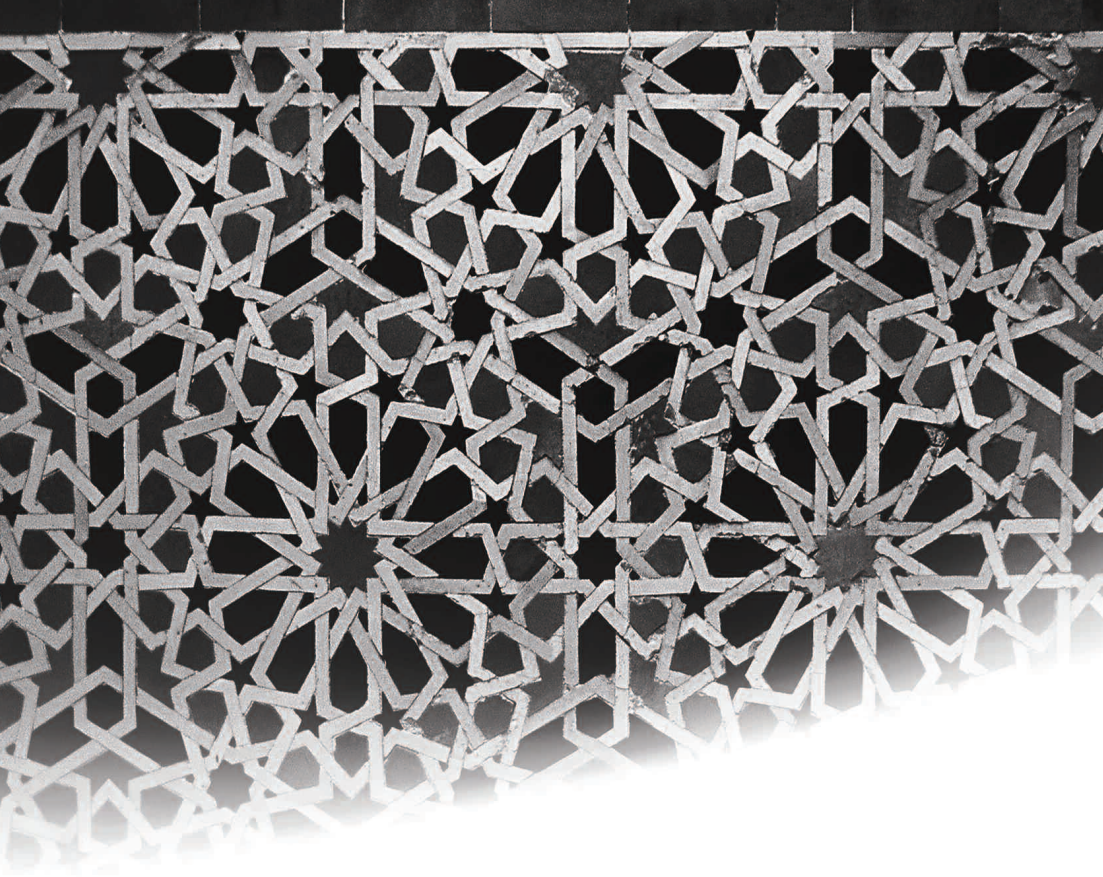

THE ZAKI BADAWI MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

# A SHARED PAST FOR A SHARED FUTURE

## *European Muslims and History-making*

MARTIN ROSE

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS • BRITISH COUNCIL

THE ZAKI BADAWI MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

3

# A SHARED PAST FOR A SHARED FUTURE

## *European Muslims and History-making*

---

MARTIN ROSE


THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (UK) • BRITISH COUNCIL

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (UK)
P.O. BOX 126, RICHMOND, SURREY TW9 2UD, UK
WWW.AMSSUK.COM, E-MAIL: AMSS@AMSSUK.COM



British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978–1–56564–447–2 paperback

Printed in the United Kingdom by Oxuniprint



*Memorial Lecture organised by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK) in cooperation with the British Council, the Centre for the Study of Democracy (University of Westminster), and the City Circle*

BEHOLD, as for those who have attained to faith, and who have forsaken the domain of evil and are striving hard, with their possessions and their lives, in God's cause, as well as those who shelter and succour [them] – these are [truly] the friends and protectors of one another. But as for those who have come to believe without having migrated [to your country] – you are in no wise responsible for their protection until such a time as they migrate [to you]. Yet, if they ask you for succour against religious persecution, it is your duty to give [them] this succour – except against a people between whom and yourselves there is a covenant: for God sees all that you do.

(*The Qur'an*, 8:72)

# FOREWORD

THE RESPONSE BY BOTH MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM scholars, intellectuals and religious leaders to the Clash of Civilisations theory has been swift and astute, not only at theoretical but also practical levels. *The Alliance of Civilizations* and the *Common Word* initiatives, among many others, have developed a large number of projects and encounters not only of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue but also of active engagement and participation of people of different faiths, cultures and communities working together in a manner and at a scale that may be unprecedented in the history of humanity. Much more sustained work is, however, needed to bring about a better understanding and more peaceful co-existence.

The British Council has recently celebrated its work with the Muslim community and the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK). In 2006 the AMSS and the British Council's Counter-Point jointly produced the *British Muslims: Media Guide*, the first ever such guide to be produced in the West describing Britain's Muslim communities, their history, and present and future aspirations. The success of the *Guide*, which was positively received at all levels in the UK and which inspired similar initiatives in other countries, was one of the factors behind the British Council's new and ambitious *Our Shared Europe Project*. This project seeks to find common ground and build shared values, perspectives and behaviours based on mutual respect and trust. Its aim is to create a shared understanding among all Europeans of Islam's past and present contribution to European societies and identities. If the *Our Shared Europe Project* engages and fully reflects the many myriads of our shared diversity then it will have come a long way towards realising the new era of respect and peaceful coexistence that is challenging the suppositions of the old. By giving its 2009 Building Bridges Award to this project the AMSS is stressing the importance of creating a climate of respect, dialogue, hope, and real engagement, along with initiatives that build bridges and promote universal ethical values and an inclusive view of our shared planet.

Underlying the critical importance of the *Our Shared Europe* project Martin Rose, former Director of Counter-Point and Director of the new project, was invited by the AMSS to give the third AMSS Zaki Badawi Memorial Lecture. The theme of his lecture, published here, can never be more timely and appropriate.

History is indeed very important; but the aim of reaching reconciliation at any level and creating better understanding leading to peaceful co-existence can only be achieved if we collectively revisit accounts and narratives of our own history as well as that of the Other. However, as Martin Rose indicates, this is a difficult exercise.

Nevertheless, history, if taught well and brought into a wider and pluralistic mainstream discourse, can help stimulate an interest in other cultures and an interaction with them, together with a better understanding of their effect on our world and society today. Indeed, if taught seriously and wisely it will present the narratives of many peoples and communities, inevitably inspiring respect for others and the existence of shared values across societies and cultures.

The author alludes to the educative qualities of history. Just as bad history is guilty of creating them, good history can clearly remove many of the myths that form the foundation of cultures riddled with anxiety, ignorance, stereotypes, myths and xenophobia. This pragmatic philosophy emphasizes the educative as opposed to simply informative aspects of not only history but indeed any discipline that seeks to explain the Other in a complex world.

Martin Rose's bird's eye exploration of the essential elements of our self-perception offers a much-needed insight into the methodology and relevance of history. This is vital since history is far more than a simple representation of events that have occurred in the near or distant past. The present is in fact a result of the past, and a mirror of a people's past mistakes and achievements. Ideally history should help human beings to correct the mistakes they may have made earlier and to draw inspiration and strength from the very best they may have achieved.

DR. ANAS S. AL-SHAIKH-ALI, SHIRAZ KHAN
July, 2009

# A SHARED PAST FOR A SHARED FUTURE

## *European Muslims and History-making*

*I met Shaikh Zaki Badawi half a dozen years ago, at the Muslim College. I had just been appointed director of the British Council's think-tank, Counterpoint, and it seemed to me that one of our priorities should be to think about how the British Council related to, represented and worked with British Muslims. So I went with a colleague to see Dr Zaki in Ealing, and among the ideas we floated in the course of a pleasant lunch, was a short book about British Muslims. He thought it a promising idea, and introduced me to his friend and colleague Dr Anas al-Shaikh-Ali, as the person with whom he wished us to work on this project. The book was eventually published in May 2006 – sadly, a few short months after Dr Zaki's death.*[1] *It was a considerable success, I believe; but for me the process of its writing, editing and publishing were as important as the book itself. The growth of understanding and trust that it represented were very important to me – as were the friendships that I made with its author, Ehsan Masood, and my co-publisher, Dr Anas. Though Dr Zaki didn't live to see the book itself, he launched a process of collaboration, respect and affection that I suspect he foresaw more clearly than I did. I am very grateful to him.*

*He also began my connection with the Association of Muslim Social Scientists which has developed over the intervening years into one of great respect and appreciation. I am deeply honoured to be asked to*

*give this lecture for the AMSS, in Dr Zaki's memory. Following two such eminent theologians as Dr Williams and Dr Ceric I am properly intimidated; but I shall talk today about cultural relations and history, not about theology; and I trust that my commitment to bridging the gap that sometimes seems to separate Muslims from their fellow Europeans will connect me sufficiently with Dr Zaki's concerns for my inade-quacies to be forgiven.*

I REMEMBER AS A BOY FIRST COMING ACROSS a large double-page map, in the *Times Atlas of World History*, which showed the Muslim conquests in a Hejaz-centred projection. A great green swathe of conquered territory spread outwards from Makkah across the sharply curved surface of the world: the Nejd, Egypt and Iraq were huge; the Maghreb, Persia, and Rum a little smaller; al-Andalus and Transoxiana a bit smaller still. Off the green patch, beyond the verdant *Dar al-Islam*, the pallid mass of Europe was a thin, curved borderland, falling away over the edge of the globe.

We are used to seeing the world through Mercator's eyes, in his brilliant solution to the geometrical problem of plotting the surface of a sphere onto a flat piece of paper. But like so much apparent objectivity, Mercator's projection has unintended subjective effects: because of the world's curvature it makes Europe look much bigger than it really is, in relation to countries nearer the equator. In this it is like so much else of the apparently neutral apparatus with which we describe the world, whether it is a dating system that takes the notional birth of Christ (however paraphrased) as its zero-point; or a meridian that divides the world east and west of Greenwich; the feet and metres that measure out the globe; or the Latin binomial terms that describe the flora and fauna of every continent.

That counter-intuitive map began the process of teaching me something fundamental, at once utterly banal and hugely important: that the world looks very different depending on where you are standing. In a literal sense this is obvious, a truism; but its deeper, metaphorical implications come as a surprise to many people in the West, just as the

*Times* map came as a surprise to me. It is much less of a surprise, though, to people across the rest of the world, upon whom Mercator and the Christian (or as we now often say, Common) Era, the Greenwich Meridian and Linnaean classification feel often like parts of a half-understood imposition, at once familiar and alien. Such a statement is surprising to the powerful because it runs against the grain of power: those whose culture is dominant and strong tend to see it as the norm, their own position as objective and balanced, their own rationality as clear and their own motives as pure and disinterested. It is very hard to see how what is self-evidently *right* can just as well be seen by others as a violation.

The *Times* map was counterintuitive to me not simply because I had been brought up in England on an old school atlas, published in London and sprinkled with red: more than that, my school atlas symbolized an entire mental universe that I inhabited without reflection. To a small boy in Lahore, Damascus or Casablanca that map might perhaps have made better sense: but it might very well not because, like the *Matrix*, the mental universe of 'Western modernity' is hard to escape.

This whole phenomenon has a curious and ruthless innocence about it. It is true that empires sometimes set out deliberately to rearrange the basic mental furniture of life, as the Jacobins did in the 1790s, replacing the calendar and introducing metric measures to capture their break with the past of the *Ancien Régime*. Or as Cambodia did, in its infamous 'Year Zero'. But just as often, the cultural steamroller is driven with a blithe, and almost innocent, insouciance. Most empires impose their norms on the territories and peoples they conquer not just in order programmatically to rearrange the way their subjects think, but because their ways of thinking are self-evidently *right*, practical and an improvement on what they find. The Arab armies which conquered the great empire of the seventh century were no different. Their language, their faith, their zero-point of the *hijrah*, their *qiblah* which focused the sight-lines of the world on its spiritual centre at Makkah, and their unwavering faith in the destiny that God had laid out for them – all these were manifestations of a great culture that imposed its own norms on the older cultures it overwhelmed.

What I want to stress is the blithe arrogance with which *all* imperial cultures impose their own assumptions, and then largely forget that that is what they have done. They impose their assumptions on their present, but they leave a deep imprint long after their empires have turned to dust. We still measure the circle in 360 degrees, the hour in 60 minutes and count eggs in shocks of 90 – all in distant, and mostly ignorant, homage to ancient Babylon. The emperor of Russia was still a Czar, a Caesar, almost two millennia after Julius died; and the last Ottoman Sultans still signed their rescripts in the same colour of ink used by Byzantine emperors. And despite all attempts to shake it off, the world today still sees much of its past and present through lenses ground in the imperial metropolitan capitals of the modern West.

But there is a more conscious element in the control of history, too – and a much less innocent one. Many, perhaps most, of the great intercultural arguments (and that means many of the most important arguments) of our day have their roots in the past. History is a battleground, and for very good reason. George Orwell famously wrote that "He who controls the present controls the future; and he who controls the past controls the present." He was right. The way we understand the past – the stories we tell ourselves about our origins, our nationhoods, our faiths – shape with an iron hand the way we interpret the present and the way we plan the future. Those stories also restrict, if they are allowed to, the scope for imagination and change, by setting boundaries that are frequently hard to transgress. The writing and telling of history is often a tool for defining the terms of present and future discussion. Who holds the tool, and what they use it for, are political, every bit as much as historiographical, questions.

If we doubt this, we have only to look at the fierce polemics over the preamble to the abortive 2003 European constitution, in which many Catholic politicians fought to include reference to Europe's Christian roots; and the way in which this issue surfaces and resurfaces. The European People's Party describes itself as "the political family of the centre-right, whose roots run deep in the history and civilization of the

European continent," and its manifesto for the 2009 European elections announces that "Europe's founding fathers were Christian Democrats," (I assume that the reference here is to Schumann rather than Charle-magne) and that "their achievements were built on deep convictions rooted in Judaeo-Christian civilisation and the Enlightenment."

Why does this particular argument matter? It is clear that Europe does in a very real sense have a Christian taproot, and it would be ridiculously naïf to deny this. But it has many other thick roots too, and the stubborn reductive determination of those who want to give a monopoly in the making of Europe to Christianity, and to belittle or exclude everything outside the 'Judaeo-Christian tradition', has very little to do with a disinterested scientific quest for historical truth. It is about today, and the political issues that preoccupy politicians, among others the prospect of Turkish accession to the EU, the position of Muslim minorities in EU Member States, the bloody rash of terrorism by fringe Muslim groups, and the strident identification of a 'Eurabian Fifth Column' by security commentators mainly on the American right. Planting a cross on the hill-top of pseudo-historical debate is an attempt to pre-empt a broader understanding of our collective past, which might shape views of the future in a more generous and open way. It is about power, not about truth.

I am not a historian by trade: I am a cultural relations practitioner. My interest is in how history shapes and is shaped by the politics and behaviour of today; and in how the way we think about our history – or our histories – forms and deforms relations across cultural divides. In particular, I want to apply this interest to the stories that Muslims in Europe tell about themselves; and to those that are told about them. These stories, the narratives that we construct and which seem best to explain us to ourselves, are very important. My fear at the moment is that we are telling very different, divergent stories, which have the effect of pushing Europeans of different cultures and faiths apart. Sometimes we know what we are doing, and sometimes we don't.

More than twenty years ago, I arrived in Baghdad on my first posting for the British Council. A diplomat said to me, helpfully, "You'll be amazed at Iraqi dinner parties. Within the first quarter of an hour, *every* time, someone mentions the Balfour Declaration." This turned out on the whole to be true, and has prompted much thought over the years. Discussion of this pivotal event in modern Middle Eastern history managed to be at once crucially important to Iraqis and slightly absurd to a British diplomat.

Why? The conundrum is about timescales. Ninety-two years ago, when Balfour signed his 1917 letter to Rothschild, my grandfather was a young man, my father unborn. For most Britons it is a piece of history, a document from an imperial past which we no longer really understand, which we no longer feel we own – and for which we feel no responsibility. But for Iraqis, like most Arabs (and all Israelis), it is felt as part of the present. For better or worse, the Declaration and the consequences that flowed from it, have shaped their grandfathers', their fathers' and their children's lives. There are equally good examples in the colonial history of every European nation, half-forgotten pasts which are only reluctantly and with difficulty remembered, like Belgium's in the Congo, or France's in Algeria, but which live on strongly in their consequences for former colonial peoples.

Half-forgotten these legacies from the past may be, but they do not fade away. In a strange way, as I found in Baghdad, time simply moves at different speeds in different places. Samuel Beckett wrote of time as "a chaotic conflux of oozings and currents," and I saw a slow oozing of time around Iraqi dinner-tables, left far behind by the much swifter current rushing inexorably onwards through London, Paris and Washington. A recent historian asserts that "what we call time is an ungainly mixture of times – unfolding at different speeds in different places – which intersect and interact in all manner of ways." For many thinkers, he continues, "time cannot be a progressive, 'geometric' history of successive events, able to be gathered into one rationalized unity. Rather, the world is conceived as a swirl of times-in-motion, produced by many different collectives."[2]

This seems to me to be useful: time (or at least the perception of its rhythms and its movement) is defined by culture and imposed by

power. The 'collectives' to which the writer refers set the speed and direction of the passing of time; but they are not equal in their ability to impose it on others – in their cultural and political leverage. Some of them are empires, some tribes, some prophetic traditions, some diasporas. One particular 'time-in-motion' comes to dominate the 'swirl' at any moment in history; and one 'rationalized unity' to edge out the different tempos of less powerful historical visions.

What this means is simply that strong cultures make the rules, largely dictating what is important and what is current. Generally the 'intersections and interactions' have taken place at the edges of the great currents of imperial insouciance; and the majestic flow of geometric time has seemed to flow on smoothly and undisturbed in the midstream. But this comfortable progression has changed. It has changed, generally, on the borders of cultures: recently, thinking about this phenomenon, I came by chance across a comment by an Afghan fighter to a Western journalist, which could have been made at many moments in the last two centuries. "You," he said, "have watches. We have time."[3]

A curious feature of this two-speed time is the 'failure' to synchronize social attitudes. It is often said that Muslims in Britain are socially conservative, with the implication that many hold attitudes in some way 'out of tune' with modern British society. The recent Gallup/Coexist poll seems to confirm this, painting a picture of a Muslim community that is very firmly British in its sense of itself (more so than the general population) but strongly opposed to sex outside marriage, homosexual behaviour and so on.[4] This set of attitudes would probably be described patronizingly by today's secular commentators as "not very modern." But I reflected, as I read the poll results, that what I was reading was in many ways a profile of middle England in 1950. As a set of attitudes, the bulk of Muslim responses to the questionnaire would have been quite comfortable for my grandfather, who was an Anglican bishop. Indeed he would have found himself much closer to them than to the sampled attitudes of the population as a whole in the same Gallup exercise. Here too, time passes at different speeds: contemporary secular society has left its grandfathers far behind, and expects the rest of the world to do the same. It seems, in this as in other ways, to have lost its sense of the past.

History is something that the strong can leave behind more easily than the weak. 'Our' past is often the *present* of the peoples of what were once 'our' Empires, and 'we' are letting go of our past. The Balfour Declaration, the Partition of India, the deposition of Mossadeq, the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire are written about by historians, but I doubt if you could persuade one British schoolboy in a hundred to give you a coherent account of any of them; while around the world, many millions of people live with their direct consequences, and speak fluently about them.

"It's all just history" is a statement that, with variants, we hear frequently as a dismissal, meaning that it doesn't matter any more, and anyway nothing can be done about it. But history doesn't go away, it goes underground. Margaret Macmillan wrote recently that "It is wiser to think of history not as a pile of dead leaves or a collection of dusty artefacts, but as a pool, sometimes benign, often sulphurous, which lies under the present, silently shaping our institutions, our ways of thought, our likes and dislikes."[5] In the past, imperial societies have generally been able to walk away from the consequences of their histories and to leave that pool bubbling quietly on the other side of the globe. But today something different is happening: globalization, instant communication and the mass movement of people around the world have created a global society in which present and past are hyperlinked together. Who could have imagined in 1948, when Ceylon became independent, that sixty years later, Tamil protesters would occupy Parliament Square demanding that Britain take some responsibility for its consequences in today's Sri Lanka? Or that surviving Kenyan internees from the Mau Mau rising of the 1950s would sue in 2009 for redress over their torture, documented at last in recent academic studies, to be told by the British government that "the claim was invalid because of the time that had elapsed since the abuses?"[6]

The migration of large numbers of people from the peripheries of Europe's empires to their centres in the decades since the Second World War has changed the architecture of historical memory. The great events and decisions that shaped modern India, or Iran, or Algeria or Indonesia don't return home only through the memoirs of proconsuls, the state archives, and brittle clippings from *The Times*, *Le Monde* and

the *Nederlands Dagblad*. They arrive through the experience and the memories of the people at the other end of those events and decisions, and this makes forgetting much more difficult for us all. Slow time and fast time intersect in modern Europe: France left Algeria, Holland its East Indian empire, and Britain, India; but Algeria, Indonesia and India came to Europe to work, and stayed, so that *our* history catches up with us in turbulent eddies.

Sometimes this is alarming, sometimes it is illuminating: but the important word is *our*, because in a country where empire has come home to roost, a much more rounded, more nuanced, more open and much less monochrome history is necessary. I hope it is also inevitable. "Nos ancêtres les gaulois …" as the schoolchildren of French West Africa are supposed to have been made to chant, is both wonderfully absurd, and wonderfully prescient. We share our histories whether we like it or not; and we couldn't easily defend the gates, even if we wanted to.

Once in Europe, the terms of engagement changed. The intimate knowledge and understanding that the British and the peoples of the Empire had had of each other, albeit on unequal and often 'Orientalist' terms, seemed to evaporate, or at least thin, in Britain. So did the shared experiences, those great lists of dead havildars and subudars from Indian regiments carved into the Menin Gate at Ypres, or on headstones at war cemeteries from Kohima to Kut al-Imara'. So did the languages, vocabularies and cross-fertilized imaginations; and the mutual know-ledge that had often nurtured respect. Ziauddin Sardar writes of this unexpected change, "Despite this intricate intertwined history, the Britain that greeted people like me was the eradication of memory, the obliteration of history and the defiance of sense and reason. Instead of building on the entanglement of empire, the familiarity with India and its peoples that was widespread and commonplace in British society, British Asian migrants of the 1950s have been deliberately constructed as a new people …"[7]

Enoch Powell (who was sometimes capable of great insight) once said that an Englishman who doesn't understand India could never understand his own history, and as a nation we have found ourselves sliding almost without noticing into exactly that ignorance, of our imperial past, and so of ourselves. Britain has become smaller, not just in a literal, post-imperial sense, but imaginatively, in terms of its ability to understand the world. One curious symptom of this ignorance strikes me again and again whenever I read anxious debates in the press about the decline of modern languages in British schools – always framed as though Urdu, Bengali and Persian, Punjabi, Arabic and Gujerati are not modern languages at all, unless they have been learned at SOAS. It is a telling dismissal.

The odd consequence is that, like people moving past each other on up and down escalators, it sometimes seems that 'old Britain' is forgetting its history just as 'new Britain' is remembering – and reinventing – its own. What is not happening, and what needs desperately to happen, is the collaborative construction of a cultural, social and political history that explains us *all* to ourselves. That goal is not yet very close to fulfilment.

Britain's Muslims are on the up-escalator. The last quarter of a century has seen the transformation of 'Asians' into 'Muslims', the replacement of an ethnic identity with a religio-cultural identity. It is a curious process, starting from a self-identification that was anything but Muslim. In the 1970s "young Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were so open-minded about their origins and identity," in the words of Kenan Malik, "that they were quite happy to be labelled 'Indian', notwithstanding the turmoil and bloodshed of Partition. But while they were happy to be labelled 'Indian', it never entered their heads to call themselves 'Muslims'."[8] This of course has changed utterly, in the last 20 years, and the ball is in the other court: 'Muslims' and the 'Muslim community' are today primary categories for social and political, as well as religious, discourse.

It is a transformation that has much to do, of course, with the vibrancy of faith itself, and the life-work of men like Dr Zaki; but it is also part of a process of history-making: the search of men for a history, a narrative, that would explain them to themselves. Secular nationalist

history has, so far at least, failed: Britain was reluctant to accommodate its new Britons in a subtler, more global and more generous version of its own national story. It left immigrants economically disadvantaged and cut off from their pasts, as well as from the quietly triumphal history of Empire and 'our' leaving of it. Indeed this image of the *retreat* from Empire, of the tide rolling back in, of independence for former colonies and dominions as 'we' left 'them' to go 'home', is another binary, another dangerous dichotomy. It assumes a very concrete, white, exclusive 'we' and imagines a very clear leaving behind of Empire and its responsibilities and consequences. It doesn't leave a lot of space for writing shared histories, but rather a poignant emptiness where the stories of many of us should have been written.

Despite the tremendous history of Islamic empires and the vast reach and appeal of Islam itself, the imagination and the inner history of most Muslims (as most humans), for most of history, has been rooted in place and culture at least as much as in the greater *ummah*. Language has divided as well as united (as anyone can testify who has heard, for example, the boys of a *madrasa* in north-west Pakistan getting their *suras* by heart in an Arabic of which they understand not a word). "Religion," in the words of Carl Ernst, "never exists in a vacuum. It is always interwoven with multiple strands of culture and history that link it to particular locations."[9] The history that was devalued, the memory that was allowed to wither, sprang from Sind and the Punjab, from Mirpur and Hyderabad, Dhaka and Campbellpur and Sylhet. Later it sprang too from the new states of Pakistan and Bangladesh, as well as from East Africa, the Arab Near East and elsewhere. The Islam of those who came to Europe was the Islam of their homes, whether urban or, more often, rural: a comfortable and traditional faith, a link with history and geography as well as a call of the spirit.

But driven by social pressures as well as by religiosity, British Asians began to see themselves differently. Succeeding generations discovered different expectations and assumptions, fresh insecurities. A new collective identity was hammered out, partly on the anvils of the Rushdie Affair, the Bosnia and Iraq wars – and on the reactions to 9/11 and the London bombings. At the same time proselytes of a simpler,

more uniform and more austere piety had begun to shape the religious imagination of many younger Muslims. With these changes came a new history, a history not of Pakistanis and Indians, Bangladeshis and East Africans migrating inwards to the metropolis of the old empire; but of Muslims.

At one level the building blocks of a new history were as old as Islam. Of the *hajj*, Benedict Anderson writes, "the strange, physical juxtaposition of Malays, Persians, Indians, Berbers and Turks in Mecca is something incomprehensible without the idea of their community in some form. The Berber encountering the Malay before the Kaaba must, as it were, ask himself: 'Why is this man doing what I am doing, uttering the same words that I am uttering, even though we can not talk to one another?' There is only one answer: 'Because *we* are Muslims …'."[10] But at another level we can also see today the making of a quite new history, founded in a solidarity with other Muslims across the world, concerned with their causes, their enthusiasms and their suffering. It is in a sense an ahistorical history, a stitching together of rhetoric and passion and perceived injustice into a powerful narrative of attributed motives and hidden actors.

It is easy enough to envisage (if more difficult to achieve) a collaborative understanding of imperial and post-imperial national and nationalist history: we can see such an understanding being worked out, for example, in modern accounts of the Indian 'Mutiny,' or of Partition, by British and Indian and Pakistani historians. But when it comes to the history of Muslims, as Muslims, we are on different ground. Islam is a universal and inclusive faith, certainly as seen by Muslims; but it is also by its nature a faith community defined by membership and belief. Its history can be written inclusively or exclusively. It can be a way of opening up, or of battening down hatches. There is always the risk that, as the history of what Anderson called an 'imagined community', defined by a shared understanding of member-ship, it stops at being just the story of a particular 'Us'. It can be – as Dr Zaki understood very well – much more than that.

Everybody, and every community, needs their own story, the narrative that tells them who they are and where they came from. These stories are not trivial things. They build over time like the sedimentation of rocks, and stretch opaquely across the frontier between memory and myth, song-lines and lineages, epic poetry and traditional stories as well as dry histories. Deliberately cultivated, they become assertions of origins and nationhood and territory. There are no human societies that survive without them – indeed society *is* in one dimension the business of sharing stories. Often they lock on to the peculiar binary architecture of the human mind, becoming stories of 'Us' and 'Them'.

Whether this binary architecture is really universal, or whether it is a Western phenomenon, is arguable: many non-western cultures recognize it as damaging and stress an ideal of non-dualism. Still, it is strong in the modern world. The novelist Lionel Shriver recently wrote: "It would be nice if we could think of each other as one big, loving human family, but that's not how we think about ourselves or each other. We belong to groups, and that's not going to change. We have a sense of who is 'us' and who is 'them'. It may be regrettable, but factions are part of the way we think, and part of the way we feel."[11] Stories, and histories, tell us how we think we got to be us.

Nowhere is this binary history clearer than in the myths of origins that shaped much European historiography in the nineteenth century. Which country descended from which barbarian tribe in late antiquity? Which peoples were of Roman ancestry and which not? Who had lived where in remote antiquity? None of these questions were asked in a spirit of open curiosity – they were all driven by political-cultural agendas. The new territorial nationalisms of the time needed mythologies, and the writing of history provided them. There is something bizarre about the purposeful parenting of Belgians onto Belgae, Englishmen onto Anglo-Saxons and Germans onto the forest-dwelling Teutons glimpsed in Tacitus. The Middle East too is plagued by history. Its ancient history and its archaeology, constantly burnished,researched and improved, provide the rationale for wars, occupations and enmities. Modern historians have unravelled many of these claims – Patrick Geary, for example, demonstrating that the formation of European 'peoples' in the early Middle Ages was a decidedly non-biological

business, that ethnic labels attach to polities not gene-pools, and that historians of origins are, more often than not, mythographers.[12] This is not just true of Europe.

This process of myth-building is much talked about today, though its language is now one of citizenship and shared values. It mostly represents a perfectly reasonable attempt to co-opt migrants from other continents and other cultures who are new to the relatively old, established societies of Europe, into the norms, behaviours and myths of the societies which they have joined, in the interests of social cohesion. Perfectly reasonable, but perhaps also at times fairly unrealistic. There is certainly much information and custom that is usefully acquired and allows the business of daily life to go on; just as it allows us to understand our new neighbours. I have spent a great deal of energy in my various postings around the world trying to understand as much as I can about my host societies, from the finer points of date-palm husbandry to the cooking of pasta, and from the language politics of the Low Countries to the rules of ice-hockey. But this doesn't make me any more of an Iraqi, or an Italian, or a Belgian or a Canadian. What I hope it does make me is a slightly better informed and – perhaps – slightly wiser Englishman.

There is a constant note running like a bass-line through debate about identity and citizenship, which somehow devalues, even disallows, cultural difference. It is often expressed today as a questioning of 'multiculturalism', the suggestion that the only way an 'immigrant' (and this is usually an oblique way of saying 'a Muslim') can become properly British is by learning about our equivalents of pasta and ice-hockey and forgetting his or her own. It's certainly no bad thing to do the former; but cultural integration is not a one-way street. It is not enough to insist that people arriving (or long since arrived) in Britain become *Britons*: we all have to make intellectual and spiritual space for this almost magical process to take place. We have to acknowledge that the two sides in any intercultural negotiation approach *each other*, a phenomenon that linguists, speaking of the way accents converge in conversation, call 'accommodation'. The demand for cultural capitulation is not an option in a liberal democratic society. In Québec, discussion of this whole matter is referred to as *accommodation*

*raisonnable*, or 'reasonable accommodation' and although much argument there actually focuses on what degree of accommodation is *un*reasonable, I find the phrase 'reasonable accommodation' really quite usefully expressive.

Yet we often behave and speak as though cultural capitulation were an option. A new book by an American journalist, much trumpeted in the British press, called *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, suggests in measured, Tocquevillian tones that large-scale Muslim immigration (or oddly and perhaps tellingly, as the author would have it, *Islamic* immigration) is fundamentally changing Europe. The final sentence of his book summarizes the doom-saying: "When an insecure, malleable, relativistic culture meets a culture that is anchored, confident, and strengthened by common doctrines, it is generally the former that changes to suit the latter."[13] I baulk at the notion of these vast objectified cultures clashing, like King Kong and Godzilla. Cultures are not monsters, but agglomerations of people, and it is useful to look carefully at those individuals. It is the endless collision of minute particles and unseen forces – a sort of human Brownian Motion – that drives change, synthesis and originality in human cultures. Though there are certainly risks, there is also much to be gained in this process, in the bringing together of the strands of histories, and cultures, that are not nearly as separate as we think. And of people, whose histories (as Sardar commented) are inextricably entwined.

But before we bring them together, we must pause briefly over attempts to drive them apart. There are two very divergent 'extreme' world histories developing today, like evil twins. Both are intellectually barren and politically lethal; but they have become popular explanatory frameworks. To be brief I shall have to risk caricature. This may very well be the most appropriate approach to each.

The first is the story of the clash of civilizations, the inevitable confrontation of Western and Muslim worlds, of social, political and intellectual failure in the East expressed as aggression against the West, the custodian of a modernity which 'Islam' at once craves and resents.

This narrative paints Islam as a monolith, 1.4 billion people thinking and acting as one, steeped in resentment of the West and determined to undermine Western civilization. It takes the highly partisan analysis of certain recent scholar-commentators who seem all too often to have political axes to grind, and grafts onto it a ludicrously generalized understanding of the small but very bloody terrorist campaigns of recent years. It assumes that all Muslims think like each other; and that secretly, many Muslims in the West hate their adopted countries; that tacitly at least they support violence, in Europe and outside; and that Muslims in Europe represent a sort of Fifth Column. By this account, Muslims undermine the West through their propensity to violence, their 'primitive' understanding of women's rights, opposition to freedom of speech and so on. It is the stuff of John Buchan's *Greenmantle*.

The other story – the other evil twin – supposes that the West is a monolith, driven by a fear and hatred of Islam; that its military actions in Muslim countries are crusades, studiously shaped by a malice towards Islam rooted in centuries of conflict and in religious hatred (fanned perhaps by the modern hatred of atheism for faith). This story jumbles together every piece of evidence, every event and every atrocity (from a fertile range of possibilities) that can be uncritically adduced to suggest that there is a concerted global campaign against Islam itself. It assumes that Europeans and Americans are driven by detestation of Muslims and fear of Islam. It is the mirror-image, the photographic negative, of *Greenmantle*.

I'm not going to dwell for long on these two geopolitical fables of 'us' and 'them'. They are important because they are believed, not because they are true, though both of course contain bits of fact and elements of truth, mixed with fiction and wishful thinking and jumbled together purposefully to prove a pre-determined conclusion. They provide interpretative frameworks for people who have already made up their minds. Worse, they provide glib justifications for behaviour at a personal level which only substantiates the fables. And worse still, they both provide easy tools for manipulating impressionable minds.

The real risk is not that these stories are true – but that by constant lazy or malicious repetition we make them so. As the old saying goes,

'Be careful what you wish for.' These twin stories come, inextricably, two for the price of one.

There are, though, less antagonistic – more 'innocent', in the sense that I used the word earlier – ways of recounting history, which still fail really to acknowledge the fact that human civilization is a global continuum today, as it has been for many, many centuries. This is how history has been written and taught by thoughtful historians shaped by their own cultures. These stories are purposeful, too, but the purpose is largely subliminal, a reflection of the fact that each history has been written from within a culture that has spent much time and energy defining itself against 'others'.

This should not surprise us. I am struck here by analogies with memory. It is generally accepted that we unconsciously airbrush and tweak our memories, for consistency and for comfort. A recent researcher went further, and suggested that we do this in order to manage the future. "We remember bits and pieces of our experiences and then reconstruct them to create plausible, but not necessarily accurate, accounts of what happened. Such structures make sense … if one of the main functions of memory is to shuffle scraps of the past in novel ways to project possible futures."[14] Our collective memory seems to operate in the same sort of way – shuffling scraps of the past in novel ways, to project possible futures. It is not necessarily dishonest at all, but if we are clear about the future we want, we may very well shuffle the past, albeit subconsciously, to map a path to that future.

Both the traditional Western account of Western civilization, and the traditional Muslim account of Islamic civilization are teleological, subtly retro-fitted histories that aspire to explain us all in their own terms, whether of 'modernity' or of God's final dispensation. Whether these two histories will fertilize, or continue to antagonize, one another is one of the great questions of our time.

The answer, like the answer to many difficult questions, is probably both. The very short recorded history of modern mankind (12,000 years since the dawn of the Holocene, a little less since the Neolithic

'revolution', and perhaps 5,000 since the invention of writing) is for the most part a shared, relatively undifferentiated Eurasian history. The histories of Islam and of Christendom are tail-pieces – 2,000 years and 1,400 years respectively – to a long, common past that stretches back far beyond that. Yet it is upon this relatively recent divergence that we focus, despite the fact that even then the cultural and the religious differentiations are those between near neighbours – cousins – of the same family. This is what Freud called 'the narcissism of small differences', the directing of negative feelings towards those most like us, and the minute attention to the small areas of differentiation. Back, in other words, to defining ourselves against others – by what we are *not* – in the all too familiar binary pattern of black and white, green and orange, blue and green, red and white, blue and red, black and green … and all the other pairings of parties, football teams, sects, chariot-factions and armies that litter history.

So the history of Europe has for the most part been written to demonstrate how we got where we are today, and represents a systematic reworking of the past to justify and explain the present. This doesn't make it some kind of all-enveloping malign conspiracy (though historiography has its share of those), just a product of the human mind. Humans need to explain themselves to themselves, and on the whole they find it difficult to imagine a history that didn't end up with them where they are now. From there it is a short leap to inevitability. There is a compelling tendency to make a coherent narrative that takes us from 'the beginning' to 'now' in a plausible progression: a narrative that takes us out of the realm of chance.

For modern Europe that narrative is so familiar that we often forget that it is a matter of craft and choice. It goes something like this: the origins of 'us' are in ancient Greece, in the moment of genius in fifth century Athens that provided the wellspring of European thought. The trail leads on through Rome and its emperors, grafting onto this stock the new faith of Christianity, and its adoption as the state religion of the Empire; the barbarian invasions and the fall of Rome. At this point culture goes underground, a small flame nursed by the Church in remote monasteries, only to re-surface as the first coherent polities emerge from the Dark Ages. We reach an apogee in the High Middle

Ages, in a galaxy of cathedrals, sacred art and confidence. In the twelfth century we see an early intellectual Renaissance, harbinger of the real thing a couple of centuries later, and then European thought explodes once again in an effervescence of creativity fertilized by rediscovered Greek learning, leading on inexorably to the desacralized individualism of the Enlightenment and what we call 'modernity'. Then Europe takes modernity to the world in the age of imperial expansion, building by diligent commerce the vast bedrock of capital that still sustains it and delivering its values and its ways of thinking to the unenlightened world – which then, in fits and starts, becomes 'modern' too.

Along the way there is a small by-pass built into the story (there are others, of course, too, but this one concerns us). In order for the story to work, the wisdom of Athens, and of the Hellenistic culture that expanded upon it, needed a safe berth during the European Dark Ages when the Europeans were clearly making a pretty poor fist of keeping the flame alive. The new, vigorous and open-minded civilization of Islam provided that haven, absorbing translations and translators of large quantities of Greek philosophy and science into its own mainstream, where it formed an important element in the high culture of Abbasid Baghdad and of the kingdoms of al-Andalus, to name only the two most obvious.

Or did it? What is interesting is the great reluctance in modern Europe, at a popular level at least, to imagine that these cultured Arabs, Persians and Berbers read and internalized the Greek literature that they had translated. It is almost as though their role was simply to pass it on, unexamined, like the courier who sews a secret dispatch into the hem of his cloak and later hands it over, unopened, to its recipient. That the wisdom of the Greeks could have been just as fertilizing to classical Arab and Islamic culture as it was to be to European culture, is apparently hard to accept: by the time Europe began to have large-scale encounters with Muslim states and Islamic institutions, it had already settled into the stance of unassailable superiority which has continued ever since.

And so it should probably not surprise us to see the editorial pages of French and even American newspapers discussing whether Aristotle was first translated in Muslim Toledo or, as the French historian

Sylvain Gouguenheim has recently maintained, at Christian Mont St-Michel.[15] Would that this were a sign of a growing popular interest in mediaeval intellectual history, but I'm afraid it isn't: it is (or has become, in the hands of the bloggers and polemicists) an attempt to minimize the Arab contribution to the Renaissance of the twelfth century, and so to the European intellectual story and to 'modernity'. Gouguenheim's book is now being translated into English, and will undoubtedly fuel another round of 'told-you-so' devaluation of Muslim histories and Islamic cultures. It is instructive to look at the websites on which the book is enthusiastically discussed: for the most part they are not sites specializing in scholarly intellectual history.

Similar ding-dong battles about 'Islamic science' seem all too often to resolve into attempts to show that the original contribution of Islamic scientists has been wildly exaggerated – that the Greeks did the real thinking and their genius then passed undigested through the gut of the mediaeval Islamic world to emerge ready for use by Renaissance thinkers, unsullied by any further originality. Indeed, it sometimes seems that a lot of what is written about Islamic civilization, particularly by non-specialists, is devoted simply to demoting it from its position of having provided the high culture of the mediaeval Mediterranean, almost as though refusing to admit its achievements a thousand years ago will somehow invalidate the claims to economic and social parity of Turkish, Moroccan, Pakistani and Somali Europeans today.

So we should probably read much of this historical argument as proxy politics. It's an odd sort of politics, but it tries to strip today's Muslims in Europe of their place – however collateral it may be – in the creation of Europe and the modern European mind. It is true that this claim would be hard to maintain if it was made simply in the name of farmers from Mirpur settled in Bradford, or from Sylhet settled in Brick Lane. But it isn't: it is made by Muslims, speaking as Muslims, as small shareholders in the great civilizational and religious enterprise of Islam. As Muslims, Mirpuris and Sylhetis, Moroccans and Anatolians can all hold their heads higher. They are, after all, distant heirs of what Claudio Lange described like this: "in the 11th century, Islamic civilization, together with the Byzantine, Chinese and Indian civilizations, established the First World of the time, while Western Europe embodied the Third."[16]

There has been much written about the need to rethink the writing of world history. Jack Goody describes the aim of his book *The Theft of History* as "to show how Europe has not simply neglected or underplayed the history of the rest of the world, as a consequence of which it has misinterpreted its own history, but also how it has imposed historical concepts and periods that have aggravated our understanding of Asia in a way that is significant for the future as well as for the past."[17] He is one of several scholars who have addressed the need to escape from the selective and inadequate narratives of the Eurocentric past, and to understand much more clearly the intimate linkages that have always existed between European and Asian cultures and histories.

Others (like Margaret Meserve) have re-examined the late mediaeval and Renaissance construction of Western historical thinking about the Turks;[18] or (like Ian Almond) the intricate networks of alliances throughout European history that have belied the old chestnut of wholly hostile civilizations, by placing Muslim and Christian on the same side;[19] yet others (like George Saliba) have patiently unravelled the history and meaning of the transmission of scientific ideas from East to West, and the part played in that transmission by Muslim scientists.[20] Others have written sympathetic revisionist histories of Islam in Europe, like David Lewis's *God's Crucible*.[21] Nabil Matar has chronicled the engagement of Muslim Arabs with Christians across the cultural frontier.[22] And Richard Bulliet has made a persuasive case for rethinking the history of the Mediterranean basin up to about 1550 as that of an 'Islamo-Christian' civilization.[23] There are many more.

It is interesting to note how much of this work post-dates 2001. Scholars had been toiling in this vineyard before that year, of course, but 9/11 and the intellectual fallout from it have given huge impetus to attempts to stop the two civilizations (or if we follow Professor Bulliet, the two halves of one civilization) being forced into escalating antagonism by what I called a moment ago the 'evil twins' – the two malign narratives that coil round each other like a double helix. It is no doubt sometimes exaggerated – that's the way with revisionism – but when we get past the competitive and often fruitless claims about which culture discovered, recognized, invented, translated what first, we can discern a powerful attempt to demonstrate what every rational instinct

tells us must be the case: that two great civilizations living in proximity for a millennium and a half, trading, fighting, abusing and studying each other, forming glittering syncretic micro-cultures like those of Muslim Spain and Norman Sicily, and occupying opposite shores of the same body of water – cannot be hermetically separated from each other. Indeed, the opposite seems very likely to be true: that constant commerce and intellectual intercourse across the cultural frontier meant that significant elements of what formed the modern European mind came from, or through, the Muslim East.

What is to be lost by exploring this intimate cross-fertilization? Why does it arouse such negative reactions? Why did the editor of *Standpoint*, for instance, write recently in words that echo the EPP manifesto, that we must go "back to a politics that reaffirms values rooted in classical, Judaeo-Christian and Enlightenment thought. We need a nation state, proud of its identity and history, independent and sovereign, free and democratic, living under the rule of law and capable of protecting its way of life …"?[24]

In the end the historical revisionism that Goody and Bulliet propound hits two very sensitive points. It flouts the pedigree which thinkers in the West have written over the centuries for their own, self-consciously Western, civilization, suggesting that it may be indebted to a culture against which it has for so long defined itself. 'Islamo-Christian civilization', even were it in some ways a rhetorical figure designed simply to draw attention to a hidden hybridity, seems, in its provocative name alone, to upset a sense of the past long held unarguable. And at a baser level, according historic recognition to the *cultural* forbears of today's Muslim Europeans seems to give them a stake in Europe and its future which many 'old Europeans' do not want them to have.

So we see an outbreak of what the American historian of science, Robert Proctor, called 'agnatology' – the deliberate production of ignorance. Proctor coined the word to describe the commissioning of spurious research into tobacco and lung cancer, and the fabricating of

an apparent scientific debate long after the aetiology of lung cancer was well understood by scientists. The campaign was funded by the tobacco industry, and was designed simply to create doubt in the public mind and postpone the reckoning that would come when cigarettes and cancer were finally linked. The next big agnatological campaign was the still current, and richly funded, push to discredit predictions of catastrophic climate change, by creating the false impression that the basic science is still a matter of widespread debate amongst scientists. Many of the same spin-doctors have handled the two campaigns.

Today a good deal of what is written about Muslims in the European press and in blogs and political tracts, is also agnatology. While there are many honourable attempts to increase the sum of public knowledge of Islam and the vast gamut of Muslim cultures and histories, and a good deal of honest and informed criticism, there is also much that is meant to confuse, obscure and denigrate, to suggest that Muslim Europeans are in some way not 'real' Europeans.

History is a fine bell-wether for political and cultural attitudes. I am working currently for the British Council on a project exploring this whole area, which will try to demonstrate that *Muslims are an integral part of Europe's past, present and future*. The project is called 'Our Shared Europe', and its objective is to bring a new and principled realism to the way in which we speak about Europe and its people – above all, about our Muslim fellow Europeans. To make quite clear that Muslim Europeans are not second class citizens with only a secondary claim on the European heritage and on Europe itself, but full members of it.

History substantiates this, in the two dimensions I have been discussing. By opening up our understanding of the sources of the Western achievement to include our inheritance from – our debts to – the East, that is to say from China, India and the Middle East, we begin to counter the tacitly accepted hierarchy of cultures, and the hierarchy of race, ethnicity and faith that goes with it, which are among the least attractive aspects of our imperial inheritance. By allowing (which is

true) that the cultures of Islam have contributed dramatically to Europe and the European mind, we lose nothing, but stand to gain much in terms of rethinking our relationship with the world. And by doing so, we dignify (quite properly) fellow-Britons and fellow-Europeans who are all too often socio-economically marginalized in our societies, with a sense of their own part in the culture that they now inhabit and own.

Secondly, we acknowledge the current reality of Europe's past imperial dominion over much of the world. Few European Muslims are direct lineal representatives of the high culture of mediaeval Islam; but the vast majority are descended from the peoples of Europe's empires. In this, rather different, sense they are also direct shareholders in Europe's modernity. By going back to our shared history, by re-visiting what I quoted Ziauddin Sardar as calling "the eradication of memory, the obliteration of history and the defiance of sense and reason," we can help to undo the marginalization of many of Europe's Muslims. By "building on the entanglement of empire" we can create a new and powerful narrative for tomorrow's Europe. The only sure way of combating the 'evil twins' is to explore a shared history that acknowledges amongst the many sources of European culture Muslim astronomers, poets, philosophers and architects; and which recognizes the history of empire as a history that belongs equally to all its heirs, of every race, faith and nation.

# NOTES

[1] Ehsan Masood, *British Muslims: Media Guide* (London: British Council and AMSS UK, 2006).
[2] Paul Glennie & Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.66.
[3] Letter to *The Spectator* from Michael Irwin, 30th May 2009.
[4] *The Gallup Coexist Index*, May 2009.
[5] Margaret Macmillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2008).
[6] "Mau Mau veterans sue for colonial abuses," *The Guardian*, 11th May 2009.
[7] Ziauddin Sardar, *Balti Britain* (London: Granta Books, 2008), p.209.
[8] Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), p.50.
[9] Carl Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p.30.
[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Books, 1991), p.54.
[11] Lionel Shriver in Dialogue with David Coleman, *Standpoint*, May 2009.
[12] Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations* (Princeton University Press, 2002).
[13] Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration and the West* (Doubleday Publishing, 2009).
[14] Jessica Marshall, "Future Recall," *New Scientist*, March 24–30, 2007.
[15] Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Aristote au mont Saint-Michel: les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne* (Paris: Seuil, 2008).
[16] *cit.* Jack Goody, *Islam in Europe* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), p.65.
[17] Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.8.
[18] Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2008).
[19] Ian Almond, *Two Faiths, One Banner: When Muslims Marched with Christians Across Europe's Battlegrounds* (Harvard University Press, 2009).
[20] George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (MIT Press, 2007).
[21] David Levering Lewis, *God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, 570–1215* (W.W. Norton, 2008).
[22] Nabil Matar, (e.g.) *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727* (Columbia University Press, 2008); or *In the Land of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (Routledge, 2003).
[23] Richard W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (Columbia University Press, 2006).
[24] Daniel Johnson, *Standpoint*, May 2009.

In honour of the life and work of Sheikh Zaki Badawi, OBE, KBE, and in recognition of his noted public contribution in championing the vital role of religious faith and values in the life of the nation, the AMSS has established the annual Zaki Badawi Memorial Lecture. The lecture series is dedicated to Dr. Badawi's vision to foster pluralism, inter-faith dialogue, inter-cultural understanding, and social cohesion.

'He who controls the past controls the present.' In this third Zaki Badawi Memorial Lecture, Martin Rose argues that history is as often a polemical weapon as a dispassionate exploration of the past. It can, at worst, support entrenched positions and inhibit understanding – but it also offers solutions to difficult questions of identity and belonging in today's Europe. Seeing both Muslim and traditional European accounts of their own history as teleological and springing from their respective cultures, he argues for a thoughtful and open-minded approach to the writing of an intercultural history that explores much more fully the role of the Muslim East as a contributor to the 'modern' European mind; and at the same time acknowledges the shared, inescapable and potentially creative legacy of common imperial histories for today's Europe.

*Martin Rose has been the Director of the British Council in Canada since 2006, and is also the Director of the British Council's 'Our Shared Europe' project. He has an MA in History and an M Phil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies, both from Oxford; and he has had previous careers in academic publishing and international banking, during which he travelled extensively and lived in the Middle East and Africa. He joined the British Council in 1988 and has served in Baghdad, Rome, Brussels and Ottawa. He set up and ran the British Council's in-house think-tank, Counterpoint (2002–6). He can be contacted at martin.rose@britishcouncil.org.*

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (UK)
BRITISH COUNCIL

BRITISH COUNCIL

AMSS (UK)

ISBN 978-1-56564-447-2

Cover Image *Corbis*