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Islamic Fashion: Subversion or Reinvention of Religious Values?

IMÈNE AJALA

Abstract

The embedding of Islam in capital markets has given way to the emergence of an urban Muslim culture in the West resulting from an alliance of consumerism and religious practice sometimes dubbed as “Cool Islam” or “Pop-Islam”. This movement refers to young Muslims abiding by religious practices while adopting the codes of youth and pop culture. Islamic Fashion is one example of this movement. Using frameworks from value theory and drawing on empirical data from the Islamic Fashion sphere, this article explores the intricacies between the consumerist values of products associated to Cool Islam and the traditional values it subverts and reinvents, suggesting, beyond the critique of consumerism as corrupting spirituality, that it may lead in fact to the revitalization of faith for Muslims living in the West while paving the way for plural exegesis of religious scriptures for Islam as a cult.

Keywords: Consumerism, Cool Islam, Hijab, Hybridity, Islamic Fashion, Values, Youth.

1. Introduction

The embedding of Islam in capital markets has given way to the emergence of an urban Muslim culture in the West resulting from an alliance of consumerism and religious practice: sometimes dubbed as “Cool Islam” or “Pop-Islam”, this movement refers to young Muslims abiding by religious practices while adopting the codes of youth and pop culture. Muslims in the West as well as cosmopolite well-off upper-middle classes in Muslim countries have been at the forefront of this movement. Islamic Fashion is one example of this movement.

Ambiguities arise in this process as Cool Islam, by inviting to visibly showcase pride in religious identity, questions the traditional understandings of concepts associated to Islam, such as modesty. This process has not gone unnoticed by its critics, perceiving these dynamics as detrimental to an authentic spirituality. However, what if, especially for Muslims in the West and thus, in spaces where the experience of Islam is the experience of the minority, Cool Islam could also be seen as not only subverting but
reinventing or even transcending traditional values, paving the way for a new religious understanding?

Using frameworks from value theory and drawing on empirical data regarding Islamic Fashion, this article explores the intricacies between the consumerist values of products associated to Cool Islam and the traditional values it subverts and reinvents, suggesting, beyond the critique of consumerism as corrupting spirituality, that it may lead in fact to the revitalization of faith for Muslims living in the West while paving the way for plural exegesis of religious scriptures for Islam as a cult.

Three sections compose the article. The first section sets the stage: it defines Cool Islam and Islamic Fashion in a securitized context. The second section explores the various economic, anthropological, sociological and political dimensions of value and values as concepts, and what they can bring, as heuristic devices, to the understanding of Cool Islam as a hybrid movement. The third section mobilizes content analysis of a range of press archives and previous empirical studies to explore how Islamic Fashion dynamics when it comes to values. On the one hand, it restates the critics addressed to Cool Islam and Islamic fashion as manifestations of Islamic consumerism, covering two aspects: the loss of spirituality as well as the toxic politics of normalization they are perceived to imply, leading to the subversion of religious values. On the other hand, it attempts at approaching this subversion differently, by arguing that this subversion can also be framed as a revitalization of faith experienced by a minority as well as a bridge to more inclusiveness, finally alluding that subversion may even translate into the creation of new understandings of the Islamic faith.

2. Cool Islam and Islamic Fashion in a Securitized Context

Cool Islam” or “Pop-Islam” describes a movement of young Muslims abiding by conservative religious practices while adopting the codes of youth and pop culture and can be considered an extension of the growing individualization in post-industrial societies and of the global neoliberal environment, embedding Islam in capital markets. Muslim communities in the West are at the forefront of this movement giving rise to hybrid practices and sub-cultures associating an Islamic referent and any cultural form of expression tied to youth, pop, or street culture in a broad sense: hence the emergence of ‘Islamic rap’ and Muslim street wear for example, consecrating a combination of pop culture and Islamic ethics.

One of the most visible expressions of Cool Islam is Islamic fashion and its icons, the ‘hijabistas’ (neologism formed by the conjunction of hijab and fashionista). The rise of Islamic fashion goes in hand in hand with the rise of a transnational, virtual sphere of modest fashion influencers using the social media favored by the digital natives such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Modest fashion photography or Muslim Beauty Pageants constitute other manifestations of this movement.

3. The Context: Securitization

Value-based conflicts and tensions, due to the encounter between religious practices and deeply secularized spaces concerning Muslims in the West and fuelled by securitization
linked to the global geopolitical context are well documented⁵. A stronger claim of religious identity is noticeable among younger Muslim generations in the West⁶, tough it happens through a strong individualization of practices, resulting from modernization and industrialization⁷.

Cool Islam and its manifestations, such as Islamic Fashion, is one manifestation of the individualization of practices as already mentioned above. In an ethnographic study of Islamic street wear products, the religious reference is the most commonly found category used in the messages displayed on the products, when compared with references to the minority status in non-Muslim societies and expressions of political transnational solidarity⁸. Messages leave aside austerity and rigidity attached to traditions by associating ‘cool’ language with religious references. Strong claims of religiosity and religious self-identification, reflecting the ideal ethics of Islam⁹ are renewed by incorporating distinctively modern elements related to youth and pop culture¹⁰, an extension of postmodern values: a strong individualization with an emphasis on the self exemplified by the use of personal pronouns¹¹.

Still, Muslims in the West are still perceived as a political but also as a cultural threat¹². Precisely on the topic of veiling for instance, non-Muslim European populations think that removing public signs of religiosity is necessary for integration¹³. As the veil is a visible marker of Muslim identity, this leads to perceive hijabis as threatening the local way of life¹⁴ and “threatening the very notions of individuality and freedom on which democratic Western societies are founded”¹⁵. The veil is thus seen as “an assault on the dominant civic values of female liberty and a denial of the dominant national identity”¹⁶. When the hijab is perceived as a threat, the assumptions underlying its significance for non-Muslim Europeans navigate between viewing it as the symbol of oppression of women, a sign of support for Islamic extremism, an assertion of hatred for Western society or a sign of backwardness, among others¹⁷. Such orientalist and generalizing perspectives also essentialize Muslims as one single homogeneous block, occult the diversity¹⁸ and deprive Muslim women of their agency¹⁹ despite a number of studies highlighting the autonomy of women in their choices and the plurality of motives behind them²⁰.

4. **Veiling and its Plural Meanings**

Pink observes that “the relation between (Islamic) religion and consumption has mostly been discussed with a focus on veiling and modern headscarf fashions”²¹, a good entry point, along with Islamic fashion in general, to consider the interplay of different values. It is therefore necessary to provide some context on veiling practices. Veiling principally aims at concealing a woman’s beauty. Modesty is an essential and multidimensional concept in Islam, emphasized in the Quran, and Hadiths narrating the sayings of Prophet Mohammed²². Modesty is not only tied to modest dress but refers to proper behaviour and implies various dimensions: lowering the gaze, as commended by the Quranic Verse (24:30-31), restrictions on contact with the opposite sex and generally a sort of reserve²³. The Global Islamic Economy Report, citing the Quranic verses calling for modesty, asserts that “Muslim fashion is driven by an underlying Islamic mandate to preserve
modesty”⁴. Alia Khan, the founder of Islamic Fashion Design Council, an organization established to develop the Islamic fashion industry in Dubai, defines Islamic fashion as clothes “worn primarily by practicing Muslims who have committed to the Islamic principles of dressing”⁵.

However, the understanding of modesty as it relates to dress- and the extent of what needs to be covered- can vary enormously. The definition of modesty is by no means fixed⁶. The Global Islamic Economy Report, acknowledges that “there is a wide diversity in interpretation and adoption of ‘modesty’ among Muslims across the world (…), geographic/cultural heritage also plays a strong role”, thus leaving room for diversity⁷. Bucar, in her study of pious fashion in Iran, Indonesia and Turkey shows how indigenous forms of cloth blend with local pious fashion, revealing diversity, contrary to the idea of a homogenous Islam whereby dressing practices are set up by the Arab world⁸. Tarlo also emphasizes the diversity of Muslim dress worldwide and their embedment in local dressing practices⁹. There are thus “many forms of coverings, which themselves have different meanings in different communities”¹⁰.

Muslim women in the West particularly are at the crossroads of competing narratives and expectations. The Islamic discourse itself is not homogenous and different ways of asserting Islamic identity take form¹¹. Haddad, Smith and More identify “the several general alternatives of Islamic discourses about women, namely, traditionalism, conservatism, Islamic modernism or secularism, and feminism”¹². Haddad, Smith and More thus explain about American Muslim women that they:

…often find themselves the focal point of external and internal pressures facing Muslim religious communities. Externally, they feel the push to be homogeneous, to find a place for all Muslims despite their differences, and to find consensus on issues of morality, social interaction, and standards of personal dress and conduct. Internally, they may still feel the strong pull of those things that serve to differentiate them, from culture to ideology to the degree to which they want to affiliate with religiously observant Muslim communities in America¹³.

Islamic feminists argue that men have monopolized the interpretation of religious scriptures consequently marked by a patriarchal bias and emphasize the importance of women contributing to the debate, basing their egalitarian and emancipatory project on religious scriptures:

…they want to create an attractive alternative to both dogmatic traditionalism with its constraining patriarchal overtones, on the one hand, and on the other to secular liberal feminism that appears to have given up on Islam and succumbed to the changing whims and values of a West that appears unable or unwilling to appreciate Islam¹⁴.

Rumee has observed how the narrow understanding of Sharia in a purely legalistic perspective also paradoxically allowed for several groups and individuals, precisely such
as Muslim feminists, to instigate new interpretations of sharia using the language of Islamic law\textsuperscript{35}. New narratives about veiling practices thus become another indirect way of “hacking” Islamic law\textsuperscript{36}. The binary fundamentalism vs feminism is thus too simplistic:

Clearly, for many Muslims, veiling signifies their piety and spirituality, and they are unhappy with both the wider society’s demonization of the veil as a symbol of oppression, and the elevation by some Muslims of the veil as a symbol of Muslim identity, resistance, and even jihad. As well, there are women who have adopted the veil for personal reasons stemming from their particular social contexts. Some wish to prevent alienation from their parents and community as they engage in “unconventional” pursuits such as higher education and careers, which may entail mingling with men, living alone and travelling to distant places. Other women are using Islam, including practices such as veiling, to help break away from certain practices of their community’s patriarchal cultural traditions, such as arranged marriages, which they find unacceptable (Hoodfar in this volume). In short, for some women veiling can be empowering and in some contexts even subversive\textsuperscript{37}.

So, though the veil is a traditional marker of religious piety\textsuperscript{38}, a myriad of factors can be identified behind the decision to veil\textsuperscript{39}. The language used by the hijabiis and hijabistas showcase independence, agency, personal choice and consciousness, thus deconstructing and challenging essentialist conceptions of veiled women as passive and oppressed\textsuperscript{40} so that “veiling must not be confused with, or made to stand for lack of agency”\textsuperscript{41}. This experience of assertion is of course by no means universal\textsuperscript{42}. Bucar identifies values related to stability and conformity behind the regulation of dress in Iran for instance\textsuperscript{43}.

In short, for some women veiling can be “empowering and in some contexts even subversive”\textsuperscript{44}. This subversion works then both ways: not only against postmodern values of the non-West society, but also against holistic values associated to religion. This double subversion of values can be interpreted very differently, as the last section of this article suggests. Before that, the next section precisely delves into some of the conceptual frameworks provided by value theory.

5. Values: Multiple Political Dimensions

5.1. Values, Modernization Theory and the Market

The term ‘value’ can hold different meanings: Graber distinguishes value in a sociological, economic and linguistic sense. In sociology, value would refer to conceptions of “what is proper” and desirable in human life while economically, value denotes the degree to which something is desired\textsuperscript{45}. The plural introduces another layer of complexity as it can be easy to contrast economic value with societal or, in our case
more specifically, religious values, alluding to the respective qualification of commodities versus the qualification of worldviews. The distinctions within what is understood as value and between value and values suggests a dichotomy between economy and religion, in other words, between the economic value of a product and the values it may reflect or promote.

Robbins argues, in relation to values in a given society, that it is not so much the number of values but rather, the nature of the relations between them that counts. Both monist and pluralist tendencies can be found in a given society so that the point is to find the different configurations of both these tendencies rather than trying to determine a holistic monist or pluralistic character. The debate around values concerns the potential clashes or harmony between the values in the society. While monists argue that there are values which tend to contribute to one supervalue overarching the rest, pluralists argue that the pursuit of values means clashing with a set of others: the latter have dominated the debate. Robbins uses Dumont’s model to identify the different arrangements of monist and pluralist features that can be found in a given society; he illustrates four different configurations based on ethnographical studies which are monism with the case of the Bobover and unaffiliated Hasidim of Brooklyn, monism with stable levels where a value dominates with the case of the Priestless Old Believers in Sepych-a town in the Russian Urals, stable pluralism with the case of the Avatip, a community located in Papua New Guinea’s East Sepik Province, and unsettled pluralism with the case of the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea.

The case of the Urapmin, unsettled pluralism, leads Robbins to conclude that they experience much of their lives as profoundly marked by conflict. Now all of these cases concern individuals pertaining to the same society. Intuitively, it is easy to presume that individuals who navigate between different societies, societal expectations and societal values are also at a risk of, similarly to Urapmin, to experience conflict in their lives, simply because the pluralism itself originates from experiencing belonging to different societal spheres. Beyond Robbins’ methodology, a useful concept here is the concept of composite habitus, based on Bourdieu’s famous writings on the split habitus, mobilized by Karen Waltorp to study the behaviour of young Muslim women in Copenhagen and how they use the smartphone and social media to navigate different traditional and modern imperatives, involving a process of negotiation between the values corresponding to those imperatives.

A significant conclusion made by Robbins in his work is with regard to the importance of religion in all the ethnographic cases discussed, with religious values as a strong contender for paramountcy. From an anthropological point of view, in this diversity leading to a composite habitus, there is an assumption that “the fundamental cultural ordering of any situation is provided by traditional ideas” and “structures of the longue duree will always win out, so there is little sense in considering the ways new elements do more than find themselves absorbed by the traditional frameworks that encompass them.” This is precisely the case for religion and the dichotomy between appearance, often referring to rituals or dressing practices among others, and essence:
Robbins argues that in this perspective, “new religious ideas and practices are always “on the surface,” an “overlay” that covers over “core” or “deeper” traditional ideas”51.

Would this entail that new practices inspired by the competing “modern” sphere remain superficial? First, let us identify the values associated to this non-traditional sphere. A look at modernization theory can be helpful here. According to modernization theory, industrialization has a major impact on societal values, including on values related to the distribution of gender roles52. Modernization would globally result in a convergence of values as traditional values are being replaced by modern values. One of the best illustrations of this line of thought at the level of governance is Fukuyama’s End of History: liberal democracy has triumphed in the realm of ideas, liberal democracy being understood here as the realization of the “universal homogenous state” based on consumer culture and liberal democracy: the world is thus on track towards this same destination53. On the contrary, others contend that traditional values persist despite the changes brought by modernization as values are relatively independent of economic conditions54. Inglehart quotes Hamilton who argues that “What we witness with the development of global economy is not increasing uniformity, in the form of universalization of Western culture, but rather the continuation of civilizational diversity through the active reinvention and reincorporation of non-Western civilizational patterns”55. Still, based on the World Values Surveys, Inglehart and Baker come to the conclusion that levels of economic development seem to have a significant impact on cultural values while pointing to the resilience of traditional values56, corroborating the conclusions exposed above. Values change, but still remain shaped by the particular local cultural heritage and historical religious traditions57.

As to the changes brought by modernization, Inglehart recognizes that “industrialization leads to occupational specialization, rising education levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings unforeseen changes- changes in gender roles, attitudes towards fertility rates; broader political participation; and less easily led publics”58. All of this leads to a shift towards postmaterialist and postmodern values translating into an “emphasis on quality-of-life, environmental protection and self-expression”, the latter highlighting the new importance of individual judgement59. Individual modernity is directly related to theories of value change60. As modernization takes place, people will become “more open-minded and more secular, positivist rational, activist and achievement oriented”61. What we witness then, connecting again to Robbins, is “hybrid (…) formations that result when individualist and holist values exist within the same culture”62.

However, Graber notices a paradox here: while postmodernism is supposed to signal the end of grand narratives, liberals praise the single market, “that is in fact, the single, greatest and most monolithic system of measurement ever created, a totalizing system that would subordinate everything – every object, every piece of land, every human capacity or relationship – on the planet to a single standard value”63. This echoes Carette and King’s criticism about the growing commercialization of religion analyzed in Selling Spirituality64. As Adam Possamai notices, religion “now has to speak a language that the majority of people can understand: that of consumption”65.
Neo-liberal values and consumerism have affected all religions, including Islam. This trend can be verified with the proliferation of marketing strategies mobilizing an Islamic referent. Carette and King’s critique is mirrored in a number of observations related to the specific case of Islam: anti-capitalist and Marxist perspectives perceive these dynamics as extending market logics and attacking spirituality. The commodification of Islam is thus conceived of as another symptom of a deep spiritual crisis whereby Islam is emptied of its spiritual content and becomes reduced to a game of appearances, a deceptive halal-haram (allowed-forbidden) dichotomy, excessive ritualization and judicialization, facilitating radicalization.

5.2. Values and Hybridity

Hybridity allows to escape a strictly binary pattern of reflection according to contemporary post-colonial theory. In this perspective, hybridity creates a third space within which the colonized reclaim the colonizer’s tools and undermines colonial authorities. Hybridity thus implies an encounter to be contextualized: it can be experienced positively or negatively, it can constitute a threat or on the contrary, a revitalization. Pieterse notes that hybridity entered the field of social sciences precisely through “the anthropology of religions and the issue of syncretism.” In cultural studies, hybridity is understood as a multiplicity of identities.

Isabel Hoving distinguishes two types of hybridity, one encompassing a modern approach, and the other a post-modern approach. Bakhtin favours the modern approach, associating hybridity to the idea of plurality and multiplicity by distinguishing between organic, non-intentional (for instance, linguistic dynamics) and intentional hybridity conceived as a moment of resistance against a dominant culture and embedded in a conflicting logic. Bhabha on the other hand represents the post-modern approach which defines hybridity as a process rather than as an identity, turning its political significance into its supreme characteristic: Bhabha transforms Bakhtin’s organic hybridity into an “active moment of challenge and resistance against a dominant culture power.” In this vision, hybridity is also perceived in a positive way because it is carrying an emancipatory dynamic of resistance. We can connect this positive experience of hybridity to successful encounters between holistic and individualist values. Timo Kaartinen’s study of Banda Ely, a village in the Eastern Indonesian island of Kei, is alluded to by Robbins and Siikala as “a case in which hierarchical values have been able to renew themselves through their encounter with individualism.” Kaartinen shows:

how, after displacement and dispersal, the Bandanese have created new forms of totalizing practices which combine Islam, mosque-building and long-distance trade with their traditional hierarchical ideology. These changes have resulted in corresponding new forms of hybrid ideological formations in which individualist influences have not replaced, but have rather transformed the pre-existing hierarchical values in both their internal and external expressions.

This brief overview of the multidimensional concepts of value and values and the economic-religion dichotomy implied allows us to consider the case of Cool Islam and
Muslim minorities in the West equipped with a number of heuristic devices from value theory in general: unsettled pluralism and composite habitus can help us apprehend the conflicts arising from the experience of navigating between different sets of imperatives. In parallel, the commodification of religion referring to the triumph of the ideology of the market as a dominant value would lead us to perceive a submission to a totalizing system. Clearly, for both hypotheses, from the perspective of religion, what stands out is a competition with values understood as modern and a loss of authenticity. Does the case of Islam Fashion strictly conform to these conclusions? What are the ambiguities arising within the nexus of religion and neoliberalism or religion and modernity? In the framework of unsettled pluralism as defined by Robbins, how are values conceived and negotiated by individuals? Do these necessary lead to the loss of spirituality?

6. Between Commodification, Normalization and Subversion

The Muslim clothing market represents 11.9% of the global expenditure and is expected to reach 488 billion dollars by 2019. The world Muslim population is expected to rise from 1.7 billion in 2014 to 2.2 billion by 2030 (26.4%) with a median age of 30 years old, potential consumers for the fashion industry. A range of initiatives reflect that the niche market of Islamic and modest fashion is of interest to large retailers: special collections for Ramadan by DKNY and Tommy Hilfiger, the offering of burkinis since 2013 in Marks & Spencer, the use of hijabib models in a range of campaigns such as H&M or Gap, the commercialization by Nike of its first “sports hijab” in 2016. The New York Fashion Week of September 2016 also featured a modest fashion collection by Anniesa Hasibuan, an Indonesian designer, where every model was wearing a hijab. Sizeable markets are not limited to the Muslim world as Muslims in Western Europe (Germany, France, UK) plus North America (U.S., Canada) collectively spent an estimated 22 billion dollars on clothing and footwear in 2012. This makes the western Muslim clothing market second only after Turkey. Events like the Muslim Lifestyle Expo in England or the ‘Rassemblement du Bourget’ in France function as platforms for halal-oriented consumerism.

In this context, it seems the practice of veiling remains inseparable from consumption, to the point where its original sense related to piety seems relegated behind, reflecting the tyranny of the market depicted by Graeber. The following section relies on the content analysis of press archives published worldwide in English outlets, compiled through Lexis-Nexis over a period of three years (January 2014 to January 2017) in order to collect voices from the Islamic Fashion sphere.

Islamic fashion and Islamic street wear derive from the global neoliberal, increasingly individualized environment leading to “the growing commodification of religious experience within modern consumer culture.” This stands out in the observations made by Shelina Jammohamed, a British writer and vice-president of a marketing agency which helps market companies to Muslims around the world. She reckons that: “If you're discussing sparkles and spangles then I'm up for glitz to a point. But when I get dressed and look in the mirror, I stop and ask myself if I'm observing the
letter [of religious doctrine] as well as the spirit of modest wear,” she says. Similarly, Khadija Ahmed, editor of the online magazine Another Lenz, says: "It's not doing anything for the Muslim community other than reducing the hijab - which I see as an act of worship - into something as simple as a fashion statement” (BBC.com 2017) to the point where she stopped wearing the hijab. The deviation of this intention is also criticized by Shelina Janmohamed, when she asserts that

...today's fashion industry is about consumerism and objectification - buy, buy, buy and be judged by what you wear. Muslim fashion is teetering between asserting a Muslim woman's right to be beautiful and well turned out, and buying more stuff than you need, and being judged by your clothes - both of which are the opposite of Islamic values.

In fact, the fashionable hijab has been vehemently criticized by some scholars who have been issuing fatwas to condemn modelling, make up, tight clothes, and designer pieces. As the use of the Internet contributes to “displace discourses about modesty away from traditional religious authority structures”, communities, especially women communities, reinvent what they understand as modest. A Dubai-based designer, Ahmed Ammar explains that “Islamic fashion is drawing on more western influences.” Consequently, targets of conservative groups no longer target only non-veiled women but also women considered to be veiled in an inappropriate manner: Mariah Idrissi, the model who appeared in the ad campaign for H&M explained that while she expected negative reactions from some women, the criticisms she got were from male Muslims stating that “this isn't hijab”. In Istanbul, an important scene of Islamic fashion, conservative Muslims demonstrated during a fashion show to denounce what they perceived as forms of immorality and a violation of Islamic. Shelina Janmohamed exemplifies this tension in the following statement: “Many would say I'm still too flamboyant, while compared to others I'm pretty conservative.” This assertion explicates the problematic nexus at which societal expectations are not met.

Hijabi women are also perceived -and criticized- by some of their counterparts as submitting to pressures for normalization and engaging in a form of respectability politics, “the idea that a minority group can minimize or evade the injustices associated with discriminatory attitudes by behaving in a so-called respectable manner, i.e., dressing, acting, speaking, and even protesting in certain acceptable ways: this mirrors power relations relying on a dichotomy of what are considered “respectable” and desirable values versus values considered disrespectful, a reading imposed by the dominant group on marginalized groups. In a way, hijabistas, by incorporating markers of postmodern values, would be endorsing a form of the “acceptable Muslim”, the one who showcases markers of familiarity and is thus endorsed by the non-Muslim society.

Another criticism coming from another side is from Muslim women in Muslim countries where veiling is not a choice. Masih Alineja, an Iranian activist who started the Facebook campaign "My stealthy freedom" showing women removing their hijabs explains: 'I think the media in the West want to normalize the hijab issue - they want to talk about minority Muslims in the West, but they totally forget there are millions of
women in Muslim countries that are forced to wear the hijab" (BBC.com 2017). From a liberal feminist point of view, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a famous British Muslim writer talks about the 'Islamification' of fashion, contributing to legitimizing a conservative dress code that sanctions the oppression of women.

To conclude, it seems Islamic Fashion, by subverting respective holistic and individualist values is relegated to the expression of a conflict of values. However, how do agents themselves rationalize the adoption of its codes? The displacement of discourses away from traditional understandings of the value of modesty can be approached differently. The association of religion and consumerism may also be approached as an answer to an identity challenge where values are shifting. It extends the plurality of identities detailed by Hussein and Bagguley in a hybridization process creating a new space. Here, according to Patrick Haenni, hybridity takes the form of “an ethical behavior” which consists in restituting the “Islamic reference in a secularized reasoning, but not contradictory with the precepts of the Muslim morality.” We have already seen that the various instances in which the hijab is worn can be politically subversive: politics is also another area of struggle for values. For instance, the famous poster of a hijabi wearing an American flag made by Shepard Fairey based on a photo of Munira Ahmed reflects these two tendencies: Munira Ahmed herself explicitly states that by wearing the American flag, she showcases her pride in both her identities, being an American and a Muslim. The context of course is key here: this is in the midst of a strong anti-Muslim climate marked by the infamous Muslim ban adopted by the then American President Donald Trump.

During the Danish Cartoons controversy, a German of Turkish origin, Melih Kesmen created a t-shirt bearing the slogan “I love my prophet” before launching his brand of street wear, Styleislam, following the success of his design. Style Islam became an online fashion label in 2008. Kesmen has explained how the personalization of his Tee-shirt was met with success by fellow young Muslims and how it inspired him the creation of a fashion brand, Style Islam: "It became clear to me that I wasn't the only Muslim wanting to convey a message to society in a non-verbal way with a statement on my chest – a statement that is positive and speaks for itself.

Anniesa Hasibuan, the Indonesian designer of Modest Fashion whose designs were displayed during New York’s Fashion Week, declared that hijab is “a part of a Muslim woman's identity, an identity they are asserting more confidently.” Her take on Western contexts is insightful: she adds that “fashion is one of the outlets in which we can start that cultural shift in today's society to normalize the hijab in America and other parts of the West, so as to break down stereotypes and demystify misconceptions.”

Another designer, Calvin Thoo, identifies a “crisis where Islam has probably been given a bad name by extremists, and I want to show modest dress does not have to mean somber, or boring or so complicated.” Melanie Elturk, chief executive of an American modest fashion brand, Haute Hijab, concurs on Instagram that “fashion is one of the outlets in which we can start that cultural shift in today's society to normalize hijab in America so as to break down stereotypes and demystify misconceptions.”
All these voices concur towards two directions: asserting modernity and normalizing a piece of cloth whose meaning gets distorted in the context of securitization. In other words, as stated by Lewis, “alongside the depiction of Islam as a religion of peace and universal values, the depiction of Islam as part of contemporary consumer culture is an effective way to convey the message they live in the same world as everyone else”\textsuperscript{110}. Bucar concludes: “Fashionably dressed Muslim women, it is thought, have the potential to rehabilitate Islam’s public image”\textsuperscript{111}.

Beyond this political aspect of emphasizing inclusiveness, and based on the redefinitions of the concept of modesty, maybe Islamic Fashion is thus also, quite ironically, a way to claim back the exegesis of religious scriptures from a female point of view, a subtle way of revitalizing the faith by breaking with centuries of exclusively male, patriarchy-dominated exegesis.

7. Conclusion
To conclude, different readings are possible when engaging with value theory on Islamic Fashion. The most obvious reading would be to conclude along with Graeber or Carrette, that Islamic Fashion is just another usual case of commodification of religion and flamboyant reminder of the triumph of the market as the ultimate value. It appears though that such reading is too one-dimensional. Coming back to unsettled pluralism as conceptualized by Robbins, we have seen that pluralists argue that the pursuit of certain values implies clashing with a set of others. It seems that though external observers perceive this particular clash, wearers of Islamic Fashion conceptualize the values they pursue in a hybrid perspective: still, we can acknowledge the paramountcy of religion taking into account the fact that hijab functions first and foremost as a marker of religious piety and a visible Muslim sign of belonging.

Having said that, Robbins’ observation that “there is little sense in considering the ways new elements do more than find themselves absorbed by the traditional frameworks that encompass them”\textsuperscript{112} does not apply here given the fact that adepts of Cool Islam and Islamic Fashion are perceived as subverting the traditional values by the conservative Muslims and are criticized by liberals and feminists for betraying values of emancipation: the asserted agency is perceived as used for the reproduction of a traditional patriarchal system. Indeed, Islamic fashion and products of Cool Islam may be best understood as “hybrid (…) formations that result when individualist and holist values exist within the same culture”\textsuperscript{113}, the culture of Muslims in the West who, by being subject to two different spheres of influence as explained by Haddad, Smith and More, clearly experience the dichotomy between individualist and postmodern values of the society they live in and the holist traditional values tied to their roots.

Bringing an answer to the question asked earlier, the new practices inspired by the competing “modern” sphere and giving rise to instance of Cool Islam and Islamic Fashion are thus far from superficial. Bidar suggests that Islam in Europe will undergo changes resulting from the modern values of freedom of conscience and gender equality\textsuperscript{114}. The European hyper secular space would allow an evolution towards a non religious Islam due to the exposure of Muslim populations to modern humanist values
renewing the understanding of Islam as a religion, a synthesis of Islamic thought and humanist rational thinking\textsuperscript{115}. Though this is a very controversial thesis, it is easy to see how Cool Islam and the subversions it brings about could fit into this dialectic picture of “non-religious” Islam as it destabilizes, for instance, the usual understandings of the value of modesty and women’s place in society, de facto reinterpreting the usual traditional and often patriarchal understandings of Islamic practices. Furthermore, what is attacked as a form of normalization implicitly acknowledging a position of submission could also be viewed differently as emphasizing values of coexistence in diversity.

NOTES


This is reflected in messages such as “Keep smiling it’s Sunnah, Good Deeds Bad Deeds Al Qiyamah Coming Soon” as if it were a movie trailer, “Super Muslim” mimicking “Superman” or “Ramadan” with a figure throwing ‘ego’ away: these messages use the methods of advertising with humour and popular references. Other messages convey a range of values with more sobriety: Haqq (meaning truth in Arabic), Hubb (Love), Tawhid (oneness of God), Sabr (enduring capacity). These messages also reflecting the ideal ethics of Islam (Pras et Vaudour-Lagrace 2007). Visually speaking, some terms are incorporated in the form of Arabic calligraphy. For the full study refer to: Imène Ajala, 2018. “Muslim youth and consumerism: a study of Islamic street wear” Contemporary Islam 12(1), 2017, pp. 57-71.


29. Emma Tarlo *op. cit.*, p. 5.


42 Ibidem.

43 Elizabeth Bucar, “How Muslim Women Use Fashion to Exert Political Influence”, op. cit.

44 Sajida Sultana Alvi, Homa Hoodfar, and Sheila McDonough, op. cit, p. xiv.


50 Ibidem.

51 Ibidem.


56 Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, op. cit, p. 29.
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57 Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, “The True Clash of Civilizations”, Foreign Policy 135 (March-April), 2003, p. 64.

58 Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker op. cit, p. 20.


61 Ibid, p. 186.


63 David Graeber, op. cit., p. xi.


71 Ibid.


74 Ibid. p. 23.


76 Joel Robbins and Jukaa Siikala, “Hierarchy and Hybridity: Toward a Dumontian Approach to Contemporary Cultural Change” op. cit., p. 130.

77 Ibid.

78 Thomson Reuters, op. cit., p. 8.

79 Thomson Reuters, op. cit., p. 25.


85 Reina Lewis & Emma Tarlo, Modest Dressing, op. cit., p. 16.


87 Ibid.


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93 Tim Arango, Ceylan Yeginsu, and Safak Timur, “Turkey Fosters an Islamic Fashion Revolution.” *op. cit.*


101 Elizabeth Bucar. “How Muslim Women Use Fashion to Exert Political Influence”, *op. cit.*


106 Elizabeth Paton, “A Muslim Fashion Identity”, *op. cit.*


108 Vanessa Friedman, “From Breakthrough to Backlash”, *op. cit.*

110 Vanessa Friedman, “From Breakthrough to Backlash”. *op. cit.*

111 Elizabeth Bucar. “How Muslim Women Use Fashion to Exert Political Influence”, *op. cit.*


