

“For My Mum It Comes with the Culture”: Intergenerational Dynamics and Young Somali Women’s Interventions within Multicultural Debates in Britain

Giulia Liberatore

I. The Play

The *Muted Cry* was performed for the first time in October 2011 during the annual Somali Week Festival at Oxford House in East London to a large audience of mostly Somali women. Written by playwright, Abdirahman Yusuf Artan, the actors were predominantly young Somalis born or raised in the UK. The play features Hodan, a Somali teenager who is taken by her mother from London to Hargeysa on holiday, where she undergoes female genital mutilation (FGM). The play begins with her return to London, and as it unfolds, familial conflicts and disagreements are revealed. Hodan never appears on stage but her father, worried of tarnishing the reputation of the Somali community and the honor of his family, prefers to brush the incident under the carpet. The mother is informed by her son of the criminality of her act and the possibility of prosecution, but she remains unperturbed, concerned only about her daughter’s health. Meanwhile Hodan’s young cousins, and brother, angered and frustrated by these reactions, debate the religiosity of the practice and finally appeal to a Somali *Sheikh*, who appears on stage holding a Quran. The stage lights are dimmed and a spot light highlights his upper body as he informs the audience that FGM is a non-religious, cultural, and traditional practice: there is no Islamic evidence for the practice, except for a “weak *hadith*.” The *Sheikh* continues: “The way Somalis practice female circumcision... is traced back to ancient cultures and traditions, and religion is very much opposed to it.”

The play concludes with a call for the eradication of the practice, as illustrated in the following dialogue between the younger siblings and cousins:

Ali: “Youngsters... Are we crazy, or empty of any thought process, have we no shame... We, the educated, we, who claim to be modern and yet we have been convinced that some cultural and traditional practice... .”

Naima: “This method of female circumcision brings shame onto the culture and tradition of the Somalis, it is a stigma and black spot against the Islamic religion and it is damaging and traumatic for girls, it is unlawful and totally forbidden in Islam. Everyone else has progressed and is in the 21st century apart from us.”

Another youngster addresses the crowd with: “Who is pushing this practice in our community? Why won’t it stop?” To which Ali replies, “It is because of the lack of knowledge and the lack of power and connection of our community which is helping this practice. Look, none of us here support this practice, yet still it is going on...” (Artan 2011).¹

The play sends a clear message that FGM is a “cultural” practice that ought to be discarded because it contradicts “religious” practices and beliefs. It draws on an Islamic reformist discourse that advocates an “authentic” universal Islam, based on an absolute truth, and purified of cultural or traditional norms and practices (Jacobson 1998). Circumcision is thus cast as a negative cultural, ethnic, and traditional practice that religious knowledge should seek to eradicate.

Written and performed by young Somalis in English, the play also marks a clear generational divide. The mother is represented stereotypically as the carer of familial wellbeing, as well as emotionally vulnerable and easily persuaded by others, whereas the father is presented as authoritative and the defender of family honor. Both parents appear to adopt—what young Somalis describe as—a “cultural attitude” which involves uncritically performing and embodying traditional practices and characteristics. In the final scene described above, only the young, who considers themselves educated and modern, stand at the front and call for the eradication of the practice. Ali cries out to the young to reflect and act, instead of passively accepting the continuation of the practice, in order to avoid the errors of his parents’ generation. According to these young people, their parents are unable to effectively “pick and choose” which cultural practices ought to be discarded (e.g. FGM), and which ones are compatible with Islam and can be retained. They

call on all to scrutinize their actions and values in order to separate themselves from the practice; only reflection on these unconsciously adopted cultural elements, associated with the past, will enable them to progress into the future. The final dialogue reinforces the associations between religion, education, awareness, modernity, and future progress. The divisive character of the Somali community is cast as an impediment to progress, and religious knowledge as a means of uniting and enabling Somalis to collectively select amongst elements of their culture that do not conflict with religious textual knowledge. Islam is presented as embodying “modern” values, and, as I argue in what follows, as the solution to the “problems” of integration often projected onto minority groups in Britain.

This article elaborates on some the themes highlighted in the play. It first situates the argument within the literature on the Somali diaspora and among anthropological studies of Islam in Europe. It subsequently explores how the notion of “religion vs. culture” (*diin* vs. *dhaqan*) has played out across two generations of Somali women through contrasting attitudes towards seeking Islamic knowledge in London. It concludes that the younger generation employs this Islamic reformist discourse to separate themselves from their parents, but also to speak back to, and position themselves differently within, debates on multiculturalism in Britain. The discussion is based on ethnographic work conducted between 2009 and 2011 with 21 households in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, and Camden—areas of East and North London with large Somali populations. My approach entailed following the trajectories of two generations of women across the city rather than focusing on a particular area or neighborhood, enabling me to gain a textured understanding of their experiences in different contexts and spaces. In addition, I conducted over 30 life-history interviews with the older women, in order to gain an insight into changes that had occurred prior to and following migration abroad, and over 60 informal interviews with the younger women on their engagements with Islam in the UK.²

II. Religious Change in the Diaspora

Somalis have long been established in the UK, with the earliest migration dating back to the 19th Century when Somali men worked on British Merchant ships and settled in port cities across the UK (Kleist 2004). Most of the “first-generation” of women described in this article,

however, arrived throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s following Somali state collapse, and many were granted refugee and later citizenship status. Although a large number of earlier arrivals were educated women from urban areas, many have struggled to find employment that matches their qualifications in the UK and have worked in often low-paid jobs or been reliant on state support. Their children—who I refer to as “young Somalis”—constitute the one-and-half and second generations,³ and many hold degrees from British or European universities and aspire to improved economic opportunities and professional careers. Of particular interest to my work are a group of young women who have recently begun—in their words “practicing Islam”—engaging with Islamic reformist models of piety with the aim of applying them to the self (Mahmood 2005).

While scholars have investigated the religious experiences of the older generation of Somalis in the diaspora (Tiilikainen 2003; Berns-McGown 1999), the everyday experiences of piety among young Somalis, and the effects of this on intergenerational dynamics have not been analyzed in much depth. Rima Berns-McGown’s work (1999) provides one of the more detailed accounts of religious changes among Somalis in London and Toronto. She explores how, since migrating to the UK, Somalis have experienced an increased religiosity and a greater self-conscious adherence to Islamic practice. In her analysis, which is based predominantly on the accounts of first-generation Somali women,⁴ she explores the “mechanisms of integration” from the perspectives of the immigrant population and the political culture of the host society. She argues that the encounter with an individualistic, secular society has “forced” Somalis into a “crisis of identity.” Somalis have thus re-articulated, re-examined and, ultimately, strengthened their Muslim rather than their national or clan-based identities (Berns-McGown 1999: 97–100). They have also begun to separate religion from culture and to assert a Muslim identity in reaction to the rest of society:

Faced with a cultural challenge that prevented them from taking their culture for granted, they undertook to re-examine it. They then separated, in many cases, religion from cultural habit... and sought to understand more about their religion, precisely in order to define themselves in a part of the world where to be Muslim is to stand apart from most other parts of society (Berns-McGown 1999: 97).

While this analysis points to the older generation's attempts to separate religion from culture, and partly accounts for an increasing religiosity among Somalis in the diaspora, I suggest it unduly prioritizes the migration and integration processes as explanatory factors for these religious and cultural transformations. Much of the emphasis, therefore, is on processes of identification, and changes that result as a consequence of engagement with the host society. For example, in Berns-McGown's (1999: 97) account, Islam plays a functional role; it serves as an "anchor" for Somalis, providing "an oasis of tranquility amid the dislocation of refugee straits and the turmoil of adjusting to a new culture."

This emphasis on migration and integration not only downplays the extent to which changes amongst, particularly first-generation Somalis are the result of long-term historical factors originating prior to migration, but also limits an understanding of religion and religiosity to symbolic processes of identification and belonging. Engagements with Islam are presented as responses to experiences of estrangement in the host society, neglecting the more complex meanings and experiential dimensions of engaging with Islamic revivalist knowledge: the ways in which engagements with scriptures, debates and ethical practices are crucial to processes of ethical self-fashioning (Mahmood 2005; Fernando 2014).

Being Muslim involves, amongst other things, the implementation of embodied religious practices centered on the fashioning of a pious self through an active engagement with an internally dynamic Islamic discursive tradition (Asad 1986; Mahmood 2005), albeit one that is shaped and reconfigured in relation to other values, ideals, norms and practices. This approach, which draws on Foucault's later work on *The History of Sexuality* (1985) moves away from a focus on Islamic practices as signifiers and markers of identity, to an analysis of embodied religious practices as disciplines centered on realizing Islamic virtues and a connection with God.⁵ Theorizing religious changes as constitutive of processes of self-fashioning provides a more thorough account of the religious engagements in the diaspora. Rather than viewing these solely through the lens of identity and migration, or as "coping mechanisms" for displacement aboard, they are conceived as part of an active effort to engage with scriptures and debates that are fundamental to the shaping of the self (Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006). In this article I extend this argument further, to explore how these prac-

tices of piety are also intertwined with intergenerational dynamics, and with debates on Somalis and Muslims in Britain.

Throughout I treat culture, tradition and religion as a means of engaging with the world, and with others. I do not, for example, seek to delineate what constitutes Somali culture, or to treat this notion as a descriptive or analytical category. In so doing, I build on, but also depart from, some of the literature on Somalis in the diaspora, which has explored changing notions of culture and religion (Berns-McGown 1999; Hopkins 2010; Valentine et al. 2009). Rather than analyzing the meanings of religion and culture, I unpack the sorts of engagements individuals constitute *vis-à-vis* historically specific notions of culture and religion.⁶ Following Foucault (1985: 26–28) I focus on the “modes of subjectification,” or the ways in which individuals relate to the notions of religion and culture, and how these are made sense of and employed in processes of self-fashioning (see Liberatore 2013).

III. Somali Mosques

Over the last decade there has been a rise of mosques that are set up and managed predominantly by Somalis in London. Most of these institutions are attended by the first-generation and their young children, and often offer women-only classes, alongside lessons for children on Quranic recitation (*tajweed*), or the study of *hadith*. One of the first mosques to open in London was *Al-Huda* in Stepney Green, East London, which was supported by community funding initiatives. There are now a large number of Somali mosques spread across the UK most of which follow the *Sha’fi madhab* (school of jurisprudence). Many are not associated with a particular reformist movement, and include committee members from various schools of thought; some, however, have a reputation for following more literal or “Salafi” (e.g. Tottenham mosque) or “Sufi” traditions (e.g. Elephant & Castle mosque). Sheikh Mukhtar, a former mathematics teacher who was involved in setting up a new mosque in North London during my fieldwork, explained, “Most of these mosques were set up around a local need, to address gang violence... the problems faced by youth, and educational failures. Committees were largely made up of local people.” Like many other Somali mosques, his arose as a way of tackling Somali parents’ preoccupations with their children’s educational achievements, but also assuaging their fears that their children were losing their cultural and religious values.

The relatively recent rise of Somali mosques reflects the religious transformations experienced since the 1980s–1990s by the first generation of Somali women, both in the Horn of Africa and the diaspora. While most of the women I met in London had attended a local *madrassa* as children in urban areas of the Somali regions, and had learnt to recite the Quran, practice their daily prayers, and observe the fast during Ramadan, they had not been actively engaged in reading and studying Islamic texts. Furthermore, religion was not understood as separate from tradition and culture, but constituted a crucial part of these women’s lifeworlds and embodied ways of being (Kapteijns 2009: 119–120). Throughout the 1970s and 80s, during Siyaad Barre’s regime, however, religious practice, considered a part of traditional culture, came to be seen as “backwards” and incompatible with socialist modernity. Relatively few of the older women who had been raised in urban areas of the Somali regions had worn *hijab* at the time, with many covering their heads only after marriage.

Over the last 25–30 years, many Somali women have in contrast begun to actively read, engage with, and reason about Islamic scriptures, and acquire an awareness of the meanings of texts (Berns-McGown 1999; Tiilikainen 2003). They have started attending Quran classes in homes, community centers, Somali mosques, and in other institutions that run classes in Somali; many have begun emphasizing the importance of understanding the meaning of the texts, and reasoning about Islamic rules, obligations and requirements. Older Somali women living in London today, who twenty years earlier would not have concerned themselves with Islamic clothing, have now begun to don the *hijab*, *abaya* and *jilbaab* justifying it as a process of “religious awareness” (Talle 2008). As an older Somali woman in her 50s, who had grown up in Mogadishu but left in 1990 explained: “In Somalia I knew I was a Muslim, but I didn’t understand the meaning, and I didn’t understand the Quran. Before I thought that dress was [a matter of] culture, but here I have started understanding and realizing that the Quran says to veil. I now understand the meaning.” Since coming to the UK, she added, accessing the translation of the Quran in Somali, and attending lessons and talks, she has begun to reflect and mold her behavior in accordance with Islamic obligations grounded in the texts.

Many Somali women have begun to appropriate and apply the discourse of “religion vs. culture” drawn from within reformist teachings. Practices considered traditional and cultural have been separated out from religious ones, and in some cases critiqued for being “un-Islamic”;

Somali songs and dances, for example, have become a target of criticism by more religiously inclined Somalis. Despite these efforts, many continue to attend Somali mosques with their young children, thereby reinforcing the links between Somali values and Islam. When I asked *Sheikh* Mukhtar whether he saw this overlap of religion and culture as problematic, he replied: “Mothers say they want to transmit Somali culture, and a large part of that is about Islam. That’s ok for us, but ***we stay away from things like clan, war, tribal politics...” According to *Sheikh* Mukhtar, religion was part of being Somali, although certain Somali practices, such as clan politics, were incompatible with religion and ought to be discarded. As we shall see in the following section, younger Somalis criticize this approach, and stress a need for further differentiation between culture and religion.

IV. Mosque Hopping

Despite the changes experienced by the older generation, younger Somalis insist that their engagements with Islamic knowledge are radically different to those of their mothers. Layla, a young practicing Somali woman who I met early on in my fieldwork first started thinking critically about her faith and to practice more seriously in her early 20s. Like her other practicing friends, “seeking knowledge” was a crucial dimension to becoming more active in her faith, involving a range of practices from reading or listening to Islamic sources, to attending classes and lectures. However, she did not find the forms of learning in Somali mosques particularly engaging, or relevant to her life. Often delivered in Somali, Layla felt the language, style, and content did not suit her tastes. She also disagreed with what she regarded as “cultural modes” of relating to knowledge. Discussing the intentions and attitudes assumed by older Somali women towards religion, Layla pointed out that they focused excessively on the implementation of practices such as the *jilbaab*—an Islamic style of dress that covers the head and drapes over the chest—as a way of conforming to others’ judgments and behaviors. She explained: “Islam isn’t about restrictions, doing this, doing that, wearing *jilbaab*. It’s more about loving and connecting with God.” She also thought that the women in the mosque were “cliquey,” not welcoming to non-Somalis, and excessively preoccupied with cultural concerns; they spent too much time judging each other and discussing clan and family matters—all things Layla found irrelevant and distracting.

Rather than attending Somali mosques, young practicing women like Layla prefer to “hop around” the broad “field” of Islamic education (Bowen 2010: 108–109), with a diversity of Muslims of different ethnicities and in the company of like-minded friends (see Liberatore forthcoming b). They attend classes or lectures in independent institutes or mosques such as the East London mosque, Regent Park, or South Tottenham Mosque, experimenting with different traditions and schools of thought. Classes in these institutions are often delivered in English and aimed at younger Muslims; they are action-oriented with an emphasis on self-improvement and *da’wa* (spreading awareness). Like many of these young women, Islamic knowledge is often categorized through a “Salafi-Sufi continuum” (Jensen 2006) with many selecting knowledge from traditions of reform and schools of thought across this spectrum.

In their critiques of Somali mosques, younger Somalis also draw on the discourse of “religion vs. culture” and on the notion of an “authentic” religion purified of its cultural practices. Of course not all cultural practices are “bad,” some (e.g. food, language, and certain values such as hospitality and respect towards kin) are seen as compatible with religion and can be retained. Nonetheless, as we saw with the play, “bad practices” such as FGM are cast as “backwards”; religious knowledge provides a guiding framework informing their decisions to abandon or retain particular practices. What is at stake in these critiques, I suggest, is not only a process of discerning “un-Islamic” practices, but also a particular *attitude* which the older generations are thought to assume—one that lacks a critical and conscious awareness. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Liberatore forthcoming a) this discourse of “religion vs. culture” is used to denote a particular mode of engagement or subjectification (Foucault 1985: 26–28) towards religion and culture. A “cultural attitude” describes a way of acting that conforms to conventions rather than one that is informed by reason. The problem with attending Somali mosques, therefore, is not necessarily that they are run by and for Somalis, but that those who attend adopt a “cultural attitude,” and hence do so out of social obligation, rather than as a result of a reasoned understanding, and a desire to please God. Similarly, according to Layla, the adoption of Islamic clothing by the older generation is not performed as a means of engaging with God, but as an effort to conform and avoid being judged. Hamda, another young practicing Somali woman in her 20s, reiterated this critique, “I think for my mum and her generation it is sometimes a by-product of who

they are. It's a given. For my mum it comes with the culture." According to Hamda, her mother practiced not because she intellectually, critically, and spiritually engaged with knowledge, but because she had simply been encouraged to do so by her daughter and by other Somali friends or religious authoritative figures.

Hamda's criticism of her mother ignored the ways in which her mother's generation was also involved in processes of reform. As we have seen in the previous section, in contrast to claims by younger Somalis, the first-generation have also begun to engage critically with Islamic scriptures and reformist discourses. This notion of "religion vs. culture" as employed by the younger women, therefore, is not a reflection of generational differences, but rather a discursive strategy employed by these young women to differentiate themselves from their parents (Bolognani and Mellor 2012). As I show in the final section, it is also inseparable from these young women's engagements with public debates around the demise of multiculturalism.

V. Intervening Within the Multiculturalism Debates

Anne Phillips has argued that within multicultural legal and policy frameworks in the UK and Europe more broadly, minorities have often been represented as bounded communities defined through their cultural characteristics and juxtaposed to a liberal autonomous self (Phillips 2007). Multicultural frameworks, she maintains, have made recourse to culture as a way of referring to race, thereby reproducing fixity, defining groups in totalizing ways, seeing people as separate and different to the majority culture, and thus predicting the behavior of minority groups. For example, whole ranges of behaviors deemed unacceptable—such as FGM, as we also saw with the play—have been attributed to cultural characteristics. This deployment of culture has produced a "radical otherness," and has depicted minorities as incapacitated by culture and as lacking in autonomy (Phillips 2007). In the mid-2000s in the UK, as a consequence of various national and global events, these multicultural frameworks were extended to recognize religious differences, partly as a response to the political mobilization on the part of Muslim minority groups for greater recognition. This led to introduction of various practical and financial provisions for Muslims in Britain, but it also had the effect of reifying Muslims as a bounded community with distinct cultural characteristics. The incorporation of religious diversity within existing frameworks has

meant that religious communities (e.g. Muslims in the UK) are often treated in political and public discourse as a bounded community with a shared culture (Werbner 2009).

Furthermore, since 9/11 and the race-related riots in northern British towns in the summer of the same year, the UK has witnessed an attack against prevailing liberal ideologies that dominated policies in the 1970s (Grillo 2007). These critiques of the multicultural project have been voiced across the political spectrum, as state multiculturalism has been blamed for an increase in segregation and violence, the development of conflicting values, and a loss of national identity. As elsewhere in Europe, the demise of multiculturalism has become inseparable from the “problems” of Muslim communities. These groups have often been seen through the lens of “culture” as segregated, constrained by their “communitarian” attachments and by their values and ways of life, which are viewed as incompatible with British liberal values of equality, freedom, and choice.

Young Somali women’s practice of “hopping around” both appropriates and critically responds to these debates. These women’s criticisms of their parents’ generation draw on the notion of culture as bounded and determining, and the idea of a “cultural attitude” as predicated on an uncritical acceptance of inherited practices. As a consequence, their parents are viewed in opposition to a liberal autonomous self, and hence as different, poorly integrated, and segregated within their communities. In a discussion with Ifraax, a young pious Somali woman in her 20s, she emphasized the difference between herself and her mother’s generation: “A lot of our mothers have come from war-torn places, then had loads of kids, and have always been housewives, that’s the culture, the women are at home. They hang out with Somalis.” Drawing on mainstream debates around minorities, she presented the first-generation as embodying traditional values and gender roles in juxtaposition to liberal values of autonomy and gender equality appropriated by her own generation. As we saw in the play, young women criticize their parents for uncritically accepting cultural practices such as FGM, and hence blame them for presenting Somalis as traditional, illiberal, bounded by culture, and not fully integrated into British society. These young women redirect public critiques of multiculturalism at their parent’s generation and at their “cultural” mode of engagement with both culture and Islamic practice. While critics of multiculturalism assume that Muslims are segregated, what

is in fact to blame, young women argue, is an uncritical engagement with culture.

In contrast to these dominant debates, young Somali women separate religion from culture, stressing that their faith enables them to choose. Crucial to these young women's "hopping" around mosques is the importance of choice and movement; young practicing women select among a variety of available mosques, institutions, and different styles of teaching from across the city. Furthermore, these places of learning are not only attended by Somalis, but are ethnically diverse. A religious attitude, they claim, involves choice, as Islam is not bounded and determining but transcendent and transnational. It also enables them, in contrast to their parents, to "integrate" by engaging with people from a range of ethnic backgrounds across London.

This emphasis on reason and conscious engagement, however, must be seen as ultimately bound by Islamic structures of authority and modes of reasoning (Jouili and Amir-Moazami 2006). It is also forged through networks of like-minded friends who advise each other on where to go, and on what kind of knowledge is trustworthy and authoritative (Liberatore forthcoming b). Hopping is not a random process, but involves close monitoring among groups of pious friends—an aspect that is often missing from accounts of young Muslims in Europe and their individualized quests for knowledge. Recent sociological scholarship on Islam in Europe has argued that with growing fragmentation, objectification and pluralization of authorizing discourses and institutions, Islam has become increasingly individualized, and hence more European (Cesari 2003; Mandaville 2003). My work, however, shows how "mosque hopping" and personal choice are not disembodied from authorizing discourses, Islamic structures of authority, or networks of pious friendships. Knowledge is a condition for becoming pious, and engagement with knowledge is both deliberative and disciplinary (Hirschkind 2006). Processes of individualization are, thus, modes of subjectification that should not be divorced from institutionalized Islam (Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003).

VI. Conclusion

This article has explored the ways in which young Somali women have engaged with reformist discourses alongside dominant tropes on multiculturalism and diversity in Britain. In so doing, they have presented themselves as pious, modern, educated, and integrated sub-

jects. Unlike their mothers, young women insist that they can “pick and choose” among different mosques and places of learning, but also within and among aspects of culture. They can abstract themselves from a particular context and constitute—what Wendy Brown (2006) in a discussion of liberalism has termed—an “optional” relationship to both culture and religion (see Liberatore forthcoming a). As a result, culture is reduced to a set of values, practices, objects, and attitudes, while religious knowledge is prioritized and has come to provide a moral framework informing the process of selection among a set of cultural elements. These young women’s engagements with Islamic knowledge involve a critical, willing, and informed attitude, yet one that is bound by structures of Islamic authority. Hopping around mosques demonstrates how they, unlike their mothers, occupy diverse spaces, and fully participate in a multicultural society.

At the same time, in presenting themselves in these ways, young women redirect public critiques of Islam at their parents’ generation, presenting them as “segregated” by drawing on discourses that equate ethnicity, culture, and community and view culture as an imprisoning and determining force (Baumann 1996; Phillips 2007). These efforts to differentiate themselves from the first generation, I suggest, develop in reaction to contemporary debates that have perpetuated notions of minority cultures and religions as segregated and different. As we saw in *The Muted Cry*, the older generations are presented as unenlightened and not integrated into British society; they are ultimately blamed for their own cultural stigmatization. By differentiating themselves in these ways, young Somalis reinforce bounded and reified notions of culture, while also challenging the ways in which Islam is positioned within debates and policy frameworks on multiculturalism in Britain.

As a result of these tensions, debates between the two generations over the meanings of Somaliness, Somali culture, and Islam are a relatively frequent occurrence. At the same time, as I have shown in this article generational differences and conflicts should not be overstated. There has been a tendency in the literature on the Islamic reform to portray young Muslims as engaged in a reflexive, self-conscious, and rational form of Islam, as opposed to their parents who are bound by a non-reflexive, embodied engagement with knowledge (Jouili and Amir-Moazami 2006). This juxtaposing, however, does not fully capture the experiences of first-generation Somali women. Generational differences, as we have seen, are not so clear-cut, and first-generation Somali women are similarly engaged in processes of reform. Religious

change does not occur in linear and coherent ways, but is fragmentary and recursive in nature.

Giulia Liberatore is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), and Junior Research Fellow at Linacre College, University of Oxford. The author may be contacted at giulia.liberatore@compas.ox.ac.uk.

Notes

1. The play was based on testimonies gathered through a community project on FGM and formed part of the Special Initiative campaign to raise awareness of the practice (see also Liberatore 2014).
2. Identities and names of people and places have been altered in order to protect the anonymity of the individuals concerned. While my work focused mostly on women for reasons of access, young men are also undergoing similar changes.
3. I avoid the term “second-generation Somali” for it defines these young people as migrants and ties them to their place of origin. In contrast, many young Somalis have British citizenship, and consider themselves British, British Somali or British Muslim.
4. Berns-McGown’s (1999) book also includes a discussion of young Somali adolescents and intergenerational conflicts. Because it was written over 15 years ago, however, it does not include the experiences of young adults born or raised in the diaspora.
5. See Fernando (2014), Jouili (2015), and Jacobsen (2010) for a similar approach to the study of Muslim piety in Europe.
6. I follow recent work in Somali Studies that has pointed to the ways in which the notion of an authentic Somali culture or tradition is historically constituted (Kapteijns and Omar 1999; Ahmed 1995).

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