

## Conclusion

I said in my introduction that I am not interested in fastening this study to current events, which, admittedly, may appear to be a decision born of diffidence, or worse, of insularity and intellectual cowardice. On the other hand, this study is an affirmation of narrative and its ubiquity. It is an affirmation of texts and textuality in a time in which inconsequential persons can catapult themselves into the world limelight by threatening to burn books. Islamic civilization and culture is an organism, an ecosystem rather, that emerges from a wide body of texts, including literary ones, as well as from a wide body of cultures, ideological perspectives, and political camps. And while this study has proceeded from attention to particular texts and particular experiences in this ecosystem, I must underscore the necessarily global dimensions of any critical discussion of Islam.

The narrative of Islam has a lot to gain from attention to its African selves, and I remain optimistic about the power of novels to this end. Nuruddin Farah, Abdulrazak Gurnah, and M. G. Vassanji's novels demonstrate, with rigor and artistic sensitivity, what might only seem banally obvious—that Islam is many things. It is a part of modernity; it moves in and out of the life of states; it is a point of linkage between cultural ports; it has a unique relationship to Arabic and Arabs, but it does not belong to them; it is a source of spiritual nourishment as well as a political language. Islam is also a great source of literature and writing. The fiction of the three novelists that form the center of this study demonstrates how attention to Islam can have productively transformative consequences for postcolonial studies and its imperatives in a particular African context. The state, transcultural consciousness, and writing itself are not novelties in eastern Africa, something that became obvious to me only after I had read these novels. These texts disrupt some of the smugness that has arisen around postcolonial scholarship in unique ways. These fictions are important because, as they enter and reenter the African “canon” through different doors, they contribute to the completion of the idea of Africa, to the way it is imagined.