms of women against men, but, on top of that, in terms of women against Islam. An oppositional construction, though, justifying the wearing of the head scarf on the basis of the

freedom to choose, undermines the dominant feminist construction (Librarians Group, pp.4/5). Another female librarian adds that the head scarf is put on as a kind of protection (Librarians Group, p.5). This latter construction may have been inspired by the fact that early Christian doctrine required women to cover their hair in compliance with an injunction in one of St. Paul's letters.

Another tradition that bolsters the feminist construction of Islam is that of 'arranged marriage'. In this tradition families choose husbands for their daughters, often at an early age, without allowing them the freedom of choice to decide whom they want to marry. An entrenched Asian tradition, it is exercised by communities of different religious and cultural backgrounds especially in the Indian sub-continent. However, in the discussions, it is widely believed to be a Muslim tradition *per se*. Islam is constructed as stripping women from their right of free choice in marriage. A female secretary puts it clearly as "anybody has to toe the line or otherwise they're thrown out of the family" (Secretaries Group, p.11). This, surely, touches on the issue of individualism yet again - the freedom to choose whom one marries and equality between men and women in this respect. Personal experiences of female colleagues forced into arranged marriages serve to establish this as a strong representation of Islam. A postgraduate tells a story of a female colleague at school who is Muslim and was forced into an arranged marriage after completing her degree, but after a while she was divorced. That experience meant she would be deprived of the opportunity of remarrying as "she is soiled goods and she can't actually get married again and that suits her down to the ground" (Postgraduates Group, p.9). A personal experience, as explained earlier, matters.

## 8.5. Conclusion

The concern throughout this chapter was to get closer to, and to extract meaning from the discussions of 'normal' people. Group discussion was useful in letting the

participants speak out their constructions of Islam. Thematic analysis has provided further confirmation that various components of Western culture serve to determine the way in which Western people construct cultural others. Individualism and secularism are particularly influential in determining the way Islam is socially represented. Within the wider frame these two main components of Western culture nourish other minor cultural components in the determination of social representations of Islam. Of these, the feminist culture becomes emblematic of the constrictions of Islam. Of some interest in this analysis is the role personal experience plays in shaping representations of Islam. Mistrust in the media is yet another subject of interest.

This analysis is not at all exhaustive of the entire corpus of data which the group discussions yielded. From a qualitative point of view there is still scope for further analysis and the extraction of yet more meanings. Analysis in this chapter is restricted by both space and time. Even more restricting is the researcher's understanding of a foreign culture which he laboured, to the best of his ability, to make sense of the many colloquial phrases used throughout the discourse in question. An analyst with a deeper comprehension of Western culture may have made a better sense of the data.

Before concluding, there are some reservations to be reported. The presence of the moderator - a Muslim - while the discussions were being conducted might have restricted the freedom of expression of the groups' members. Nevertheless, the moderator's role is crucial in the discussion as he/she is required to monitor complex interactions and to assume, in a subtle manner, the overall management of the debate (Lunt & Livingstone 1996). That the moderator in the present study was not British might equally have restricted the range of opinions expressed. That is because the peoples of different nations seem to be reserved when talking about strangers in the presence of those very same strangers. This could have been avoided by assigning the role of the moderator to another person who would be familiar with other members of the group. Given more time and other facilities, the discussions would have allowed,

the inclusion of groups from yet different backgrounds, like the homeless, LSE porters or bus drivers. Clearly, this might have expanded the scope of, and increased the diversity of the social representations elicited by talk.

## Chapter Nine

### A Conclusion that is not a Conclusion

This closing chapter is by no means a conclusion. The thesis as a whole does not claim to be a definitive piece of research so much as an attempt to raise fundamental questions pertaining to its topic of research. It is an expedition which, instead of claiming a discovery, humbly seeks to explore uncharted and challenging territory. In so doing, it raises as many questions as it settles.

In a strict sense, this chapter deals with three terrains of interest: an overview, a qualification and a challenge. As an overview the preceding chapters are reviewed in terms of what they are about and in terms of the theoretical, methodological and empirical rationale underlying them. The overview, except when outlining the significance and implications of results obtained in the empirical inquiry, appears intermittently throughout the chapter. This is because there is no need to repeat in this final chapter what is already reported elsewhere in the thesis. Thus the purpose of the overview is to highlight some of the meanings and implications of the research. As a qualification, this chapter deals with the social representations of cultural otherness as a theoretical space. Here, it is argued that the social representations of cultural otherness, given both their strengths and limitations, need to be articulated more fully. Further still, this chapter reviews both epistemological and methodological aspects of interest which this thesis argues also need further articulation if empirical inquiry is to be rendered more operational. Finally, as a challenge, prospects for future research and articulation are highlighted.

The overall structure of this thesis has been sufficiently described in previous chapters as has the structure of each separate chapter. In a more general way, the first and second sections of the thesis have dealt with the theoretical, historical and

methodological aspects of the study whilst the focus of the third section has been the empirical exploration of the theoretical presuppositions of the thesis. In the following paragraphs some light will be shed on the epistemological foundations that relate to the paradigm used in developing appropriate methods of research in the study of social representations. But before embarking on the last leg of this expedition one might dwell, for a while, on the social representations of cultural otherness, which represent both the theoretical and the empirical core of this thesis.

### **9.1. Social Representations of Cultural Otherness**

The notion central to this thesis is cultural otherness as a social representation. The establishment of its theoretical foundations as well as the provision of empirical proof of its existence have been the main tasks of the present thesis. As shown in the preceding chapters, cultural otherness as a social representation consists of two fundamental elements. One is culture. The other ingredient is the mix of power structures influencing the construction of the other in terms of a social representation.

Although it contributes much to recent discourse in social theory, cultural otherness first came to prominence elsewhere in social theory before being treated under the rubric of representations. Early pronouncements of it appeared, though not exclusively, in post-colonial discourse, cultural theories and, more recently, in post-modern theory. All these recent trends in social theory arose, in one way or another, as a critique of the dominant Enlightenment/modern social theory, which is inspired by a positivist epistemology. Positivism clearly presupposes an asocial and an ahistorical genesis of knowledge. Conversely, its critics stress the social and historical nature of knowledge.

The theory of social representations is not initially identified under any of the aforementioned guises. Chronologically, its advent even preceded some of these trends since it was first launched by Moscovici in the late 1950s. It is based on an explicit

critique of the basically positivist-inspired behaviourist theory which conceives of psychology as a natural science and where leads to the individualisation of social psychology. However, the theory of social representations is conceived of as explaining how social knowledge forms, diffuses and is transformed. In this respect a social representation is not reality *per se* but a type of reality (Moscovici 1984). Thus, it is clear that the theory of social representations is based on a distinction between reality and the re-presentation of reality. Indeed, this leaves the entire theory of social representations short of an explanation of what is “the real” as opposed to “the representational”. In fact, this is a protracted debate that can be traced back to Nietzschean thought which denies the existence of true representations. Said (1978), who apparently reproduced Nietzsche in *Orientalism*, equally fails to resolve the confusion by talking about representations of the Orient as the product of a hybrid system of power i.e. as an invention and, at the same time, as a *misrepresentation* (Ahmad 1993). As yet unresolved, this is one confusion that future research in the theory of social representations should address.

Another area where qualification is required is in Moscovici’s conception that representations, being prescriptive, impose themselves upon people ‘with an irresistible force’ (Moscovici 1984). Social representations, therefore, are coercive in nature. They are coercive as they are already shaped by language and culture. Although this is not entirely without meaning it raises the problem that we are left with a kind of determinism that does not allow the thinking society the power Moscovici himself accords to it. It is problematic since culture and language are *the* forces that, apart from any other intervention, shape representations in so deterministic a manner. This leads to a questioning of the implicit claim that the theory of social representations is culture-specific, a claim not yet challenged by the community of researchers in social representations. Indeed, there is social knowledge which is basically culture-specific. This is more evident in those forms of static culture studied by anthropologists. To some extent, this is true even in regard to the more dynamic cultures of today whose

contours are continuously changing in an age of revolution in communication technologies and globalisation. This said, social knowledge produced by social representations is both relative and particular. That is, its power of generalisation stops short of explaining social knowledge produced in another cultural setting. It lacks the power to prove that social representations are generalisable beyond the specific cultural domain in which it was first produced. Here, the point is whether or not social representations possess the epistemological foundations and the mechanisms needed to produce social knowledge that is universal.

The notion of cultural otherness needs to be accounted for in the context of the theory of social representations. As a relatively new line of research in the tradition of social representations, cultural otherness needs further theoretical refinement. Otherness evokes other types of distinction ranging from racial through gender and religious otherness to cultural otherness. In the present context we are concerned with cultural otherness. This is because Islam is, by and large, a cultural other. The West, as a cultural other to Islam, is a blend of Judaeo-Christian and secular cultural elements, in which individualism is also an important cultural value. Cultural otherness is the fashionable theoretical terrain with which post-colonial theory deals (Williams & Chrisman 1993, Bhabha 1994). In this respect, post-colonial theory claims that colonial discourse represents the colonised as a social reality 'which is at once an other and yet entirely knowable and visible' (Bhabha 1994). Said's *Orientalism*, Bhabha claims, is revealing of, and relevant to colonial discourse. However, the current thesis asserts that Said's *Orientalism* also lies at the heart of the discourse of social representations.

Said has contributed a profound introduction, in terms of the theory of social representations, to the study of cultural otherness (highlighted at some length, in chapter four). Said brings into the spotlight two remarkable novelties. One is cultural otherness as a social representation which has been discussed. The other is the relation of power to social representations. His hybrid system of power, which the West uses in

representing Islam in the tradition of Orientalism, is required to figure out which West is the one *Orientalism* depicts as having the authority to represent the Orient. The Orient, on the other hand, so powerless to be so represented, is not seen as equally responsible for making such a construction of it as a cultural other possible. In agreement with Ahmad (1993), this sweeping, non-compromising vision is only self-comforting. So comforting is it to the extent that *Orientalism*'s translator into Arabic, Abu Deeb (1981), opts conveniently to assert that Orientalism, as a Western representation of the Orient, is determined in the way Said asserts it to be in *Orientalism*. It could never have been otherwise.

In order to be rendered theoretically sound, Said's thesis on the relation between power and social representations needs to be qualified. First, by determining where power lies within the social fabric. In this regard some conventional left wing jargon such as social class is even more obsolete now than it was when the Communist regime in Poland tried to stamp out the working class Solidarity union movement in the 1980s (Toffler 1991). Like class, the indiscriminate gross denunciation of the other (without), whilst, at the same time, there is *an* other within, which stands in opposition to the dominant discourse, is deeply ideological and not at all convincing. Is there any sense in seeking such a power in a cross-sectional network of formations of predominance and influence, without recourse to conspiracy theory? Is the self required to be looked at as equally contributing to its own construction as *an* other? Powerlessness on the side of the represented seems to play a role in the construction of a representation. This seems more congruent with the theory of social representations which presupposes the existence of a thinking society which, necessarily, is of a dynamic nature. Said's thesis of power assumes the existence of a dynamic and powerful West vis à vis an Orient which, in this very context, is completely powerless and static. Halliday (1996), rather than Said, perhaps is correct in his analysis of the causes of the recent construction in the West of Islam as a threat to world peace. He points to certain conceptions and behavioural patterns of both the West and Muslims as contributing to the construction

of such a representation. In chapter seven, for example, it is clear that Muslims in Bradford, by burning a copy of *The Satanic Verses*, are far from being powerless in contributing to the construction of a representation of Islam in the West. The *fatwa* against Rushdie and his publishers, issued by Ayatollah Khomeini, contributed further to the construction of such a representation.

## 9.2. Paradigm, Theory and Methods

The theory of social representations has provoked a paradigmatic shift by seeking to conduct research in real life settings. The paradigmatic shift, highlighted in chapter five, was prompted by the theoretical projects of the theory of social representations. Stressing the social genesis of knowledge i.e. a knowledge which takes into account that man, or rather the community of mankind, does not just respond mechanically to stimuli 'out there' but he/she determines the appropriations of their responses in accordance with a whole set of biological as well as socio-cultural influences - hence the social genesis of knowledge as well as its transformation and diffusion. This is the fundamental reason for locating the theory of social representations in the Hegelian, rather than in the Cartesian, paradigm, as Marková found (Marková 1982). Opting for the Hegelian paradigm places the theory of social representations within the scientific framework Kuhn (1962) set in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn stands in opposition to Popper's "objective and socially-neutral" knowledge paradigm (Popper 1972) which would only lead us back to the Cartesian paradigm again. By stressing that knowledge is a social construction resulting from the functioning of history, culture and even geographical space, Kuhn, more than Popper, among the latest philosophers of science, accords Moscovici's theory added support. Thus, Kuhn can rightly be used to further articulate the epistemology on which social representations and their study are based.

From both paradigm and theory comes method. A method is not just determined by theory as Farr rightly has it (Farr 1993a). It is, by implication, determined by paradigm as well. Thus it is still premature to conclude that the theory of social psychology has exhausted its appropriate methods of inquiry, neither has it embarked upon an optimal articulation and utilisation of the methods currently being used by researchers in the field. Among the three methods of inquiry employed in this thesis, the content analysis of the media is evidently old and well-proven. Being used in disciplines other than social representations, and for a long time now, the procedural aspects of conducting a content analysis of the media are well articulated. The diversification of media types, from print to electronic and from electronic to interactive, and the expansion in space of their messages, pose an imminent challenge for researchers in social representations. It is a challenge to develop further their methodical tools or even to develop yet other advanced new tools in order to stay up-to-date.

Two further considerations render inevitable the need for developing methodical tools. These are the functioning of social representations not only as generating social knowledge but also as communicating it once it is formed. The function of the media in communicating social knowledge stresses their importance to the theory of social representations. Hence the need to articulate further and to develop methods of analysing content of the media. The other consideration is the dynamic nature of social representations themselves. Being dynamic, social representations are continuously subject to transformation and in this the media have a valuable role to play in accelerating change. Elsewhere it has been said that the media are instrumental in constructing the social representations of Islam in the West. Developing the necessary tools for investigating not only the formation, but also the transformation, of social representations in the media is equally important.

Participant observation was used to investigate social representations of Islam in the present study (chapter six). Among the different methods of inquiry used in the study

of social representations, participant observation is one of the most appropriate. The setting in which participant observation is appropriate is one which is similar to, or sometimes identical with, a real life setting. It is about people, with people, where there are people. Nonetheless, it is less cost-effective than other methods and it requires longer time to conduct. Participant observation is useful when employed in conjunction with other methods in one and the same study. A different method in such a situation is conducive to a diversification of methodological approaches to the problem in question as well as to verifying results. It is not just one method amongst others. It preserves within itself two contrasting perspectives i.e. the perspective of the actor (i.e. the participant) and the perspective of the observer. The participant observational study reported in the present thesis was not planned in advance by the researcher.

Group discussion is yet another method employed in the conduct of this study (chapter eight). If there is one aspect of group discussion which is unique, it is its argumentative nature, albeit depending largely on how the discussion is led. This will be commented on below. The methods and procedures used in the study of social representations are, and should be, flexible. That is because social representations are social and, since they are social they are, to a large extent, adapted to the social settings they explore.

Here, one would argue that researchers in such circumstances should be allowed some latitude to adjust their procedures to the situation in which they find themselves. This is because a group discussion, for one, sometimes may need the participation of an assistant, other than the researcher. Such a need cannot easily be pre-determined since it is a case-specific arrangement. For instance a moderator who is a non-Muslim might allow members of the group greater freedom in expressing their views than a Muslim moderator would do. Meanwhile a topic of a complex nature e.g. the social representations of psychoanalysis or quantum theory may require the participation of an assistant in addition to the researcher so that the interventions of the two, together, might help the flow of the discussion. Having said this, one is only too well aware of

the fear that a high profile involvement of both a researcher and an assistant, or even of a researcher alone is likely to influence group members in the expression of their views.

Before moving on to the following section, there is one more point to be added about triangulation. The paradigmatic shift in the case of social representations implies not only the employment of appropriate method(s), but also the adoption of a strategy justifying how such a mix of methods is to be employed. Social representations are interpretations and thus can be found in subjectivities as well as in inter-action, history and culture. Interpretation can evolve provided it is not understood in the strictly Popperian method of falsification. We are concerned about deepening interpretation by an accumulation of understanding and by exploring dimensions other than purely subjective social phenomena. Here triangulation comes into play as an appropriate strategy to enable researchers to acquire an in-depth understanding of their qualitative data. By employing three different methods in the same study one may develop a greater depth of understanding.

### **9.3. Constructing Representations of Islam in the West**

In pursuit of proof, three empirical studies were conducted. Interesting results were reported and were apparently consistent across methods. Since there is no point in repeating the findings, the following pages outline some of the novelties to emerge from these empirical studies. The most salient points are indisputably culture, the transformation of representations of Islam over time and power as a driving force behind Western constructions of Islam. Above all else, Islam is not just a topic for theoretical speculation. The evidence is adequate that Islam can be studied, empirically, as a social representation constructed by a cultural other - the West in this case. The whole (Islam), when socially represented, is fragmented into a series of items which are matters of concern to the thinking society which does the representing. Through such fragmentation Islam is socially represented in accordance with the world of assumptions

determined by hybrid forces. These forces, with culture being the most important, also include salient elements of power on the side of the representing society and of powerlessness on the side of the represented.

Islam, the results show, is constructed both monolithically and consistently, as a fundamentalist phenomenon. Fundamentalism is expressed under several guises. At times fundamentalism is presented and re-presented a threat to the public good; as terrorism; or as a polity based on religious values. In other cases it stands in contrast to freedom: freedom of expression and of publishing, or comprises a threat to civil rights: the right to a safe and peaceful life or women's rights. In a third instance fundamentalism is reported in political terms with reference to aspects of political Islam i.e. manifest in Iranian or Algerian politics. An exception to this is found in constructions shaped by personal experiences of interacting with Muslims at work or on holiday or of acquaintance with Islamic objects (see chapter eight). Fundamentalism, therefore, is a stereotype of Islam which, under the extraordinary powerful influence of the media, has gained prominence and generality. Such a simplification as fundamentalism conceals the diversity in Islam and represents it as a monolithic phenomenon.

For Said (1978) culture converts free-floating objects into units of knowledge. The function which Said ascribes to culture is what we call representations. Culture is prominent in this thesis as a determining factor of how Islam is represented. Of particular significance in this respect are the representations of Islam to be found in chapters seven (the content analysis of the press) and eight (group discussions). As outlined earlier, two main components of Western culture i.e. individualism and secularism are instrumental in determining how Islam is constructed. Both components seem relevant, in one way or another, to religion. Individualism stands in sharp contrast to religion considered as a community-centred institution. In Western history, individualism produced a whole series of concepts, legislation and values on which

modern Western life is based. In many instances it is used in defence of the individual over what is seen as an undesirable encroachment by religion on one's own private sphere. Secularism was initially introduced as a Western cultural value with a view to pacifying religion in regard to public life. It was also necessary to neutralise truth so that different religious sects in the West did not fight each other in the name of possessing absolute truth. Thus secularism played a principal role in shaping the Western public sphere and has been safeguarded, by institutionalisation, against any take-over by religion.

The representations of Islam in the West are a response not only to old but also to current encounters. These may be confrontational as they were at the time of the Crusades, or of past imperial wars, or, more recently, of the Gulf War. They may be peaceful as in political, economic or intellectual interactions. All such encounters lead to constructing representations of Islam. These representations are easy to remember since they are still vivid in the collective memory of the West. In certain instances they are present in setting the public agenda in dealing with Islam. The increasing economic, political and strategic importance of the world of Islam - from the newly independent Central Asian republics to the Middle East with its oil rich Gulf states - will keep such encounters in the forefront of attention for quite some time to come. Constructions of Islam transmitted by the extraordinarily powerful Western media echo one or another of such encounters, either explicitly or implicitly every now and again. Nevertheless, underneath this superficial terrain lies an ever powerful bedrock which is culture. Unlike the encounters mentioned above, culture is self-perpetuating, whereas specific encounter are expressions of, or reactions to, it.

Representing a cultural other arguably raises the question of the status of culture within the theory of social representations. The other is viewed from the standpoint of how the self is seen and then is placed either in the contrast position or in a position of both conformity and opposition. Culture also gives rise to stereotyping and it is from culture

that a stereotype of the other stems. In return, a stereotype preserves the cultural in the representation of the cultural other. Even more important in according culture such a prime influence is the central role it plays in shaping group identity. Group identity is shaped by many different elements, depending on which kind of identity is in question. Unlike many constituents of identities e.g. social, professional, political etc., cultural identity is entrenched and deep seated. Interestingly, when an appropriate identification of an other is at stake, it is culture that will contribute the most towards such an identification.

It is widely assumed that social representations are derived from culture. This is mentioned, though *en passant*, in social representations discourse (Moscovici 1984, Farr 1993a). A theoretical elaboration of this, however, is not being undertaken, and so the methodological tools needed to examine the role of culture in constructing and/or transforming social representations have not been developed. In a sort of chain reaction, this resulted in a failure to introduce the theory of social representations in the study of cultural otherness. Social theory has thus disappeared in this domain, leaving a theoretical vacuum which only disciplines such as international relations could fill. In our contemporary world where borders between different cultures scarcely exist, and where globalisation dominates the nation state and leaves isolationist policies obsolete, culture is back on the agenda not only of politicians but also of social scientists. Further refinement of the role culture plays in social representations is a necessary pre-requisite for the future development of the theory of social representations.

Another relevant point concerns the transformation of social representations. It is not uncommon that social representations form, transform and diffuse. That social representations form, has been given some articulation as, for example, in Moscovici's discussion of anchoring and objectification as the two main processes by which this happens (Moscovici 1984). As representations form they also render their objects familiar and communicable. However, too little thought has been given to

understanding how social representations diffuse and transform. An exception to this is Sperber's explanations which are not too well integrated into the social representations literature (Sperber 1985). The functions which the diffusion and the transformation of social representations serve are far from clear. This situation is sometimes justified by dismissing the call for operational definitions of social representational concepts as deriving from a conception of social psychology as a branch of natural science (Farr 1993b). Certainly, such a view was acceptable when the theory of social representations was still struggling for recognition as a new theory in social psychology. The accumulation of research that has followed ever since renders the raising of such questions even more urgent.

The present thesis probably has shed some light on how social representations transform and diffuse. Here, one would restrict the discussion to the transformation of representations that are already established. The transformation of Western representations of Islam is detectable in this thesis because of the very nature of the topic. As shown earlier (chapters two and three), encounters between Islam and the West, and vice versa, span many centuries. With encounters, which, in essence, are interactions, come representations. Encounters and representations then engage in a somewhat dialectical relationship, in that an encounter prompts a representation or a revision of an existing representation and, in turn, a representation might give birth to a renewed encounter. In this process social representations not only form, they also transform. Along with this, forces within the thinking societies concerned in the social encounter also change. This is quite clear in the Western representations of Islam over the long period of time they have been at work.

Western representations of Islam portray it as a cultural other. This is the bottom line that never changed. In this context representations of Islam, mostly negative, keep transforming. As highlighted in chapter two, in earlier epochs of interaction between the Occident and the Orient Muslims were represented in the West from an entirely religious

perspective. Since Islam, chronologically, had been revealed after Christianity, Western representations of it constructed Muslims as the “infidels”. This representation was extraordinarily popular during the Crusades. In such a representation it is easy to detect a fear of Islam as a threat to an established religious order. Representing Muslims as infidels justifies undertaking to fight them - the mission of the Crusades. Following this, and with the territory of the Muslim world unfolding to Western missionaries, travellers, explorers and early Orientalists, new images of Islam began to dominate the scene, gradually replacing former constructions. This period gave way to the next epoch during which the scramble to colonise the world, of which the Muslim world was a part, started in earnest. As Said (1978) explained in *Orientalism* even more diverse representations of Islam were constructed. A more direct, day to day interaction brought into existence representations displaying greater details than ever before. The Orient, read as Islam, was then constructed as exotic and strange; Orientals (basically Arabs) as mindless and known for their atomic mentality etc. This seems to have lasted until the end of World War II when the reign of Orientalists, during which they dominated the scene of forming the representations of Islam, came to an end. From then on began the present era which is characterised by the dominance of representing Islam as, more or less, a fundamentalist phenomenon. It is worth noting that during this prolonged period of continuously transforming representations, the latter have shown consistency, rather than continuity, in transforming.

The transformation of Western representations of Islam has been coupled, throughout, with a change in the forces comprising the thinking societies which are in the business of constructing representations of Islam. What is quite interesting, in this respect, is that the formation, or transformation, of representations of Islam is undertaken by a small group of people usually under a particular professional heading. Once constructed the representations are diffused and popularised by one medium of communication or another. From Crusaders and missionaries in former times, the flag was handed to Orientalists in the following epoch. The era of Orientalism is the time when academe

was in the lead in forming representations of Islam. Orientalists were replaced by the now fashionable professional label of “experts” who dominate the policy making institutes, strategic studies centres and other think-tanks. Experts are believed to be those who first gave rise to the present construction of Islam as a fundamentalist phenomenon and, therefore, as an imminent threat to the security of the West. Lately an even more powerful force is apparently taking over from the world of experts: the media. Like Orientalists, experts imposed a monopoly by a small group of professionals over the entire business of constructing Islam. The media are now opening up the platform for more and more people to play a role in representing Islam. The thinking community, which used to be too small and expert-dominated now comprises an increasingly larger group including journalists, writers, television producers, novelists, minority rights activists, feminists etc.

Among other factors, this game of musical chairs, in which different groups, such as the ones mentioned above, have been exchanging positions, has not only undertaken to transform social representations of Islam in the West. It has also been consistently involved in assisting their diffusion and further expansion. This long procession of transformations in the representations of Islam is also useful in developing and articulating some conceptions on how social representations change. Moscovici’s anchoring and objectification are both about how social representations form. They are much less about how social representations transform. Yet social representations are changing both within and independently of the established norm. Are there any rules, mechanisms or dynamics that the kind of transformation outlined above help to establish?

Power and powerlessness appear in several forms and symbols. In the context of this thesis, power includes, in accordance with the empirical proof obtained here, a social phenomenon like Western culture, which happens to assume the power of a successful world model of life which it helped to create. This is particularly so in the case of

Western culture which, for some centuries now, has been crowned as the undisputed monarch of the world. The triumphant end of the Cold War with the demise of Communism and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the entire Eastern bloc provides yet another boost for its authority. Power equally exercises influence in social representations of Islam in the West in the form of social formations like interest groups. Keen to preserve their interests within the wider society, particular interest groups endeavour to shape representations in such a way that they ward off threats to their acquired interests, rights and privileges.

Empirical inquiry has demonstrated how a group like the security officers (in the social construction of a terrorist) were keen, and able, to influence representations of Islam, or, at least, to preserve representations of it, that are compatible with its position on their own agenda. In the case of the security officers, a professional concern with the assessment of threat encourages suspicion in the first instance and, therefore, stereotypical representations too. It is easy for a prophecy to become self-fulfilling under such circumstances. Resistance to stereotype becomes unlikely. Publishers, as well as writers (in the case of the Rushdie Affair), are another interest group who display power in representing Islam. That is the power of the pen in constructing or preserving representations of Islam in order to fend off a threat to an acquired interest of their in-group which appears in the form of a threat to freedoms of expression (such as writing and publishing). Feminists (in the case of group discussion) construct, or preserve the construction of, Islam as a threat to women's rights. To defend the in-group interest against this threat the power of the feminist discourse comes into play. Another form of power is that of the mass media of communication. The media used not to be identified themselves as a form of power. Rather, they are conceived of as a means of communication. Here, the media are, arguably, a power in their own right. Their power resides in their contribution to the formation, diffusion and transformation of representations. It is a power that is growing in size in relation to technological progress and improved professional skills which are taking place almost everyday.

#### **9.4. Agendas for Future Research**

This thesis may be important because of its timing. The Muslim world is, undoubtedly, witnessing sweeping changes. One such change is the tide of Islamic revival which first came to prominence in the 1970s and shows no sign of abating. This phenomenon is alarming not only in the Muslim world but also a matter of concern to the West - and for a number of reasons. Islamic revival in the Muslim world is setting agendas not only for Muslims but for how Muslims are to be dealt with by non-Muslim communities world-wide. Not only because of its geo-strategic position on the globe, but also for reasons of economy, politics and culture, the Muslim world is acquiring an increasing importance for the West. No secret is made of the involvement of the West in the Muslim world's public space. The end of the Cold War, with the total collapse of communism and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, has refocussed the attention of the West on the Muslim world. Muslims do not just relate to the West through their neighbourhood across the Mediterranean, they are also now increasingly migrating to the West, which is at the same time the birthplace of the descendants of earlier Muslim immigrants. Causing an unprecedented row of its kind, the Rushdie Affair provided proof that Islamic issues in the West are no longer a matter of foreign policy. They are domestic Western issues in their own right.

Surprisingly, most contemporary scholarship on the relations between the West and Islam remains the monopoly of disciplines such as international relations, diplomacy or the oil industry. Even in the heyday of the Orientalist discourse some fifty years ago, other issues of concern were restricted to anthropology, lexicography, philology and other related linguistic studies. Ever since that time, the Western political agenda seems to have determined how academe has had to deal with Islam, and this is the state we find ourselves in today. Now, Islam is either dealt with, in the West, by the media or by international relations theorists. When the media assume the mission of constructing

Islam and, therefore, of establishing it as knowledge the necessary depth is, possibly, not there. It is, rather, provocative, ready-made clichés which epitomise the media's mode of reporting Islam. When it is academe that takes up the job of representing Islam, renowned international relations experts ranging from Francis Fukuyama to Samuel Huntington come into play. Social science scholarship has yet to stake a claim in this field. This being the situation, there are three victims: the West, Islam and the public on both sides of the divide. A more in-depth knowledge of Islam as it relates to the West, or the latter as it is seen by Muslims, is only obtainable through scholarship which is basically social. Borrowing the Marxist notion of infrastructure, social representations is herein viewed as an infrastructural base for an understanding of the cultural other. Within the wider context of social scholarship, social representations which is the framework within which the present study was conducted, is most certainly one of the most theoretically suitable disciplines to host research on Islam.

The future is ripe for the expansion of research on the topic initiated by this thesis. As the first conducted on this particular topic, in a strict sense, this study was blindly guided - though this is no excuse for any shortcomings it encompasses. No preceding research had helped to delimit the topic, and no idea on areas that might be more interesting than those investigated was readily available. This left a vast unresearched terrain and the associated freedom to go about the research unrestricted by established norms. Yet, this study has its own limitations and flaws. Of all the limitations the time available to complete such a huge research project is the most important. The researcher's own experience in conducting this study reveals that the more time one spends in developing one's own knowledge and elaborating one's own ideas the more originality and novelty one may end up with. Unfortunately, it is the established order that a doctoral thesis is to be completed within a specific period of time.

Research on Western representations of Islam, as well as on Islamic representations of the West, needs to continue. While this thesis sheds light on new topics for research in

the future, it also leaves some of the issues it attempted to tackle in need of further investigation. In this respect, I think that culture, as an important element in the set of factors influencing social representations, needs to be further articulated. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, culture is only tenuously associated with social representations. Failure to articulate it theoretically, has left the necessary methods for its exploration under-developed at best. In this regard the development of the method of group discussion for investigating culture might prove empirically sound and deserving of further refinement. With all the aforementioned precautions about the employment of group discussion accounted for, a number of groups, larger in number than those employed in the present study, might provide results of greater significance. Discussion as argumentation is perhaps one of the most suitable methods for conducting research in social representations. Choosing groups of slightly different cultural backgrounds, as well as of wide-ranging educational and professional composition, the diversity in the social representations investigated will become apparent.

How the transformation of representations takes place is not yet well known. This is a challenge for researchers in social representations. One avenue is to attempt to explore the processes and dynamics of transformation by the replication of research using the same sample at two different periods of time. This may be argued against in that the social nature of social knowledge is basically about human subjects who themselves change. However, these presumably changing subjects are what the transformation of social representations is all about. A changing subject denotes changed social knowledge which is in turn, a changed social representation. This suggestion, however, is just the germ of an idea which, upon further investigation, may prove either worthwhile or worthless. Triangulation itself might be used in finding out how social representations transform. How this can deliver the sort of result we need is to be left to future researchers.

Throughout this thesis, there has been much ado about power. Whether in the Baconian axiom i.e. knowledge itself is power or in the Focauldian/Saidian conception that knowledge is influenced by power, power is a jungle that the theory of social representations has yet to penetrate fully. In the context of this thesis an attempt was made to situate power in operational structures. The structures of power to which we pointed might prove to be only a limited sample of the structures of power actually in play. This should stimulate a desire to elaborate, theoretically, the link between power and social representations on the one hand and, on the other hand, to locate the structures in which power resides.

This entire thesis is devoted to the advocacy, open mindedly and with commitment, of the need for social inquiry to improve our understanding of people of different cultural backgrounds in a world which is the property of all, and which, naturally, is able to accommodate all in the most harmonious and lively interactive forms of co-existence. However, this is a dream which may never be realised. What can eventually be realised is to lay the foundations of the best possible understanding between different communities of mankind. For this to take place, social theory, and the theory of social representations in particular, should seek to articulate both the theoretical and empirical devices needed for continuously improving the stock of social knowledge - knowledge of the self, as well as knowledge of the cultural other.

As conceded at the beginning of this chapter, a definitive conclusion to the thesis is by no means possible. Unlike science, social scholarship raises questions rather than providing conclusive answers. This is not because answers are impossible, or, for one reason or another, that they are hidden away. Answers are to be sought and it has been towards this end that this study was conducted.

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## **Appendix (i)**

### **Interrogation**

**Date: 26-28 July 1991**

**Place: Paddington Green Police Station**

### **References, Abbreviations and Pseudonyms**

1. Abdu: A relative who was on a study course in the U.K.
2. Abim: A Sudanese official in a visit to London.
3. Abu Salih: A Sudanese expatriate in the U.K.
4. Ahsan: A journalist.
5. Ali: A brother-in-law.
6. Al-Khaliel: A Sudanese businessman.
7. Amal: The researcher's wife.
8. Awadallah: A Sudanese diplomat.
9. Azraq: A Sudanese businessman.
10. Bee: Landlord.
11. CP: The Sudanese Communist Party.
12. DUP: The Sudanese Democratic Unionist Party.
13. Eisa: A journalist.
14. Kamil: A Sudanese expatriate in the U.K.
15. Loot: A London-based advertising newspaper.
16. LSE: London School of Economics and Political Science.
17. Mafeed: A friend in Sudan.
18. Mat: A friend in London.
19. Mohsin: A Sudanese diplomat.
20. Musa: A Sudanese diplomat.
21. NIF: The National Islamic Front, a Sudanese political party.

22. Omar: An acquaintance in Sudan.

23. PCS: Popular Committee for Salvation.

24. SPLA/SPLM: Sudan People's Liberation Army and Sudan People's Liberation Movement, military and political wings, respectively, of the rebel movement fighting in Southern Sudan against the central government.

25. Umma: The Umma Party, a Sudanese political party.

26. Zahir: A colleague on a study course in Germany.

27. (...): Un-identifiable writing.

## **Interrogation**

### **First Session**

**Friday 26 July 1991, 10.00am - 12.55pm**

**Q:** What have you been doing in Sudan after being graduated from the University of Khartoum?

**A:** I joined the university as a teaching assistant.

**Q:** Have you been employed full time as teaching assistant?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Have you taken any leaves of absence between 1984 and the time you left the University?

**A:** I've been to Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Turkey and the U.K. too.

**Q:** For what reason did you visit these countries?

**A:** Mostly for holiday and study.

**Q:** Which foreign country did you study in?

**A:** The U.K.

**Q:** Any others?

**A:** No.

**Q:** When did you come to the U.K.?

**A:** 1987.

**Q:** When exactly?

**A:** I think March 1987 until June.

**Q:** Why did you come here?

**A:** For study.

**Q:** Where and what did you study?

**A:** I was mostly stationed in Leeds collecting some literature for my M.A.

**Q:** What was the subject of your thesis?

A: Psychology.

Q: Why was it necessary to come to the U.K. to study?

A: Due to the lack of literature in my country.

Q: Could you not find literature nearer to your home?

A: The University of Khartoum used to have academic connections with universities in the U.K.

Q: You say that you were mostly in Leeds. Which universities did you visit in 1987? And where?

A: The LSE, Dept. of Social Psychology.

Q: How long will your study take you?

A: It is supposed to be 3 years.

Q: When you complete the course, what award will you receive?

A: PhD.

Q: Did you apply to join the course before you arrived in England?

A: No.

Q: When did you apply to join the course?

A: After I came here.

Q: How long afterwards?

A: As soon as I arrived.

Q: What were your plans in case you couldn't do the course?

A: In case I couldn't do the course?

Q: Yes.

A: Go back to my country.

Q: Wouldn't it have been easier to apply for the course while you were still at home on the Sudan?

A: I applied on the U.K. and got an admission from the University of Bristol but it was just before I left my country I received an apology from the University of Bristol, that they won't be able to offer me supervision this year. So this is why I came here and started applying.

**Q:** Who supports you financially?

**A:** The government.

**Q:** What exactly does it pay for?

**A:** It pays for my fees, living expenses and other relevant expenses.

**Q:** Is your grant sufficient for you to survive?

**Q:** Which close members of your family are still alive?

**A:** Father, mother and sisters.

**Q:** Could you not have started for a PhD back in the Sudan?

**A:** No.

**Q:** 3 years is a long time to be away from your family. Are you lonely while you are here?

**A:** I miss them very much.

**Q:** Will missing your family for 3 years be worth the PhD?

**A:** Yes I (... ) I didn't miss them during this period of time.

**Q:** When you have completed your studies, what do you intend to do with them?

**A:** I go back to my country.

**Q:** Where will you work?

**A:** University of Khartoum.

**Q:** In return for supporting you for 3 years did the Sudanese government make any further demand on you?

**A:** I will be required to work for at least 4 years for the Sudan government, then I can be free.

**Q:** Do you favour what type of work you will have to do for them?

**A:** Teaching.

**Q:** How many friends do you have?

**A:** I have many colleagues who are teaching assistants, from the University of Khartoum studying in this country.

**Q:** Do you have any particular friends?

**A:** Not exactly.

Q: You have referred to Mr Mat as a friend and not as a colleague. Do you have any others you refer to as friends?

A: No.

Q: Are you married?

A: Single.

Q: Since arriving in Feb. have you travelled any where else?

A: Yes. I went to Southampton, Exeter, Manchester, Reading and Durham.

Q: Have you travelled to any other foreign country?

A: No.

Q: Do you intend to return to Sudan during your 3 years' study here ?

A: Yes.

Q: How often will you return home?

A: It depends on getting enough money to sponsor my trip to Sudan.

Q: Does your government not pay for say, one return trip per year or may be two ?

A: In case I am supposed to make any field work, I understand my scholarship covers that.

Q: But I mean trips home to visit your family?

A: I'm not quite sure whether I'm entitled to have such funding by virtue of my scholarship.

Q: Do you have relatives in the Sudan?

A: Yes.

Q: What area do they live in?

A: My family lives in western Sudan.

Q: Do they still live in El-Obeid.

A: No, they still live in the same region.

Q: Surely you want to see them?

A: Yes.

Q: Before your course is finished?

A: Yes.

Q: So I presume Mr Mat is your closest friend here?

A: Yes.

Q: Are you allowed to travel to and from the Sudan as often as you wish?

A: Yes.

Q: As a Sudanese national do you have to obtain a Visa to return home or a Visa to go elsewhere?

A: As a Sudan citizen I have the right for both of them.

Q: As a Sudanese citizen are you able to leave the Sudan without permission or not?

A: No.

Q: Do I assume that you need an exit Visa?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you ever had problems leaving the Sudan?

A: What do you mean, financial problems?

Q: No, I am not talking of money. I am talking of applying for permission to leave and being refused for any reason.

A: Never.

Q: You have been studying psychology or teaching in the subject for long time, and you have received financial assistance from the Sudanese government. It regards you as a reliable person, is that correct?

A: I understand. I've been paid for what I have actually been doing. It is quite the same case with other persons employed by my government?

Q: You have said that you are a Muslim? Does the government consider you reliable because you are Muslim?

A: I said I'm from a Muslim area, I, myself, am a Muslim.

Q: Does the government consider you reliable because you are Muslim?

A: What do you mean by being reliable?

Q: I mean that the regime in Khartoum is predominantly (...) that you as a Muslim have never had any trouble leaving the Sudan, would it be as easy if you were a Christian?

A: I started leaving my country since the time I were a student, since then my country witnessed four regimes. I did not get any problem with any of them to get a visa to travel abroad.

Q: Whilst you are studying here for three years, how does the Sudanese government actually pay you as a regular bonus?

A: I didn't understand the question.

Q: You have told me that you receive financial support from your government, how do you actually receive the money from your government?

A: If the question is about the technical aspect of the matter, the authorities of the Sudanese Embassy in London to put my salary in my bank account as well as paying the fees to the LSE.

Q: You say that you moved to your present address about two months after you arrived here, how did you get the (...) of the flat?

A: (...) an advertisement in Loot.

Q: Who owns the flat?

A: Someone called Mr Bee.

Q: How do you pay for the flat?

A: From my salary.

Q: How often do you pay for the rent?

A: I pay (...) pounds per month.

Q: Are you based solely at the LSE in London or do you have to travel around the country for your studies?

A: At the moment I'm based at the LSE in London.

Q: Will you continue to be based at the LSE, or will you have to travel to for part of your studies?

A: For the academic year I will be attending courses that will be based at the LSE on London, after that the topic I choose for research will determine whether I am required to stay and continue in London.

Q: Will you have to travel or stay within this country or may you have to travel abroad?

A: It all depends on the topic of the research which I have not yet chosen.

Q: Does the LSE report about you to the government or the Embassy in London?

A: I understand that it does.

Q: How are your studies progressing? Do you ( ... ) you are making satisfactory progress?

A: It is all right.

Q: We are now in the holiday period. How do you occupy your self during holiday periods?

A: I go to school making some training on computing and some readings as well.

Q: Where do you study?

A: The LSE.

Q: Please explain what you meant by readings?

A: I am strengthening my academic background on certain areas of study before the new academic year starts. That why I go to the LSE library or the library of the Dept of Social Psychology to make more readings.

## Second Session

**Friday 26 July 1991, 2.06 - 5.30pm**

**Q:** Before we had a long break we spoke about your studies in London and your intention to return to the Sudan after your period of study. Please now tell me whether you have any plans to travel out of the country on the immediate future?

**A:** I was planning to travel to Germany, I have already got the visa for that and I have also had the intention to go to my country during this holiday.

**Q:** Let's speak about Germany first. When did you intend to travel to Germany?

**A:** Today.

**Q:** That being Friday 26th. How did you intend to travel?

**A:** By train.

**Q:** And how would you leave London?

**A:** By train.

**Q:** How long did you intend to stay in Germany?

**A:** A week to 10 days not more.

**Q:** What is the reason for your visit?

**A:** Holiday.

**Q:** Where did you intend to stay?

**A:** In Bonn.

**Q:** With whom?

**A:** In a hotel or elsewhere. I had no person to go to.

**Q:** Have you booked accommodation?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Once, in Germany how were you intending to stay?

**A:** I know there are tourist information centres, that can give me the information to find accommodation.

Q: Bonn is a popular place and we are now at the height of the holiday season, would it not have been better to arrange accommodation before you got there. By that I mean many towns not Bonn. During the summer it may be that the hotels may be booked?

A: I did not think about that.

Q: Why have you chosen to go to Germany?

A: I think it is a place where I can spend a good holiday.

Q: Why did you choose Bonn as opposed to any other German city.

A: Because it is the capital city.

Q: Do you have any friends in Germany?

A: No.

Q: Why have you chosen to spend between 7-10 days there?

A: Because I want to go back to my country during this holiday I want to reserve some of my holiday to go there.

Q: Now let us talk about going home to Sudan. Have you booked your travel to the Sudan?

A: No.

Q: When do you intend to go there?

A: Sometime after I come back from Germany.

Q: When do your study at the LSE restart?

A: Early this October.

Q: You said you intend to stay in Germany a maximum 10 days, which means that had go travelled there today. The latest date you would have returned here would be about the fifth or sixth of August. Between these dates and early October do you have any appointments to study, be it computer studies or psychology lectures?

A: My course of study starts on October but during the holiday I am allowed to go to the school for further training in computing or using the library or consulting my supervisor.

Q: I am trying to establish the dates on which you would be free to travel to the Sudan. Are there any days on which you are not able to travel to the Sudan?

A: No.

Q: Who will pay for your travel to the Sudan?

A: I am seeking such a possibility by applying to the cultural attaché.

Q: Do you mean that you're hoping that the Sudanese Embassy will pay for your trip home?

A: Yes, I hope so.

Q: Surely at this time many seats on flights to the Sudan will be booked. Why have you already booked your ticket?

A: I know the problem is how to get the ticket, because I know Sudan Airlines has now a big plane that does not cause any (...) in booking.

Q: I assume that what you mean to say is that there is no difficulty getting on an aircraft for Sudan?

A: I understand that, Sudanese Airlines always leaves from London to Khartoum with some empty seats because there is not enough passengers.

Q: How long do you intend to stay there?

A: 2-3 weeks.

Q: What will you do when you get there?

A: I will see my family and maybe I collect some data for my study.

Q: Do you have to keep any official appointments, I mean any appointments in Khartoum?

A: I got nothing to do with the government officials, but as for the university I will definitely go there.

Q: I would like to draw to your attention an item of property which I am told is addressed to the Ministry of Interior and to an officer whose name is Ali. The writing on the (...) is in Arabic. Is the writing on the envelope your writing?

A: Yes.

Q: And for what reason do you write to this man?

A: He is a police officer working in the Ministry of Interior in Sudan whose sister I am going to marry. That is why I have written this letter to him. And by the way the letter I wrote to him is among the things you collected yesterday.

Q: What is the name of his sister?

A: Amal.

Q: Where does Amal live?

A: In Khartoum.

Q: When will you marry?

A: Very soon.

Q: Does very soon mean before your studies are finished here or not?

A: I hope so.

Q: Have you set a date for your marriage yet? I'd like to draw your attention to this piece of paper which has the heading Hilton International which I am told is also addressed to Mr Ali. It apparently contains only the initial paragraph, for what reason do you write this letter?

A: I actually started writing this letter sometime earlier on July 14th to send to this Ali but I could not finish it. The letter I wrote is the same letter which you collected yesterday.

Q: To arrange your marriage to Amal, do you only deal with her brother or parents if they are still alive?

A: I know Amal's father is a very old man and I used to talk with her brothers in this affair.

Q: When did you first meet Amal?

A: I think in 1985.

Q: Did you meet her through her brother?

A: No.

Q: Does she work for a living?

A: She is a student.

Q: What does she study?

A: Civil engineering.

Q: Where does she study?

A: In Khartoum.

Q: I understand that in Khartoum there is a university for ladies only.

A: That's not correct.

Q: Is there a university for ladies only in Omdurman?

A: The fact is that there are faculties for girls in two universities in Omdurman but there is no separate university for girls.

Q: What is the name of the university that Amal studies at?

A: The University of Khartoum.

Q: When will she qualify as a civil engineer?

A: After 2 years.

Q: When you marry her will she still be working as a civil engineer?

A: Surely.

Q: I now like to draw your attention to this document, which is a Lloyds Bank cash point card in the name of Abdu. Do you know the man whose name is on this card?

A: Yes.

Q: What relationship do you have with him?

A: He is from the same village that I came from in the Sudan.

Q: Please repeat to me the name of the village you came from?

A: El-Maiaa.

Q: You said to me that you were born in El-Obeid, and you gave the name of 2 other villages why do you now mention the name of El-Maiaa?

A: It is the place where my family is living now.

Q: Let us return to the cash card, which of the names is the family name?

A: Usually it is the third name that is the man name (sic).

Q: Where is Mr Abdu now?

A: He left last Friday to Sudan.

Q: Where has he been living?

A: He was attending a course of study in Grimsby.

Q: What was he studying in Grimsby?

A: Fishing.

Q: What type of fishing?

A: I don't know.

Q: Is your family's village near the coast?

A: No, there is no coast in western Sudan.

Q: I thought not. Why would a Sudanese travel to Grimsby to learn about fishing?

A: He is working on the field in Sudan and he was granted a scholarship from the British council to make this study.

Q: What is his address in Grimsby?

A: I don't know exactly but he was studying in a polytechnic there.

Q: Has he finished his study?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did he study there?

A: I think he spent 16 months in the U.K.

Q: Did you visit him in Grimsby?

A: No.

Q: Did he visit you in London?

A: Yes.

Q: Why do you have this card in your possession?

A: He left it to me because he said he may need something from the U.K. that I can cash some money from his account using this card.

Q: Have you needed this card to obtain cash?

A: No.

Q: Has he told you how to use it?

A: He left his number for this card.

Q: It says on the back of the card, that, this card may only be used by the person on the front of the card. Have you ever used this card to obtain money from a cash machine?

A: No.

Q: Is Mr Abdu a friend or a relative of yours?

A: He is a relative and from my village.

Q: When did he give you the card?

A: Last Sunday.

Q: Where were you when he gave you the card?

A: In my flat.

Q: I would now like to show you this. There are copies of your cheque book which is CTB/19. Please look at the cheque number 17. It is dated the 31st July. Is the cheque ( ... ) shows it is SSSU.K. What is SSSU.K.?

A: It's Sudan Studies Society U.K.

Q: What kind of organisation is that?

A: It is an academic organisation.

Q: Is it organised by the Sudanese government?

A: No it is established and run by a group of academics from Britain, Sudan and some other countries.

Q: Why have you written in a date that has not yet happened?

A: That is the date during which I expect my account to cover this cheque.

Q: Now I would like you to look at cheque 18, the ( ... ) bears July 31st. Who is Kamil?

A: He is a Sudanese studying in the U.K.

Q: What is his full name?

A: Kamil Ahmed.

Q: Does he have any other names?

A: Kamil Ahmed Mohammed.

Q: What does he study.

A: I think he is studying Economics-Computing.

Q: Where does he live?

A: He lives here in London.

Q: What is the address?

A: Somewhere in Brighton, I can't be ( ... ).

Q: Where did you first meet him?

A: I met him the time I was admitted to the University of Khartoum.

Q: Now would you describe your relationship with him?

A: He is a good acquaintance.

Q: What is the difference between a good acquaintance and a friend?

A: I understand a relationship with a friend is deeper than a relationship with a good acquaintance.

Q: How old is Kamil?

A: I think he is thirty something.

Q: Tell me again please what he is studying?

A: I think he is studying economics and computing.

Q: Where is he studying?

A: I don't know the name of the institute.

Q: Why did you write him a cheque for a 100 pounds?

A: I borrowed this sum of money from him.

Q: When did you borrow the money?

A: 2-3 days ago.

Q: What did you do with the money?

A: I was in need of it and I was travelling to Germany.

Q: Why did you not borrow the money from Mr Mat because he is your closest friend?

A: It just happened that by the time I was in need of this money I found Kamil and asked him to lend me the sum of money.

Q: When did you book your rail ticket to Germany? Actually pay for it.

A: I think it was last Monday or Tues.

Q: Of this week?

A: Yes.

Q: How much was the ticket?

A: 89 pounds.

Q: Was it a return ticket?

A: Yes.

Q: You said that you borrowed a 100 pounds from Kabeer. How did you spend that money?

A: I paid for the ticket, the travel insurance and some shopping I think.

Q: I would now like to show you this piece of paper which is completely filled with Arabic script. I am told it is signed by the preparatory committee and that it is an invitation to all Sudanese to meet on July 6th 1991 on the occasion of Sudan appeal. Is that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about the committee that sent out this invitation.

A: It is a committee for the work of registered charity called Sudan Appeal.

Q: Is the charity registered here or elsewhere?

A: In Britain.

Q: Where was the meeting held?

A: In the Imperial College.

Q: Did you go?

A: Yes.

Q: Did the meeting have a chairman?

A: It was chaired by the head of the committee.

Q: What is his full name?

A: Abu Salih.

Q: Is he employed here?

A: I don't know his position exactly.

Q: Does he live here?

A: Yes.

Q: Where does he live?

A: Somewhere in London. I don't know exactly.

Q: Does he study here?

A: I don't know his position here.

Q: Does he have paid employment or does he study?

A: I don't know.

Q: I like to show you another A4 size piece of paper (Arabic hand writing). I am told that the headline can be translated as the most politically dangerous document in the history of

the (...). I am told that it is addressed to king (...) and that is he has to make religious reform. Is that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Why are you in possession of that piece of paper?

A: I collected it when it was distributed in a mosque in London on Friday prayer.

Q: Do you attend the mosque regularly?

A: I attend the Friday prayer regularly.

Q: Which mosque do you attend for Friday prayer?

A: I mostly go to the LSE mosque.

Q: What path of Islam do you path? What type of Muslim are you?

A: I'm a Sunni Muslim.

Q: Does the LSE mosque cater only for Sunni Muslims or other Muslim are catered for?

A: I understand that, it caters for all Muslims.

Q: Do you attend any other mosque?

A: Sometimes I attend the Friday prayer in the Central Mosque or Muslim Welfare House mosque in Finsbury Park.

Q: Do you go to any other Muslim meeting places? I mean places where Muslim (sic) go to socialise?

A: No.

Q: Why do you attend different mosques? Why do not just go to one?

A: You know the Friday prayer is held on a working day that why mostly I have been in the School, that I go to the school mosque. When I'm free I choose either to go to the Muslim Welfare House mosque which is near to my residence, or to the Central Mosque, which is the central mosque in London, in Regents Park.

Q: Are there any differences between the three mosques you have named?

A: What differences?

Q: You have said that the LSE mosque accepts different kind of Muslims, do the other two mosques, namely the Central Mosque and Finsbury Park mosque, do they also accept Muslims of different persuasions or belief?

A: Yes they accept different Muslims.

Q: Do you ever meet both Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims?

A: I can pray in a mosque where there are Shia Muslims.

### **Third Session**

**Friday 26 July 1991, 8.06 - 9.30pm**

Q: I wish to take you back one week ago which is Friday July 19th, where have you stayed since last Friday 19th?

A: Here in London.

Q: Where exactly?

A: In my flat.

Q: Have you stayed there each night?

A: Yes.

Q: What have you been doing this last week? Studying or working or doing something else?

A: I've been studying.

Q: Have you been studying at home or been into your college?

A: Sometimes I study at home, otherwise I go to school.

Q: Let me take it day by day and I will start with Friday 19th of July. Did you leave your home that day?

A: Yes I left my home.

Q: Where did you go that day?

A: I went to the Embassy and the Central Mosque where I attended the Friday prayer, and I remember I went to a shop in Baker Street area called Lewis and Lewis.

Q: Why did you go to the Embassy?

A: I went to (see) the (...) counsellor.

Q: What is his name?

A: Awadallah.

Q: What did you speak about with him?

A: I don't remember exactly as I was reading the Sudanese papers. We would have talked about news from the Sudan.

Q: Did you speak to any one else at the Embassy?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Are you a regular visitor to the Embassy?

A: Yes.

Q: How often do you go to the Embassy?

A: Almost every week day.

Q: Why do you go there so often?

A: The Embassy is near the LSE, 3 or 4 stations on the Piccadilly Line.

Q: It may be nearby but for what purpose do you go there every day?

A: I used to go to the information office, usually to read the papers coming from Sudan and the English and Arabic papers published in London. I would like to add to this that I used to practice some sort of journalism.

Q: Tell me more about the sort of journalism you used to practice?

A: When I was in Sudan I used to be the editor-in-chief of a weekly magazine called "Sanabil".

Q: What does that translate?

A: A plural from the top of a corn plant where there is the ear. The top of the corn plant to bear the seeds.

Q: What views did you express in this paper?

A: The paper was very much concerned with the call for a genuine dialogue between the different national forces in the country being Muslim forces, Christian forces, traditional or modern forces. It was also dealing with cultural affairs, thoughts, sports and letters.

Q: During which years were you associated with this paper?

A: From Oct. 1988 up to June 1989.

Q: June 1989 there was a coup. Who was in power on Sudan before the coup?

A: There was a multi-party system within which there was a government led by prime minister Sadiq El-Mahdi.

Q: The government of El-Mahdi has now been replaced by a Revolutionary Command Council and an assembly. Has this been an improvement?

A: There is a Revolutionary Command Council and a council of ministers.

Q: Is the new system an improvement or the old government that was overthrown in 1989?

A: There was a deterioration as for the economic and security situation. The economic situation, however, is still deteriorating while the security situation seems a little improving.

Q: Is the Revolutionary Command Council the correct body to run the country? Are they doing a good job or as replaced by somebody else?

A: As a witness for the period before the change of Mr Mahdi's government I understand that most of the people in Sudan had the idea that Mr Mahdi's government would not manage to survive for a long time. That they believed the change of the whole system was just a matter of time. What I believe concerning the present government, has it not developed into a more democratic system it may not stand better chances of survival.

Q: You say that your (...) ended with the newspaper at the time of the coup. Does your newspaper still exist?

A: It is a magazine and not a newspaper. It doesn't exist now.

Q: Let us come back to the present time and return to your movements during the last week. You said that you used to visit the Embassy in order to read the newspapers. Why do you still visit the Embassy every working day?

A: For the same purpose.

Q: What did you do last weekend?

A: I stayed for the whole of Saturday at home because I received a visitor. He is Mr Abdu who came from Grimsby and stayed with me in his way back to Sudan.

Q: When did he fly back to Sudan?

A: On Sunday.

Q: Did you go to the airport with him?

A: Yes.

Q: What time did the flight leave and which airline was it?

A: By Sudan Airlines and he checked in sometime after 5.00 pm.

Q: Do you know what time the flight was meant to leave?

A: I don't know.

Q: Approximately?

A: Not more than 2 hours after he checked in.

Q: So do you mean sometime between 7.00 pm and 8.00 pm?

A: Maybe.

Q: Let us now move to this Monday 22nd. What did you do on that day?

A: I remember I went to the Embassy and the School.

Q: Now tell me about Tues 23rd?

A: The Embassy and may be I went to Victoria station to buy my ticket. I am not sure whether it was Monday or Tuesday.

Q: Now tell me about Wed 24th?

A: I went to the Embassy, to the Belgium Embassy and to the school.

Q: Why did you go to the Belgium Embassy?

A: To pick a transit visa to the Benelux countries.

Q: Now Thursday 25th. Tell me about that day?

A: I went to the Embassy, I returned home then I came to my friend Mr Mat in his house.

From there we went to see Mr Abim.

Q: Why did you go to see Mr Mat.?

A: It was agreed that we would go together to see Mr Abim.

Q: On that Thursday morning what time did you go to the Embassy?

A: Early morning it was about 9.00 am when I was there.

Q: Did you see Mat at the Embassy?

A: Yes.

Q: On what day did Mat and you first make the decision to visit Mr Abim?

A: On that Thursday.

Q: Why did you decide to go to see him?

A: Mr Abim is one of my acquaintances. I think there is something here I want to explain.

As Sudanese people given their cultural-social background when there is a visitor people go to see him. For us in London as we are away from our country when there is a visitor from

Sudan, we used to go and see him and ask him about the news of the country about relatives and friends.

Q: How did you first find out that Abim had arrived in London?

A: In fact I first knew that he will come to London by a friend in Sudan, who told me by phone that Mr Abim may come to London sometime.

Q: What is the name of this friend that told you?

A: His name is Mafeed.

Q: Where does he work?

A: He works on the committee for peace in Sudan.

Q: How did you find out where Mr Abim was staying in London?

A: Given what I already said, that I was told that he would be coming here sometime later I asked Mr Mat and he phoned another diplomat in the Embassy called Mr Mohsin from whom he got the number and gave it to me.

Q: Who telephoned Mr Abim to make an appointment?

A: It was me.

Q: What time did you telephone?

A: This morning.

Q: What time?

A: I think it was before midday.

Q: After you left the Embassy on Thursday morning where did you go?

A: I went back home.

Q: What time did you get there?

A: I think I was at home about 4 o'clock.

Q: Let me take you back to your telephone conversation with Mr Abim on Thursday morning. Did you identify yourself to him?

A: Yes.

Q: Which name did you give him?

A: Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun.

Q: That is your full name. Did you give him your full name or part of it?

A: I gave him my full name.

Q: What did you say to him?

A: I greeted him. It seemed to me as if at first he did not know me thoroughly. So I started to tell him who I am. Then I told him that I would be happy to see him in London and I like to pay him a visit if he doesn't mind.

Q: What did he say to you then?

A: He gave me his address. I said to him that we may come to see him at about 6.00. He said it is better at about 7.00 o'clock.

Q: Whom you tell him who would be accompanying you?

A: In the morning call no.

Q: When did you arrive at Mr Mat's home?

A: About 7.00 o'clock.

Q: Where does he live?

A: Flat (...) Gloucester Terrace, W2.

Q: Who lives with him?

A: His wife and son.

Q: How old is his son?

A: I think about one year and a half.

Q: Did you make another telephone call to Mr Abim?

A: Yes.

Q: What time did you make the phone call?

A: As soon as I arrived.

Q: What did you say to Mr Abim?

A: He asked me who I am. I told him that I am Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun. He asked me who was coming with me. I told him that Mr Mat (...) will be with me.

Q: What did you tell him about yourself apart from your name?

A: It seemed that he was trying to remember who I am, I told him that I met with him a lot in Sudan and he once took part in a debate that I was taking part in.

Q: Did you tell him that you were a member of the Islamic National Front?

A: No.

Q: He says that you told him you were a member of the NIF?

A: No, I never told him that.

Q: Why should Mr Abim lie to me. If he hardly knows you why should he tell me lies about you?

A: I don't know.

Q: You have said to me that when you first telephoned him, he didn't seem to know who you were, and it was same when you made the second telephone call. Why should he tell me lies. Why should he tell me that you are a member of the NIF if you are not?

A: I don't really know.

Q: Are you a member of the INF (sic)?

A: I know that there is nothing as such at present in Sudan.

Q: What is the NIF?

A: It was a political party in the Sudan during the period 1985-1989.

Q: Did it have a leader?

A: Definitely yes.

Q: Who was the leader.

A: Doctor Hassan Al-Turabi.

Q: Is the NIF also called the Muslim Brotherhood?

A: No, there was another group called the Muslim Brotherhood.

## Fourth Session

**Saturday 27 July 1991, 10.00am - 12.25pm**

Q: We spoke yesterday about your intention to travel to Germany and that you intend to leave yesterday, Friday 26th. You said that you knew nobody in Germany. Is that correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Are you sure that you didn't know anybody in Germany at present?

A: There was a colleague who is a teaching assistant at the University of Khartoum doing his studies in Germany. I don't know whether he is still there or not? His name is Zahir. In fact I had no correspondence with him since he left the country. Since he left Sudan for Germany to study. And I don't even know where he studies in Germany. I also had another acquaintance who is a diplomat in the Sudanese Embassy there, but it is now quite a long time since he wrote to me last time. His name is Musa.

Q: Is Musa a diplomat?

A: Yes, he is.

Q: Is he still in Germany?

A: I am not sure whether he is still there or not.

Q: When approximately did he last write to you?

A: Last time he wrote to me was about 5-6 months ago before I came to this country.

Q: Would that have been this year or last year?

A: I think I can produce the last letter I received from him.

Q: Apart from the two people whom you have named, is there anybody else either Sudanese or foreign who you know who is in Germany at the moment?

A: No.

Q: I am going to show you this which I shall refer to as part of ref.(...) 16 which is a very blue desk diary with the words: Khartoum University Press on the front corner. Is this yours?

A: Yes.

Q: On the fly leaf which is blank apart from the date 1991 there are two telephone numbers written in pencil. What are they? To what do they refer?

A: These are the numbers of both the house and office of the acquaintance I just mentioned whose name is Musa.

Q: What exact position does Musa hold within the Embassy?

A: He is a diplomat but what exact position he holds I don't know.

Q: I have established that these telephone numbers are the numbers of both the Sudanese Embassy in Bonn and also the home telephone number of the Sudanese ambassador in Bonn. Is that correct?

A: As Mr Musa is a diplomat in the Embassy, I understand his office should be in the Embassy, and that his office number most at least be one of the numbers of the Sudanese Embassy in Bonn. But as for the home number I do not think Mr Musa is the ambassador as far as I know. And when I was given this number I just understand that was his home number.

Q: Did you write the telephone numbers into your diary?

A: These numbers were written by a friend in Sudan in this diary just before I left Sudan in Feb. 1991.

Q: When did you first make the decision to travel to Germany?

A: I had the idea to go to Germany as I am in a holiday which started last June.

Q: You have just said that somebody else wrote these numbers into your diary earlier this year and some months before you decided to travel to Germany?

A: These numbers were written in my diary sometime even before I made my decision to come to the U.K. for study.

Q: Who wrote these numbers into your diary?

A: He is an acquaintance in Sudan called Omar who is also an acquaintance of Mr Musa.

Q: Why did he write them into your diary?

A: Because I asked him to.

Q: I will ask you again when did you first decide to travel to Germany?

A: I had the idea of travelling to Germany as I am in a holiday that started last June. It really is not a decision that I made when I knew that Mr Abim is here in London.

Q: Why have you just connected your travel to Germany with Mr Abim?

A: Because according to what is going in the interview that you are trying to establish a link between my journey to Germany and the allegation that you already told me about.

Q: Tell me why are you connecting your journey to Germany with Mr Abim?

A: The same previous answer, I just said that my decision to travel to Germany has been made as I am in holidays that started last June and by that time I didn't even know that Mr Abim was going to visit London.

Q: By last June do you mean June 1990 or 1991?

A: June 1991.

Q: Is Mr Abim going to travel to Germany?

A: I don't know.

Q: You here said several times that in June 1991 you decided to travel to Germany, why then should your friend write these telephone numbers into your diary some months earlier?

A: It is quite natural for someone from my country who is going abroad to countries where communication services are better than we have in our country to collect the numbers and addresses of acquaintances and friends with whom one can make correspondences whenever necessary and possible.

Q: Where is your friend Omar now?

A: I said he is an acquaintance not a friend. He is now in Sudan.

Q: Your answers still don't make sense to me. Surely you must have decided to visit Germany at the time or before Omar wrote the numbers into your diary.

A: Having a number in a diary doesn't mean making a decision to travel somewhere. I have got some more numbers in my diary for people living elsewhere, does that mean I have made a decision to travel there?

Q: You have another diary which contains many telephone numbers. In this particular diary to which I have been referring there are only these two telephone numbers.

A: Yes, this is because when I met this acquaintance in Sudan and I asked him to write down these numbers to me, it so happened that I had this diary with me. While I have been here I used to use a pocket diary in which I have quoted these same numbers.

Q: Why did you ask him to write these numbers in your diary?

A: Because he is an acquaintance and I may need whenever possible to talk to him.

Q: When I asked you yesterday if you knew anybody in Germany you said that you knew nobody. Today you have given me the name of someone you know at the Embassy in Bonn. Which answer was true?

A: I understand by your question yesterday that you asked me whether I know somebody in Germany who I know is present in Germany at the moment. As for these two persons I don't know exactly whether they are in Germany at the moment or not.

Q: You are wrong. Yesterday my sample question asked you if you know anybody in Germany and you said no. That answer was obviously wrong. Wasn't it?

A: My last answer was exactly what I understand from your question yesterday. I assure you this answer is right.

Q: Have you been to Germany before?

A: No.

Q: How is your intended visit to Germany connected with Mr Abim?

A: It has no connection with Mr Abim.

Q: If you had travelled to Germany yesterday would you have been able to return to this country?

A: What do you mean by able?

Q: By able I mean would the British immigration allow you to come back into this country via Germany?

A: As I am a resident student I understand that I am allowed to come back and that was why I bought a return ticket.

Q: I would now like to show you your JTB18. This is a Sudanese passport bearing your name and photograph. Page 18 contains a single entry visa dated Dec. 1990 which is valid

for 6 months from that date. That means that you wouldn't be allowed to re-enter this country.

A: I understand that my residence in this country as shown in my green card extends to Oct. 1992. I understand accordingly that during this period of study I am allowed to travel abroad and travel back to the U.K. without being in need of an entry visa.

Q: If you had travelled to Germany were you intending to return here?

A: Within 7 to 10 days. Sorry I mean ten.

Q: I think from Germany that you were going to go home to the Sudan. Is that right?

A: No.

Q: Where is your rail ticket to enable you to travel to Germany?

A: It is with Awadallah.

Q: Why does he have your rail ticket?

A: As I visited him on Thursday in his office in the Embassy I requested him to make a booking for me to Germany as he goes out at the end of the day from the Embassy and pass the ticket to me sometime later that day.

Q: Which day was that?

A: This was Thursday 25th of July.

Q: What time was he meant to give you the ticket?

A: This was in the Embassy sometime before midday.

Q: Why didn't he give you the ticket?

A: I was not at home by the time he might have come to see me there. I was already here.

Q: Where did he get the ticket from?

A: It was me who got the ticket, not him.

Q: You have just said to me that you asked him to book me the ticket and then pass the ticket to you later on the Thursday.

A: What I mean by booking the ticket is to make a reservation. Because I have already bought the ticket.

Q: Do you mean that you collected the ticket from the travel office or railway situation.

A: Yes. I have already collected the ticket from Victoria International Railway Centre.

Q: Where is that?

A: Victoria Station.

Q: Where is the ticket?

A: With Awadallah.

Q: If you collected the ticket why did you give it to him?

A: To make me a reservation.

Q: At the time you collected the ticket you could have made the reservation yourself. Why didn't you?

A: By the time I collected the ticket I was supposed initially to get a travel insurance which was needed to obtain the German visa. So I went to collect the travel insurance and I took the chance to collect the ticket. So I was not there to make a reservation as I initially wanted to collect the travel insurance.

Q: I now like you to look at CTB 18 which is a certificate of travel insurance number 53726. It covers a period from July 25th until August 2nd. You have said to me yesterday and indeed several moments ago that you would be in Germany for a maximum of 10 days. If you had stayed in Germany for 10 days this insurance would have expired before you come back.

A: I made this travel insurance for 9 days because to have a travel insurance there are several categories for payment. There is a category. There is a category for a 15 days stay. I think there is another one for 7 days and there is a third one for 9 days in addition to some other categories. The payment increases as the number of days of stay increases. I did not like to choose the 4th category because it meant to me that I pay extra money. That is why I chose the 9 days category and accordingly I would return within this limit of time.

Q: I am now going to show you page 21 of your passport which contains a German residence permit (visa) (... ) 16123074, that allows you to stay in Germany between July 26th and August 10th. Why did you apply for these particular dates?

A: Because these are the suitable days for me to travel to Germany.

Q: If you stayed in Germany until August the 10th your travel insurance would have expired?

A: I would not have stayed there up to August 10th.

Q: Why then is August 10th written on the visa?

A: It was just for precaution against any unforeseeable thing that may happen to me and delays my return. I will not need to ask for an extension of stay.

Q: I am now going to show you page 18 which contains the British visa that allows you only to this country. It is dated Dec. 30th 1990. When did you apply for it?

A: This was sometime last year in Sudan.

Q: When exactly last year?

A: Either in Nov. or December 1990.

Q: Where did you apply for it?

A: The British Embassy in Khartoum.

Q: Did you visit the Embassy in order to make the application?

A: Yes.

Q: After you made the application, how many weeks did it take for you to receive your visa?

A: It took me quite a long time. As was the case with all applicants that time. This was because the war in the Gulf complicated the procedures leading to having a visa.

Q: How many weeks did it take?

A: I don't remember exactly but between 3-6 weeks.

Q: What did you have to do to obtain the visa?

A: You fill at a form, produce documents showing the reason why you are travelling to the U.K. to fix two passport personal photos. That is it.

Q: Let us return to Germany, you said to me yesterday that you hadn't been to Germany before. Is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you book accommodation there?

A: No.

Q: Were you going to meet anybody there?

A: No.

Q: Were you going to visit the Sudanese Embassy in Bonn?

A: I had no such a plan in my programme.

Q: You have in possession the Sudanese ambassador's personal telephone number, not many people have that. Surely you were going to contact him?

A: The number I have is for an acquaintance who was a diplomat in Sudanese Embassy in Bonn by the time I were in Sudan. I assure you that I don't know whether he is still in Bonn or not. In addition to that I don't think he has just so quickly become an ambassador.

Q: I am not talking about the Embassy telephone number. I am talking about the ambassador's home number which is private?

A: Me too, I don't speak about the Embassy's number. I talk about the home number which is Mr Musa's number as far as I know.

Q: Do you have any German currency?

A: No.

Q: You were interested in travelling to Germany yesterday. Why did you not buy some?

A: I know it is not a problem to make change. Neither it does need time to do so.

Q: Do you have any travel cheques?

A: No.

Q: When were you going to collect your ticket from Awadallah?

A: On Thursday night. I was actually expecting him to bring it to me at home, as he lives not far from my home and he has got a car.

Q: What time was he going to deliver the ticket to you?

A: Sometime after 10 pm as I was expecting I will be at home by then.

Q: How long did you expect to stay with Mr Abim?

A: I think I will tell the whole story relating to my visit to Mr Abim. First Mr Abim is an acquaintance whom I have been knowing for not less than 2 years now.

Q: How do you know him?

A: We have been working together almost in many conferences held by the government in Khartoum. This started by the national conference for peace in Sudan which was convened in September 1989. So from this aspect both of us have been known in the Sudan as peace

activists. Mr Abim also took part in a debate which we held in Khartoum about Sudan foreign relations in the 1990's. I was chairing this debate. Mr Abim who is a minister in the present government in Sudan and I are sympathizers in this government. Moreover, I am a member of the popular committee in London which has an office here in Sudan Embassy. It is a committee which is concerned with offering services to help the Sudanese nationals in this country and it is also working for the welfare of Sudan. One of the things we used to do in the committee is to let some of the Sudanese personalities who visit London talk to the Sudanese people in public meetings, and organize meetings with the media to talk about Sudan. We have done this before and we had the idea to organize the same thing to Mr Abim. This was an initial reason why I went to see him in the company of the cultural attaché. And in addition to that we wanted to take the opportunity to ask him about the general situation in our country as he has just come from Sudan.

Q: Who is in charge of the popular committee for the salvation of Sudan in London?

A: The president of this committee is Mr Al-Khaliel.

Q: Does he have any other names?

A: I don't know.

Q: Since you first started working with Mr Abim in various committees how many times have you met him?

A: I said we met in various conferences and I think it was quite a number of times.

Q: Have you met him 10 times or more?

A: Definitely more than 10 times.

Q: Have you met him more than 20 times?

A: Maybe.

Q: In that case when you telephoned him on Thursday morning why did he not remember you?

A: I think Mr Abim, I must express myself correctly, might have forgotten me, for the reason that; he is a senior official in the government, he is of a high responsibility and a busy person, as opposed to a young man like me who is a young man who used to shoulder irregularly, some tiny responsibilities. He must have met hundreds like me and

that might make it not possible for him to remember the names and features of all those people. Second, I was talking to him by telephone. It is not easy to know a person who is not very close to you by telephone even though you may know him if you know him face to face. I myself find it difficult for me sometimes to know a person's name by telephone but I know him by his face. When I met Mr Abim in his flat I remember when he was asked by one of your colleagues whether he knows me? He said to him yes, we met before.

## **Fourth Session - a supplement**

**Saturday 27 July 1991, 1.05 - 1.14pm**

Q: Mr Haroun you are unhappy about the meaning of (...) of your answers in pages 13 and 14 in this record of your answers. And I intend to let you clarify your answers. I want to remind you that you are still under caution and what you say may be taken down and given in evidence. Do you understand that?

A: Yes.

Q: Explain again in your own words the circumstances of your purchase of the rail ticket and the part that Awadallah played in it?

A: The only correction I want to make to your question about when he will give me the ticket.

Q: Line 13 or 14?

A: The correction I want to make is by this answer I meant the time I gave him the ticket to make me the reservation. And as for the time he is supposed to return the ticket to me I have already explained somewhere in my answers.

Q: I understand from this that you mean that on the morning of Thursday 25th you gave Awadallah the ticket to make you a reservation and that he was due to return the ticket to you later that same evening. Is that correct?

A: Yes.

## **Fifth Session**

**Sunday 28 July 1991, 10.45am - 12.40pm**

**Q:** You said to me before that you worked for a magazine called "Sanabil", since you came to this country have you worked at all as a journalist?

**A:** What do you mean by "worked as a journalist", please?

**Q:** By that I mean, have you written any articles for publications in any newspaper or a magazine either for payment or otherwise?

**A:** Yes, I did write some articles for some papers.

**Q:** How many articles have you written since you have been here?

**A:** I have written 3 articles which have been published by Al-Hayat Arabic daily. The first was in April 1991. It was about Sudan-Egypt relations. I also published an article on Al-Aalam which is weekly London-based magazine. It was about Sudan as viewed by the academia. The last article I wrote is about the fundamentalists after the Gulf War; what sort of relationship? I sent it to both Al-Hayat and Al-Aalam. I wrote an article in English about the chances for peace in Sudan which I sent to the London-based magazine "Africa Events".

**Q:** You have told me about these 4 articles (interrupted by the interrogated by saying they are 6). Were they all published?

**A:** I mentioned them in my previous answer. I said 3 of them were published in Al-Hayat and another one in Al-Aalam. These are the articles that have actually been published.

**Q:** You said that you wrote one about the fundamentalists which you sent to Al-Hayat and Al-Aalam was this one published?

**A:** By the way Al-Hayat can be translated as life and Al-Aalam can be translated as the universe or world, just for the purpose of explanation. As for the question, the article on the fundamentalists has not yet been published, maybe because I have written it just recently and sent it to those papers last week.

**Q:** Which viewpoint did you take in the article?

A: The viewpoint which I have explained in the article was that what is needed is peaceful co-existence within a democratic formula.

Q: At present the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), is fighting in the South to preserve the South as a separate part of the Sudan. By "peaceful co-existence" do you mean the South of Sudan should be allowed to remain separate from the North of the country?

A: If you are referring to the article I have been talking about it was not talking about Sudan.

Q: In that case what was the article talking about?

A: The article was talking about a phenomenon that is prevailing almost all over the Muslim world. It was calling for a sort of co-existence within a democratic formula between these fundamentalists and others.

Q: I understand your answer. Now that applies to the Sudan at present?

A: Can you explain your question more please.

Q: Is it true that fundamentalist Muslims are in charge of the regime in Khartoum.

A: What do you mean by fundamentalist Muslims?

Q: I mean Muslims who wish for a strict interpretation of the Qur'anic Law?

A: And what do you mean by strict interpretation of the Qur'anic Law, please?

(Here the junior officer interrupted the progress of the interrogation by asking the interrogated not to escape answering the question, but the senior officer, honestly speaking, was very patient and continued answering the interrogated's explanations)

Q: I mean Muslims who are very devout.

A: Given the explanation you made to what is meant by Muslim fundamentalists, this interpretation almost includes all Muslims in my country. I know that the "sufi" Muslims in my country, stick to the Qur'an. The Muslims who were once affiliated to what we call the "traditional Parties" also stick to the Qur'an and the Muslims affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood or the NIF also stick to the Qur'an in addition to those who are not affiliated to the above mentioned groups. So according to the definition you made to Muslim fundamentalists I can say that, and without reservation that all the above mentioned groups of Muslim fundamentalists in addition to non-Muslims are now ( ... ) in my country. I

know that the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), which is the top leadership of the country comprises 3 out of 13 members who are non-Muslims, in a country almost 90% plus of its population are not only Muslims but Muslim fundamentalists.

Q: You have just mentioned that some Muslims belong to the NIF, on Tuesday evening I ask you about the NIF and you told me it no longer existed. What do you have to say?

A: That is right, I know that all parties in my country are banned since June 30th 1989.

Q: But you told me on Tuesday that the NIF, no longer existed. You did not say it was banned. You said it did not exist. You have just referred to people who belong to it as if it does exist. Which of your answers is true?

A: By existence I mean the legal existence. As for this aspect there is no legal existence to any political party in Sudan since June 30th 1989.

Q: I know there is no legal existence, but you know main parties exist unofficially. Why do you say the NIF still exists?

A: I did not say the NIF still exists. What I said, and still say is that no political party legally exists in my country since June 30th 1989.

Q: Tell me what you mean by Muslim fundamentalism?

A: What I understand by Islamic fundamentalism as a terminology used by academics usually, political scientists, political psychologists and the media at large is the Muslim groups that do not separate religion from public life.

Q: Which groups in Sudan are opposed to the RCC?

A: Do you mean inside the Sudan?

Q: Yes, I mean inside the Sudan?

A: I am almost now 6 months away from Sudan. I do not know who is exactly with the government and who is against it.

Q: You were in Sudan this January 1991. At that time which Sudanese groups were opposed to the RCC?

A: I know the SPLA/SPLM, has been fighting against the government in Khartoum and as for the banned political parties I know that some of their leaders are participating in the government at the highest level, and some of them were opposing the government.

Q: Name to me those members of banned groups that were opposing the government?

A: I know Mr Sadiq Al-Mahdi, the ex-prime minister is the leader of the banned Umma Party was opposing the government, and some leaders of the banned Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) were also opposing the present government.

Q: Who else?

A: There is also the banned Communist Party (CP) and some trade unions.

Q: Are you a Muslim fundamentalist?

A: In the meaning you made, Yes.

Q: And what about the meaning you gave me?

A: According to the instructions of my religion, religion is not to be separated from public life. By this I mean religion offers a way of life that organises the way a Muslim behaves. According to this yes, I am.

Q: You have told me that 12 members of the RCC, are Muslims?

A: I did not tell you that, you can refer back to the interview.

Q: How many members of the RCC, are Muslims?

A: 10.

Q: How many of them are fundamentalists?

A: By the meaning you and I made, I think all of them are fundamentalists.

Q: That means that Muslim fundamentalists are in charge of the RCC?

A: What do you mean by in charge of?

Q: I am simply saying that the majority of the RCC, are Muslim fundamentalists and therefore, they have the biggest say. Is that correct?

A: According to the definition you and I made you can say the majority of the members of the RCC, are Muslim fundamentalists.

Q: How can Muslim fundamentalists peacefully co-exist with the SPLA?

A: You want me to give my personal point of view?

Q: I am referring to the civil war in your country and I want you to tell me which side do you support? The Christians in the South or the Muslims in the North?

A: I do not understand that the fighting in my country is between Muslims and Christians. This, I am sorry to say, is one of the big fallacies that I noticed as being prevailing in the media and the political arena outside my country and specially in the West. I know that there are members in the leadership of the SPLA/SPLM, who are Muslims, and there are members in the RCC, as well as in all the governments in the country since 1983 when the SPLA/SPLM, first started, who are Christians. So it is not correct to say the war now in Sudan is a war between Muslims against Christians.

Q: I wish you look at this copy of a page from your small diary, which is part of Ex ref. CJB 31. It mentions the Garang press conference on a Friday at Regent's College and the date is June the 28th 1991. Why have you written that in your diary.

A: I agree, this is part of my diary. I have written this information as I was intending to attend a public press conference held by Garang in the time and place mentioned in the diary and I did actually attend it.

Q: Why did you go there?

A The question you ask is very strange to me. I think the question must have been why didn't you go there? I told you that I have been known in my country and I still am a peace activist, and this conference was held by the leader of a movement which is taking part in the fighting in my country. So, how wouldn't I go there so as to know the recent developments about peace in my country.

Q: John Garang is the leader of the SPLA, isn't he?

A: Yes, he is.

Q: Do you support the SPLA/SPLM,?

A: No.

Q: Did you write an article about the meeting?

A: I wrote an article in which I referred to the meeting.

Q: Let me now show you copies of some papers which I shall refer to as Ex CJB 39. Three sheets are hand-written, are they written in your hand, (showing Ex)?

A: Yes, the hand-written pages are written in my handwriting, and the other pages are also typed by me.

Q: One of the copies in this exhibit is dated June 28th 19991, and is addressed "to whom it may concern", on a paper headed Africa Events and asks permission for you cover the Sudan conference on behalf of Africa Events. Do you recognise this?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Were you paid to attend the meeting?

A: Paid by whom?

Q: Were you paid by anyone to attend the meeting?

A: No.

Q: Did Africa Events ask you to attend the meeting?

A: No, it was me who requested them to write me this letter to enable me to attend the press conference. This is because I do not have a press card and I just thought that the admission to the conference will be restricted just to those who show their press cards or any other documents that might allow them in. In fact when I went there I was not even asked to show such a thing as all people were allowed in.

Q: This piece of paper is signed by the editor Ahsan. Do you know him?

A: I actually know the editor-in-chief of the paper, and by that when I phoned him, I was told he was not in the country. So I phoned the 2nd man who happened to be Mr (...). I explained to him the case and he promised to write me the letter, which he actually did.

Q: Let me refer to the 5 pages of this Ex which you say you typed. You have signed them yours sincerely, and then follows your full name and the date the July 16th. And slightly above your name you have typed dear brother Eisa. Who is Eisa?

A: He is the editor-in-chief of Africa Events, whom I mentioned in my last answer.

Q: What is his full name?

A: Eisa.

Q: What nationality he is?

A: He is African but I do not know which part of Africa he is from. I am sure he is not Sudanese.

Q: How long have you known him?

A: After I arrived in this country.

Q: How did you meet him?

A: He contacted Awadallah who himself is a journalist asking him to write an article for Africa Events, and Awadallah referred him to me. I went then to see him in his office and I promised him to write to his magazine as far as I can.

Q: Another page of the Ex CJB 29 is another letter from Africa Events dated July 23rd 1991 from the editor Ahsan to Awadallah at the Sudanese Embassy, rejecting to use your article because "it is rather partisan". Why did the editor write to Mr Awadallah?

A: I do not know why exactly, but maybe the person who wrote to Mr Awadallah who is Ahsan thought that it is Awadallah who sent him this article. However, It just happened by mistake, because I had my name typed in the bottom of the article and if he could first focus on the article clearly, he might have known that it was written by me, not by Awadallah. Another thing which makes me believe so is that I actually sent this article to Mr Eisa and not Ahsan, I would think Eisa handed it to him as the editor of the magazine and he did not pay attention to who wrote the article.

Q: He says that your article is rather partisan. Why does he say that?

A: I think this question should be referred to Mr Ahsan.

Q: In the article whose side do you take?

A: In the article I did actually take the side of peace in my country. You can just quote the conclusion to the article which says "All in all, local, regional and international atmosphere is putting more pressure on whoever fighting to consider the possibility of an end to war. The SPLM, would not be an isolated isle in a sea of peaceful emotions. Some rain is most likely to fall in the dry isle".

Q: Have you written other articles for Africa Events?

A: I have written an article about the new political system and the move towards democratisation in my country. This was, I think, in April 1991. Unfortunately, it was not published.

Q: Why was it not published?

A: I have been told by the editor-in-chief that it will be published some time later.

Q: What is the Green Village? I shall refer you to CJB 30 which is a copy of paper with both English and Arabic writing on it. On the top is written "Green Village", what is it?

A: The Green Village that I know is a hotel in Khartoum. So may be when I wrote Green Village on this Ex I just remembered this hotel.

Q: Is it written by you?

A: Yes.

Q: Why did you write it?

A: I do not know why exactly, but I know when I sit to write an article for example I keep speculating and recalling some memories as is the case with most of those who practise journalistic writing. So it might be just in this context that I wrote " Green Village ".

Q: On the same page is written and I am quoting: "book review; Turabi's Revolution". Is Turabi's Revolution a book?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: Turabi is the head of the NIF, is he not?

A: Turabi was the leader of the banned NIF.

Q: Who wrote the book?

A: El-Affendi.

Q: Does he work at the Sudanese Embassy in London?

A: Yes, he does.

Q: Do you review books?

A: In my country I used to do so.

Q: Have you read this book?

A: Yes, I have read it.

Q: When did you read it?

A: It is a newly published book, so I have just recently finished reading it.

Q: Have you written a review of it?

A: No.

Q: Why have you written the words "book review" then?

A: Because I have the idea to review it, and I hope I do.

Q: For what reason will you review it?

A: First it is not something new for me to review books. Second this book which was initially a PhD thesis written by Mr El-Affendi and supervised by the well known Sudan specialist Peter Woodward working at Reading University is a reliable book for whoever interested in Sudan politics and recent history. I am an academic with special interest in the Sudan. Why do not I offer such a help to those interested in this very specific area?

## **Sixth Session**

**Sunday 28 July 1991, 3.30 pm- 6.17pm**

*The interrogator went on throughout the whole of this session asking the interrogated about various friends and acquaintances whose numbers and/or addresses he had in his small diary. Irrelevant to the issue of concern, they are, therefore, omitted from the text.*

## Seventh Session

**Sunday 28 July 1991, 8.40 - 10.30pm**

Q: You said to me the other day that you visited Mr Abim, partly to invite him to address a meeting. Why did you do this if you were intending to leave the country within 24 hours?

A: I said as a member in the PCS, we used to make use of the government officials who are visiting this country. This use contains: speaking to public meetings attended members of the Sudanese community in this country, to help them (the visitors) talk to the media about the situation in our country, and this is something which we used to do a long time before the arrival of Mr Abim.

Q: I am going to stop your answer here. I want a specific answer to my question and I will repeat it. I understand that part of your reason for visiting him was to welcome him to the country, but I am asking you this specific question and that is: Why did you call on him and invite him to attend a meeting if you were going to leave the country the next day. I mean to address a meeting?

A: The background I made in my last answer was important to me to give the specific answer you asked for. I would like also to state here that I did not call him to address a meeting when I talked with him in the phone, but we had the idea in mind when we went to see him. Being travelling the next day to Germany makes no difference in this context, and I am going to say why. First, because we were going to see him and set a programme depending basically on what time he is going to stay here in London, and what time is suitable for us to hold the meeting of the public to attend the meeting. I would like to say..

Q: I am satisfied with your answer. Who asked you to visit Mr Abim's flat?

A: It was an initiation made by me myself, and I phoned him, and he welcomed me to visit him in his flat.

Q: Did any one ask you to telephone or did you decide to yourself?

A: Nobody asked me, I decided by myself.

Q: You have just said that you telephoned Abim in the morning. What name did you give to him.

A: Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun.

Q: Mr Abim said that the person who telephoned him in the morning gave the name of Awadallah. What do you say to that?

A: When I phoned him I told him my name Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun and when I phoned him in the evening I gave him the same name, and he never said to me this is a new name to me. Maybe somebody else called Awadallah phoned him in the morning.

Q: That is nonsense. Why would two people telephone to make an appointment at the same time?

A: This makes no point to me because at the same time even more than two persons may coincide to phone somebody for an arrangement at the same time.

Q: When you visited the Embassy in the morning on Thursday did you speak to Mr Awadallah?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you discuss your intention to visit Abim?

A: In fact I made the phone call to Mr Abim from Mr Awadallah's office. But I do not remember that we had a discussion with respect to this very issue.

Q: What is Mr Awadallah's first name?

A: Awadallah.

Q: Did Awadallah telephone Mr Abim?

A: I do not know.

Q: Why did you telephone Mr Abim and use Awadallah's first name?

A: I do not do that.

Q: When did you decide to travel to Germany on Friday 26th July?

A: I made the decision of travelling to Germany in that specific date during the same week.

Q: When exactly?

A: I do not know whether it was Tuesday or Wednesday.

Q: Who told you to travel to Germany on Friday?

A: Me myself.

Q: I do not believe you. Who told you to travel to Germany?

A: I repeat: Me myself.

Q: Why did you borrow the money from Kamil?

A: To buy the ticket and the travel insurance and make some shopping.

Q: Why did you choose Kamil to borrow the money from?

A: It just happened he was with me at the time I was in need of the money.

Q: Why was it so necessary to go to Germany at a time when you had no money, when you had to borrow it?

A: The idea of going to Germany is an old idea, and I was planning for it financially and when I borrowed the money from Kamil I knew that my account would cover the cheque by the time I wrote it.

Q: What was so urgent about going to Germany? Could you not have waited until July 31st when you would have had the money yourself. After all you have not told us of any future plans?

A: OK. There is something I have to highlight. I come from a different social and cultural background.

Q: I do not want a long-worded answer. I have asked a specific question?

A: The culture I belong to is a collective culture. It is not an individualistic culture which is why we can easily get something from a relative, a colleague or an acquaintance. Even he does not know when one will return it to him. So, nothing sounded strange to me when I borrowed the money to travel abroad. Concerning my future plans, I talked about my intention to travel to my country if I get the possibility for it. And I still have the idea of going back to my country before my holiday comes to an end.

Q: I repeat: What was so urgent about your travel to Germany?

A: It was not urgent. It was something that I started planning for in my holiday in June.

Q: You went to Germany (would have gone to Germany) having purchased a ticket with borrowed money. With no travellers cheques. With no German currency. With nowhere to stay. With no plans once you get there. Having not been there before, and not knowing of

anybody you knew would be there. Do that mean you planned your holiday. Give me a straight answer?

A: Concerning the money, I was going to take money from my account which you can check whether there is enough money to cover my trip to Germany or not. To me once I have the money then I can spend my holiday there.

*The interrogator went on throughout the rest of this session asking the interrogated about friends and acquaintances whose numbers and/or addresses he had in his small diary. They are not relevant to the issue of concern and are, therefore, omitted from the text.*

## **Appendix (ii)**

### **Home Office Document**

**MOHAMMED MAHJOUB HAROUN**

**HOME OFFICE STATEMENT**

Mohammed Mahjoub Haroun was born on 1 January 1960. He is a Citizen of the Sudan. He entered the United Kingdom on 28 February 1991 to study at the London School of Economics and was given leave to October 1992.

Haroun is known to have connections with and to be active on behalf of National Islamic Front in monitoring the activities of Sudanese students in the United Kingdom and planning counter measures against them. The current regime in Sudan is led by Lt General Bashir who overthrew his predecessor in a coup on 30 June 1989. Lt General Bashir relies heavily on the support of the Muslim Fundamentalist National Islamic Front who have become active within the Sudanese Government. Recent intelligence from several sources indicates that the Sudanese regime is prepared to consider violent action against its opponents and critics.

**LH1.2**

**Appendix (iii)**  
**Letter from Solicitor**

4 September, 1991

**TELEPHONS ATTENDANCE NOTE**

**CLIENT : HAROUN**

Telephone attendance on Detective Inspector (XXX) (230 2146). Inspector (XXX) telephoned to discussed Mr Haroun's property. He said there had been some confusion, which he believed was on the side of the police. Four weeks ago, when Mr Haroun was released from his detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Inspector (XXX) cleared his property for release. Inspector (XXX) then went on leave. On his return he has just seen our letters. He has looked into the situation, and yesterday sent Detective Constable Barry to Paddington Green Police Station to collect the custody record. This confirms that Mr Haroun has not signed to show he has received back any property apart from his watch and perhaps a change of clothing.

As far as Inspector (XXX) knows, the property is still at Paddington Green Police Station, held in their store. He has no idea why they have denied knowledge of this. He thinks the situation arose partly because the property was being held pending Mr Haroun's departure on 4th August, and partly because Wormwood Scrubs is likely to have said that they did not want two sackfuls of property and had no place to keep it. From Inspector (XXX)'s point of view, the property should have been returned to Mr Haroun immediately on his release from detention. He is now trying to contact the Chief Inspector of Paddington Green, who he will ask to telephone me to make arrangements for the property to be returned to us.

I then asked Inspector (XXX) about the circumstances of Mr Haroun's arrest. He had this to say. The police were in possession of certain information that a Sudanese national, who was unnamed, might be at risk. They did not at this stage know who it was. They contacted (Abim), and asked if he had been contacted by anyone he was not familiar with. (Abim) told the police that he had that morning being contacted by two people he did not recognise by name, and that he had arranged to see them that evening. *This fitted in with the information which had been given to the police. The police*

*were sure that the information must have referred to Mr Abim because he fitted "the profile". The information he provided about the phonecall also fitted in to what they knew* (author's italics).

Mr (Abim) was interviewed by the police several times, particularly on the afternoon of the day of Mr Haroun's arrest, and then again during the next weekend. Inspector (XXX) believes that "no statement as such" was taken. The main interview was before the arrests, the later interviews were in relation to his own person security. Mr (Abim) said that he knew of Mr Haroun, but did not know him. I asked if we could see the record of the interview, but Inspector (XXX) said that he did not think any record existed, what had been said would now have been incorporated into a "composite report" which we certainly could not have access to.

I asked whether Mr Haroun or his companion had carried guns. Inspector (XXX) said no. Had they been in possession of firearms, they would have been charged, unless of course they had had firearms certificates. He was clear that they had not been armed.

Time : 15 mins

## Appendix (iv)

### A Selective Chronology of the Rushdie Affair (1988-89)

#### 1988

**26th September** Viking/Penguin, London, publishes Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

**3rd October** Objectionable passages from the book brought to the attention of Muslim organisations, mosques, and Muslim ambassadors in the UK. Penguin officials contacted for immediate withdrawal of this offensive work.

**5th October** The Government of India bans *The Satanic Verses*.

**11th October** The UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs formed in London in order to mobilise public opinion against *The Satanic Verses*.

**21st October** Hundreds of thousands of Muslims sign the petition protesting against the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, and calling for its withdrawal. Again, the publisher ignores the Muslims' demand.

**8th November** The General Secretariat of the Riyadh-based Organisation of the Islamic Conference asks member states to take action against the publisher and the author if they fail to withdraw the work.

**21st November** Al-Azhar, the 1,000-year-old venerated Islamic seminary in Egypt, brands *The Satanic Verses* as blasphemous and calls on Muslim countries to take concerted action.

**1st December** Mr. Ken Hargreaves, MP, moves an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons, regretting the distress caused to Muslims in the UK by the publication of *The Satanic Verses*.

**10th December** A massive protest rally in London, organised by the Islamic Defence Council (UK), against the publication, earlier, of *The Satanic Verses*.

### 1989

**14th January** Muslims in Bradford, Yorkshire (UK) burn a copy of *The Satanic Verses* in a symbolic expression of protest against its publication.

**16th January** W.H. Smith, Britain's biggest retail outlet for newspapers and books, withdraws *The Satanic Verses* from sale in its shops.

**1st February** Mr. Douglas Hurd, the British Home Secretary, addressing a Muslim gathering in Birmingham, rules out any change in the blasphemy law and, instead, asks the British Muslims to join 'the main stream'.

**14th February** Ayatollah Khomeini proclaims that Salman Rushdie, for his apostasy, deserves the death penalty. Salman Rushdie and

his wife, author Marianne Wiggins, go into hiding and are placed under armed guard.

**15th February**

Iran proclaims a national day of mourning in protest against *The Satanic Verses*. Thousands of demonstrators chanting 'death to Britain' stone the British Embassy in Tehran.

Viking/Penguin's New York offices are evacuated for an hour following an anonymous bomb threat. Salman Rushdie cancels a planned three-week US tour to promote *The Satanic Verses*.

Harold Pinter leads a delegation of writers to 10 Downing Street to protest *the fatwa* against Salman Rushdie.

PEN American Centre condemns "the extreme action the Ayatollah Khomeini has taken in calling for the death of Salman Rushdie."

**16th February**

The British Government protests to the Iranian Charge d'Affaires in London over Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa*. Sir Geoffrey Howe, the British Foreign Secretary, says that ties with Tehran will be impossible if it fails "to respect international standards of behaviour".

The British Arts Council issues a statement calling for tolerance and understanding, accepting that the Islamic community has the freedom to criticise Mr. Rushdie's book.

Pakistan lodges protests against *The Satanic Verses* with both the UK and the United States governments and demands that the novel should be banned.

**18th February**

Salman Rushdie issues a statement: "As author of *The Satanic Verses* I recognise that Muslims in many parts of the world are genuinely distressed by the publication of my novel. I profoundly regret the distress that publication has occasioned to sincere followers of Islam. Living as we do in a world of many faiths this experience has served to remind us that we must all be conscious of the sensibilities of others."

Dr. Hesham El-Essawy, Chairman of the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance, says: "I regard it as an apology and it should pave the way out of this crisis. I now hope that it will resolve the problems between Iran and Britain".

The Bradford Council of Mosques describes the author's statement as "not a sincere apology but a further insult to the Muslim community as a whole".

**21st February**

Iran withdraws ambassadors from the EEC countries.

**22nd February**

The Association of American Publishers, the American Booksellers Association and the American Library Association take a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* which states: "Today is the publication date of

Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*. Free People Write Books, Free People Publish Books, Free People Sell Books, Free People Buy Books, Free People Read Books. In the spirit of America's commitment to free expression we inform the public that this book will be available to readers at bookshops and libraries throughout the country."

**23rd February**

More than 80 prominent Asians in Britain, including artists, writers and academics, some of whom are Muslims, sign a statement defending the right of Salman Rushdie to publish *The Satanic Verses*.

**25th February**

Iran cancels a British trade exhibition over the Rushdie affair.

**27th February**

A British Muslim delegation calls on Mr. John Patten, Minister of State at the Home Office who rejects their plea for equal treatment for all faiths under the blasphemy law.

**28th February**

The Iranian Majlis (parliament) votes almost unanimously to sever all diplomatic relations with Britain.

**5th March**

The Vatican expresses its solidarity with people who have been injured in their faith.

**7th March**

Iran breaks off diplomatic relations with Britain.

**13th March**

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate in London refuses to grant Abdul Hussain Choudhury, a British Muslim community leader, summonses against Salman Rushdie and

his publishers, Viking/Penguin, alleging "blasphemous libel and seditious libel at the common law", and rules that the law of blasphemy in England and Wales protects only the Christian religion.

**16th March**

The Riyadh-based Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) resolves to ban Penguin publications in 45 Muslim countries in protest at the company's refusal to withdraw *The Satanic Verses*.

**1st April**

The Muslim Institute, London, holds a conference on the Rushdie Affair. In his keynote address, Dr. Kalim Siddiqui, Director of the Muslim Institute, defends the *fatwa* and outlines the implications of the Rushdie affair for Muslims in Britain.

**26th April**

Iqbal Sacranie, Convenor of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, states in London that "paperback publication [of *The Satanic Verses*] would aggravate an already serious situation. It would be a highly insensitive act at a time of increasing tension."

**6th May**

Launch in Britain of Women Against Fundamentalism, a network which aims to challenge the rise of fundamentalism in all religions. Women's groups involved in the campaign include: Southall Black Sisters, Brent Asian Women's Refuge and Iranian women's organisations in Britain. They oppose any suppression of *The Satanic Verses*.

**26th May**

"Voices for Salman Rushdie" is launched at a press conference in the House of Commons. The group is campaigning "For the right to dissent against racism and

fundamentalism" and is backed by a wide variety of groups and individuals including those from black and ethnic minorities, Iranian dissidents, London Irish Women's Centre, Southall Black Sisters, Women Against Fundamentalism, socialists, feminists, civil libertarians and writers.

**27th May**

Led by the British Muslim Action Front, 30,000 Muslims demonstrate in Hyde Park, London, and march to Parliament Square to petition for an extension of the blasphemy law to include Islam.

**29th May**

Two Labour MPs call for the withdrawal of *The Satanic Verses*.

**20th June**

Abdul Hussain Choudhury, a Muslim scholar and member of the British Muslim Action Front, is given leave to appeal in the High Court against the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's decision that the law of blasphemy applies only to Christianity.

**2nd July**

The first UK public reading of passages from *The Satanic Verses* is held in London at Conway Hall under the auspices of South Place Ethical Society.

**4th July**

Voices for Salman Rushdie present "An Unholy Night" - a benefit for Salman Rushdie, featuring Kathy Acker, Manny Shirazi, Pauline Melville, Mehmet Yashin, Caryl Churchill, Hanif Kureishi, Jag Plah, Elizabeth Wilson, and "Hanging's Too Good For 'Em".

Mr. John Patten, British Minister of State at the Home Office, writes to influential Muslims on issues confronting British Muslims and speaks of difficulties and problems in extending legal protection to non-Anglican faiths.

**11th September**

A Conservative MP, calls for *The Satanic Verses* to be withdrawn.

**26th September**

First anniversary of the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Viking/Penguin announce that 200,000 copies of the hardback edition have been sold in the UK.

**10th October**

The Frankfurt Book Fair opens. In an unprecedented gesture of support for Salman Rushdie, the organisers of the Book Fair exclude Iranian representation.

**20th October**

A Harris Poll conducted for BBC Television shows that four out of five British Muslims want some kind of action taken against Salman Rushdie.

The International Committee for the Defence of Salman Rushdie and his Publishers (ICDSR) is founded in London.

## **Appendix (v)**

### **The Rushdie Affair**

#### **Record of Letters to Editors of Some National Newspapers**

**(January-December 1989)**

**1. Letter Number:** (1 - 264)

**2. Date (1989):**

1. Day
2. Month

**3. Newspapers:** (1 - 7)

1. Daily Express
2. The Daily Telegraph
3. The Guardian
4. The Independent
5. The Observer
6. The Sun
7. The Times

**4. Letter Writer (s):**

Name of individual letter writer (Surname + initial). In case of more than one writer of letter write the first name in list + *et al*

**5. Letter Classification:**

1. Pro-Rushdie "Showing any sort of support for Salman Rushdie or the SV, including the defence of freedom, democracy, human rights etc.".
2. Anti-Rushdie "Expressing reservation or opposition to Rushdie or the SV, including calling for protection of religion against blasphemy etc.".
3. Mixed "e. g. supporting Rushdie's right to freedom of expression while viewing SV as insulting Islam etc.".

4. Neutral/Undecided "No expression of either pro or anti Rushdie position, referring to other related issues without clearly expressing a position on the Rushdie Affair".

<b>Letter No (1 - 264)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Letter Writer (s)</b>	<b>Letter Classification</b>
1	16.1.1989	3	Swift, G.	1
2	16.1.1989	3	Ashley, J.	4
3	18.1.1989	4	Selbourne, D.	1
4	18.1.1989	4	Buchanan, M.	2
5	18.1.1989	4	Killingley, F.	4
6	19.1.1989	3	Illingworth, S.	1
7	19.1.1989	2	Hiskett, M.	1
8	19.1.1989	4	Aldiss, B <i>et al</i>	1
9	19.1.1989	4	Chowdhury, M.	2
10	20.1.1989	3	McGirr, R.	1
11	20.1.1989	7	Nicholson, M.	1
12	20.1.1989	7	Hewitt, I.	2
13	20.1.1989	4	George, S.	4
14	20.1.1989	4	Mohammad, S.	2
15	21.1.1989	3	Nandy, D.	3
16	21.1.1989	4	Weldon	1
17	21.1.1989	4	Essawy, H.	2
18	21.1.1989	4	Hyams, J.	1
19	23.1.1989	4	Majumdar, S.	1

20	23.1.1989	4	Petty, M.	1
21	23.1.1989	4	Bradley, I.	1
22	23.1.1989	3	Essawy, H.	2
23	23.1.1989	3	Madden, M.	3
24	24.1.1989	4	Ali, M.	2
25	24.1.1989	4	Rowan, P.	1
26	24.1.1989	7	Greer, H.	1
27	25.1.1989	3	Sedgemore, B.	1
28	26.1.1989	2	Simple, P.	4
29	26.1.1989	4	Hastings, M.	4
30	27.1.1989	4	Roberts, D.	4
31	28.1.1989	7	Midha, O.	1
32	28.1.1989	7	Hafez, F.	2
33	29.1.1989	7	Islam, Y.	2
34	29.1.1989	7	Azad, A.	2
35	29.1.1989	7	Qavi, M.	1
36	29.1.1989	7	Kitchen, W.	1
37	29.1.1989	5	Ali, M.	2
38	29.1.1989	5	Madden, M.	3
39	2.2.1989	7	Straw, J.	3
40	2.2.1989	3	Knowles, M.	1
41	2.2.1989	4	King, F. <i>et al</i>	1
42	6.2.1989	3	Madden, M.	4
43	7.2.1989	3	Zaman	2
44	7.2.1989	4	Barnett, A. <i>et al</i>	1
45	17.2.1989	7	Midha, O.	1
46	17.2.1989	7	Griffiths, E.	3

47	17.2.1989	7	Morris, C.	3
48	17.2.1989	4	Wesker, A.	1
49	17.2.1989	4	Zaigham, I.	2
50	17.2.1989	4	Hilder, T.	4
51	17.2.1989	4	Bonham-Carter, G.	1
52	17.2.1989	3	Azari, F.	1
53	17.2.1989	2	Gill, R.	1
54	18.2.1989	4	Walter, N.	1
55	18.2.1989	4	Gardner, P.	1
56	18.2.1989	4	Finian, P.	1
57	18.2.1989	3	Malik, T.	1
58	18.2.1989	3	Khonsari, M.	1
59	18.2.1989	3	MacEoin, D.	1
60	20.2.1989	4	Spender, Ph.	1
61	20.2.1989	4	Martelli, G.	1
62	20.2.1989	4	Russel, E.	1
63	20.2.1989	4	Tolley, Ch.	1
64	20.2.1989	1	Farmborough, F.	3
65	20.2.1989	1	Lindsay, E.	1
66	20.2.1989	1	Gordon, G.	1
67	20.2.1989	1	Rose, R.	1
68	21.2.1989	4	Newbigin, L.	2
69	21.2.1989	4	Cardy, J.	1
70	21.2.1989	4	Clarke, L.	4
71	21.2.1989	4	Catling, Ch.	1
72	21.2.1989	4	Ecclestone, J. <i>et al</i>	1
73	21.2.1989	4	Lamont, W.	1

74	22.2.1989	7	Aldiss, B. <i>et all</i>	1
75	22.2.1989	7	Dahl, R.	2
76	22.2.1989	7	Norman, R.	4
77	22.2.1989	7	Wober, M.	3
78	22.2.1989	7	Saeed, S. <i>et al</i>	2
79	22.2.1989	4	Drabble, M.	1
80	22.2.1989	4	Essawy, H.	2
81	22.2.1989	4	Desai, M.	1
82	23.2.1989	3	Warburton, J.	1
83	23.2.1989	7	Lyttle, J.	1
84	23.2.1989	7	Houghton, R.	1
85	23.2.1989	7	Payne, R.	1
86	23.2.1989	7	Halsey, D.	4
87	23.2.1989	7	Harris, L.	1
88	23.2.1989	1	Brown, E.	1
89	23.2.1989	1	Faroof, S.	1
90	23.2.1989	1	Owen, J.	1
91	24.2.1989	4	Rehman, M.	2
92	24.2.1989	4	Sommerstein, A.	4
93	24.2.1989	4	Jefferson, J.	4
94	24.2.1989	4	Renton, A.	4
95	24.2.1989	4	MacShane, D.	1
96	24.2.1989	4	Girling, B.	1
97	24.2.1989	1	Andrews, Ch.	1
98	25.2.1989	2	Honeyford, R.	1
99	25.2.1989	2	Rida, S.	2
100	26.2.1989	5	Rodway, A.	1

101	26.2.1989	5	Yasamee, A.	2
102	26.2.1989	5	Payne, R.	1
103	27.2.1989	6	Forrest, B.	1
104	27.2.1989	6	Good, R.	1
105	27.2.1989	6	Ronson, D.	4
106	27.2.1989	6	Runacares, A.	1
107	27.2.1989	6	Robinson, R.	2
108	27.2.1989	6	Merecambe, W.	2
109	28.2.1989	3	Adler, L.	1
110	28.2.1989	3	Allen, J.	1
111	28.2.1989	3	Churchil, C.	1
112	28.2.1989	4	Rizwi, Z.	2
113	28.2.1989	4	Hawtree, Ch.	4
114	1.3.1989	4	Lusty, R.	1
115	1.3.1989	4	Heywood, F.	2
116	1.3.1989	4	Faqir, F.	4
117	1.3.1989	4	Walter, N.	1
118	1.3.1989	4	Glanville, B.	1
119	1.3.1989	3	Bedford, S. <i>et al</i>	3
120	1.3.1989	3	Hiro, D.	3
121	1.3.1989	3	Garnett, T.	1
122	1.3.1989	7	Ebor, J.	3
123	1.3.1989	7	Dehqani-Tafti, H.	3
124	2.3.1989	7	Ignatieff, M.	1
125	2.3.1989	3	Roberts, Y.	1
126	2.3.1989	3	Rose, R.	4
127	2.3.1989	1	Hughes, I.	3

128	3.3.1989	7	Shawcross, H.	2
129	3.3.1989	7	Plint, A.	2
130	3.3.1989	7	Green, D.	4
131	3.3.1989	7	Treglown, J.	1
132	3.3.1989	3	Weldon, F.	1
133	3.3.1989	3	Clark, M.	4
134	3.3.1989	3	Atkins, J.	1
135	3.3.1989	4	Ebrahimi, A.	4
136	3.3.1989	4	Khalil, S. <i>et al</i>	2
137	4.3.1989	3	Wakling, S.	3
138	4.3.1989	3	Cox, S.	1
139	4.3.1989	3	Lund, M.	4
140	5.3.1989	5	Nathan, D.	1
141	5.3.1989	5	Hassan, A.	2
142	6.3.1989	4	Townshend	1
143	6.3.1989	7	Hylton	4
144	6.3.1989	7	Brichto, S.	4
145	6.3.1989	7	Buford, B.	1
146	6.3.1989	7	Miller, J.	1
147	6.3.1989	7	McIntosh, A.	4
148	6.3.1989	3	Adler, L.	1
149	6.3.1989	3	D'Arcy, M.	1
150	7.3.1989	7	Temple-Morris, P.	3
151	7.3.1989	7	Willcox, P.	2
152	7.3.1989	7	Slome, J.	4
153	7.3.1989	7	Haselden, W.	1
154	7.3.1989	4	Swift, G.	1

155	7.3.1989	4	Lewis, N.	1
156	7.3.1989	4	Jones, M.	1
157	7.3.1989	4	Young, B.	1
158	8.3.1989	7	King, F.	1
159	8.3.1989	7	Dulverton	2
160	8.3.1989	7	Abdulla, R.	1
161	8.3.1989	7	Glick, I.	1
162	8.3.1989	7	Farrington, C.	4
163	8.3.1989	4	Bufford, B.	4
164	8.3.1989	4	Hellner, F.	1
165	8.3.1989	4	Urbach, P.	1
166	8.3.1989	2	Ali, A.	2
167	9.3.1989	4	Spencer, S.	1
168	9.3.1989	4	Niven, A.	1
169	10.3.1989	7	Russel, M.	2
170	10.3.1989	7	Walter, N.	4
171	10.3.1989	4	Cunningham, K.	4
172	10.3.1989	4	Nawabalam, M.	4
173	10.3.1989	2	King, F.	1
174	10.3.1989	7	Tibber, A.	1
175	10.3.1989	1	Goulding, G.	2
176	10.3.1989	7	Berry, P.	3
177	10.3.1989	7	Bondi, H.	1
178	10.3.1989	7	Tatam, M.	2
179	11.3.1989	3	Bookmarks <i>et al</i>	1
180	11.3.1989	3	Calder, J.	1
181	11.3.1989	3	Kingsley, A.	1

182	11.3.1989	2	Osbourne, J.	1
183	12.3.1989	5	Sugarman	1
184	12.3.1989	2	Goodhart, Ph.	2
185	12.3.1989	4	Jebb, L.	1
186	13.3.1989	4	Tytler, G.	1
187	13.3.1989	2	Adler, L.	1
188	14.3.1989	7	Honeyford, R.	4
189	15.3.1989	7	Brewer, D.	4
190	15.3.1989	7	Noakes, V.	4
191	16.3.1989	4	Sahgal, G.	1
192	16.3.1989	4	Wilson, G. <i>et al</i>	2
193	16.3.1989	3	Parrinder, G.	4
194	15.3.1989	3	Mehdewy	4
195	16.3.1989	3	Cameron, M.	1
196	16.3.1989	7	Bessborough	3
197	18.3.1989	3	Hill, J. <i>et al</i>	1
198	18.3.1989	3	Akhtar, Sh.	2
199	18.3.1989	3	Naqvi, N.	4
200	20.3.1989	2	Menuhin, Y.	4
201	25.3.1989	4	McEwan, I.	1
202	25.3.1989	4	Booth, J.	1
203	25.3.1989	4	Alexander, M.	1
204	26.3.1989	2	Hiskett, M.	1
205	26.3.1989	2	Deramore	3
206	29.3.1989	4	Chaudhry, R.	2
207	29.3.1989	7	Walsh, J.	1
208	2.4.1989	5	Knowles, M.	1

209	2.4.1989	5	Williams, C.	1
210	2.4.1989	5	Phillips, H.	1
211	8.4.1989	3	Walter, N.	1
212	9.4.1989	5	Flintoff, I.	3
213	14.4.1989	2	Scarman	4
214	16.4.1989	3	Lewis, Ph.	1
215	14.4.1989	3	Hardy, P.	4
216	14.4.1989	1	Clayton, R.	2
217	25.5.1989	3	Metcalf, M.	4
218	25.5.1989	3	Modood, T.	4
219	29.5.1989	4	Wesker, A.	1
220	30.5.1989	3	Abelman, P. <i>et al</i>	1
221	30.5.1989	2	Stein, B.	1
222	31.5.1989	7	Huizinga, J.	1
223	2.6.1989	4	Chapman, G. <i>et al</i>	3
224	2.6.1989	4	Zaigham, I.	2
225	5.6.1989	1	Thompson, J.	1
226	13.6.1989	4	Hossain, M.	2
227	13.6.1989	4	Essawy, H.	4
228	13.6.1989	4	Murray	4
229	18.6.1989	7	King, F. <i>et al</i>	1
230	21.6.1989	2	Hiske, M.	4
231	27.6.1989	2	Lee, T.	4
232	28.6.1989	7	Bondi, Ch.	4
233	28.6.1989	4	Saleh, F.	1
234	8.7.1989	7	W'ham-Bellord, E.	4
235	15.7.1989	7	Carr, W.	4

236	17.7.1989	2	Hayman, E.	4
237	20.7.1989	4	Leslie, D.	4
238	21.7.1989	4	Kessel, R.	4
239	21.7.1989	4	Hughes, R.	4
240	25.7.1989	4	Khan, Sh.	4
241	28.7.1989	7	Bondi, H.	4
242	28.7.1989	7	Harris, D.	4
243	30.7.1989	7	Winter, T.	4
244	30.7.1989	7	Henderson, C.	4
245	3.8.1989	2	Honeyford, R.	4
246	3.8.1989	1	Hanson, L.	2
247	5.8.1989	4	Lash, N.	4
248	5.8.1989	4	Weldon, F.	4
249	5.8.1989	4	Bennion, F.	4
250	2.8.1989	1	Hill, E.	2
251	9.8.1989	4	Lemu, B.	4
252	9.8.1989	4	Potts, P.	4
253	9.8.1989	2	Ali, A.	2
254	12.8.1989	7	Berry, P.	4
255	12.8.1989	7	Chaudhry, R.	4
256	17.8.1989	2	Roden, K.	4
257	26.10.1989	1	Nia, M.	1
258	26.10.1989	1	Lake, I.	4
259	25.11.1989	4	Appignanesi, L.	1
260	10.11.1989	4	Mayer, P.	1
261	1.12.1989	3	Siddiqui, K.	2
262	1.12.1989	3	Vassie, M.	4

263	4.12.1989	3	Selden, R.	4
264	9.12.1989	3	Gray, N.	1

## Appendix (vi)

### The Rushdie Affair:

Letters to editors of some national newspapers with two responses or more  
(January-December 1989)

Letter No (9)

*The Independent*, 19. 1. 1989

### ‘Satanic Verses’ and censorship

Dear Sir,

Your leading article, “Dangers of a Muslim Campaign” (16 January) rightly points out that no group in society should impose their values on others.

However, the article fails to analyse the significance of the protest against Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. Generalisations about the Islamic world, of which India is incidentally not yet a part, miss the problem of the inadequacy of minority rights in this country.

Most of the two million Muslims who are British residents would be in favour of banning Rushdie’s book which shows that the censors are not aware that Britain is multicultural and that censorship should ensure that minorities’ values and beliefs are not offended.

Britain’s system of civil rights has evolved from centuries of a monocultural, monoreligious, monolingual society, where small minorities were integrated by adapting to the English way of life.

Laws of censorship have to be accommodated into the multicultural society, as should the panel of judges for literary prizes which lay claim to national prestige. It is high time that Britain became multicultural *de jure* and that censorship laws were made to respect this by an Act of Parliament.

Yours faithfully,  
MOHAMMAD CHOWDHURY  
St Anne’s College  
Oxford  
17 January

## Appendix (vi)

### The Rushdie Affair:

**Letters to editors of some national newspapers with two responses or more  
(January-December 1989)**

Letter No (49)

*The Independent, 17. 2. 1989*

## Time for the rest of Allah's enemies to stand up

Dear Sir;

Himself a Muslim until recently, Salman Rushdie has committed acts of apostasy by writing what he did in his *Satanic Verses* and later on in his interview with Channel 4 (*Bandung File*, 3 February). It is a very serious crime against the Muslim Ummah (universal brotherhood of Muslims), much more serious than high treason is against a state of which one is a citizen.

Like the many secular states that provide the death penalty for high treason, several schools of Islamic thought deem the blood of an apostate a fair target (*Halaal*) for Muslims. Ayatollah Khomeini, therefore, did his duty as a religious leader when he pronounced the death sentence against Salman Rushdie for his crime of high treason against the Muslim Ummah.

Had he called his own biological parents bastard and prostitute, his brothers and sisters would have been the most likely to be infuriated. By writing these blasphemies against a messenger of God and the wives of the Prophet of Islam, whom the Muslims revere and love more than their own biological parents, he has earned the wrath of the entire Muslim world.

As for the publishers of his *Satanic Verses*, they are his accessories in his crime of blasphemy

if not of apostasy as well. That the publishing of books is their business is not a valid defence; in the same way as the business of inn-keeping is no valid defence for harbouring an outlaw. The Ayatollah's verdict against these publishers, too, is just and fair.

Even though these criminals against Islam are being protected by the British police, this protection can only delay the execution of the sentence. Who is destined to be the executioner, and when, is something that neither the police nor the fugitives can know.

Rushdie's offence is not the first of its kind. A misguided brat in Lahore published similar blasphemies some 60 years ago. He, too, was protected by the British rulers for some time, but they could not save him from execution by Ghazi Ilmuddeen, a young, non-descript carpenter. Even while he is being protected by the police, the life of Salman Rushdie is bound to be a life of fear, suspicion and mistrust.

There is only one way out of this rat-like existence for him. By recanting his blasphemies publicly, he can win a reprieve to make amend for the wrong he has done. God is oft-forgiving, most merciful.

Yours sincerely,  
INAYATULLAH ZAIGHAM  
Gravesend, Kent  
15 February

## Appendix (vi)

### The Rushdie Affair:

Letters to editors of some national newspapers with two responses or more  
(January-December 1989)

Letter No (75)

*The Times*, 22. 2. 1989

### 'The Satanic Verses'

*From Mr Roald Dahl*

Sir, With all that has been written and spoken about the Rushdie affair, I have not yet heard any non-Muslim voices raised in criticism of the writer himself. On the contrary, he appears to be regarded as some sort of a hero, certainly among his fellow writers and the Society of Authors, of which I am a member. To my mind, he is a dangerous opportunist.

Clearly he has profound knowledge of the Muslim religion and its people, and he must have been totally aware of the deep and violent feelings his book would stir up among devout Muslims. In other words he knew exactly what he was doing and he cannot plead otherwise.

This kind of sensationalism does indeed get an indifferent book on to the top of the best-seller list (*Spycatcher* is another example), but to my mind it is a cheap way of doing it. It also puts a severe strain on the very proper principle that the writer has an absolute right to say what he likes.

In a civilised world we all have a moral obligation to apply a modicum of censorship to our own work in order to reinforce this principle of free-speech.

Yours faithfully,  
ROALD DAHL,  
Gipsy House,  
Great Missenden,  
Buckinghamshire.  
February 27.

## Appendix (vi)

### **The Rushdie Affair: Letters to editors of some national newspapers with two responses or more (January-December 1989)**

Letter No (119)

*The Guardian*, 1. 3. 1989

#### Dousing the Satanic Verses fire

WE agree with John Berger's piece (*Guardian*, February 25) about the Rushdie affair. As it must be assumed that neither Mr Rushdie, nor his publishers, nor anyone else connected with the book had any clear idea that disastrous and tragic consequences would ensue from publishing the novel, surely Mr Berger is right to suggest that anything that could now be done to defuse the situation is desirable?

The legal right to publish the book has been proved. That is a public matter, just as Khomeini's reaction, and this and many other countries' repudiation of his threats to murder is a matter for public morality. The moral issue of whether it is right to blaspheme against any faith — not at all the same thing as saying that you do not agree with it — must lie with the author: only he can determine whether he is morally right or wrong, and it is also his right to act upon his decision.

But the consequences of his choice are no longer private: the people already dead, the hostages in Iran, his own family, and the prospect of other innocent people being threatened surely means that he needs to make a moral decision on their behalf?

Mr Berger suggests that he might now consider asking his publishers to cease publishing the book: he might also consider giving away some of the money it has earned, with particular reference to those left orphaned or widowed.

Sybille Bedford.  
London SW3.  
Elizabeth Jane Howard.  
London NW1.

## **Appendix (vii)**

### **The Rushdie Affair**

#### **Letters to Editors of Some National Newspapers**

**(January-December 1989)**

### **Coding Manual**

#### **Coding Instructions:**

1. All letters should be coded carefully and every possible effort is to be made to ensure that letters are coded exhaustively.
2. Coders' attention is drawn to that relevant items are coded in accordance with their numerical order.
3. Where not applicable code as a zero digit.
4. Each issue and sub-issue also contain relevant meanings (between brackets) which, in case they come into existence, should be dealt with as having the same meaning as the issue in question.

#### **Section (1): Background Information**

##### **1. Letter Number: (1 - 264)**

##### **2. Newspapers: (1 - 7)**

1. Daily Express

2. The Daily Telegraph
3. The Guardian
4. The Independent
5. The Observer
6. The Sun
7. The Times

### **3. Date (1989):**

1. January
2. February
3. March
4. April
5. May
6. June
7. July
8. August
9. September
10. October
11. November
12. December

### **4. Letter History:**

1. Pre-*Fatwa*
2. Post-*Fatwa*
3. Legal Reform (starting from the beginning of April)

### **5. Letter Writer(s):** (\* whether individual or group, code in accordance with numerical order. \* When a letter writer(s) displays two or more identities code just one identity)

1. Civil Liberty Activist: (human rights activist, feminist, minority rights activist, representative of an organisation for supporting Rushdie etc.)

2. Mixed: (a group of letter writers of different professional, religious, cultural, political backgrounds).
3. Muslim: (individual Muslim, Imam, clergy, Sheikh, Muslim community leader, etc.)
4. Politician: (MP, councillor, trade unionist)
5. Writer: (novelist, author, journalist, playwright, academic, artist producer, broadcaster, educationalist etc.)
6. Non-Muslim Clergy
7. Non-Muslim Minority (immigrants, religious minorities etc.)
8. Business (company director, businessperson etc.)
9. Unidentified: (identity not known).

## 6. Letter Classification:

1. Pro-Rushdie (showing any sort of support for Salman Rushdie or the SV, including the defense of freedom, democracy, human rights etc.)
2. Anti-Rushdie (expressing reservation or opposition to Rushdie or the SV, including calling for protection of religion against blasphemy etc.)
3. Mixed (e. g. supporting the right to freedom of expression but opposing insulting Islam etc.)
4. Neutral/Uncertain (no expression of either pro or anti Rushdie position, referring to other related issues without clearly expressing a position on the Rushdie Affair)

## 7. Letter Origin:

1. Comment (writer's own initiative)
2. Response to an editorial (also: leader, report, news focus, cartoon, interview)
3. Response to a feature (also: commentary, comment, poem, article)
4. Response to a television programme
5. Response to a former letter
6. Response to a response to a former letter

## Section (2): Issues and Arguments

### 8. British Law of Blasphemy (*also: law of defamation, law of censorship*):

#### 1. Should be repealed

(*like: meaningless in Britain, intolerable, does not work, replace with law of public order, should not be extended, has no place in a non-believing society like modern Britain*)

#### 2. Should be extended

#### 3. Other

### 9. Bradford Muslims (*also: fanatical Muslims in Bradford, the Bradford incident, Muslim fundamentalists*):

#### 1. Symbolising fundamentalism

#### 2. Exercised symbolic act of protest

#### 3. Other

### 10. British Society (*also: Racial Relations, Immigration*):

#### 1. Multi-cultural/multi-faith/multi-lingual/multi-racial

(*like: secular, plurality supported by law, follows rules of co-existence, requires sharing common morality and civic duty and mutual respect*)

#### 2. Mono-cultural/mono-racial/mono-lingual/mono-faith

(*like: racist, minority rights inadequate, illiberal, class ridden, Christian, minorities should assimilate*)

#### 3. Other

### 11. Fatwa (*also: Death Threat*):

#### 1. Fundamentalist manifestation of religion

(*like*: appalling, violation of law, threat to peace, sanctioning opinion, medieval, barbaric, abhorrent, threat to one's liberty, fanaticism, causes anger, bigotry, violating Britain's national sovereignty, outrageous, appalling, uncivilised)

2. Fuels anti-Muslim sentiments

3. Other

**12. Freedom of Expression (also: Freedom):**

1. Not an absolute right

(*like*: not including right to insult, should be used responsibly, includes self-censorship, regulating certain forms of censorship)

2. Should be adhered to strongly

(*like*: sacred, respect for the individual, needed for artistic health, should not be restricted, covering literature, dogma, propaganda and argument, right to publish against all sorts of sensitivity, intimidation unjustifiable, no to cultural terrorism, should be opposed, censorship not acceptable in a free democracy, no protest against book publishing)

3. Other

**13. Islam (also: Koran):**

1. Encourages fundamentalism

(*like*: intolerant, troublesome, fears freedom, arrogant religion, offensive to feminists, liberals, secularists, fundamentalist phenomenon, blasphemous to Christianity, questions the fundamentals of other religions).

2. A peaceful, tolerant religion

3. Other