

Review of Jeanette Jouili, *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in Europe*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press 2015, xiii + 258 pp., ISBN: 9780804794664

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This book by Jeannette Jouili, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, is the result of her fieldwork in France and Germany, in which she investigated the ways in which young pious Muslim women grapple with religious expression. Jouili describes her main task to closely examine the everyday struggles of pious Muslim women in their quest to live according to their religious principles within European secular societies. Her focus is twofold: Jouili first explores how young European-born Muslim women cultivate orthodox Islamic subjectivities. Secondly, she investigates how these women cope with the everyday difficulties of living a religious life in societies that increasingly stigmatise and politicise Islamic orthodox practices, and are ever more hostile to visible forms of Islamic piety more generally (2015: 3).

The insight that Jouili develops at this intersection of Islamic female piety and society, is the ethical-political commitment young Muslim women point to. This ethical-political commitment considers individual striving for pious self-cultivation as intrinsically connected to a web of social and interpersonal relations. Islamic female self-cultivation may therefore have, in turn, important ethical-political implications (2015: 3–4). Jouili builds upon the work of poststructuralist thinkers on Islamic ethics, such as Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood and Charles Hirschkind, and relies on Aristotelian ethical concepts to theorise women's intersubjective and relational moral reasonings (2015: 14–22). Jouili's main argument is that the complicated and restrictive French and German settings not just hamper, restrict or weaken female Muslim piety, but rather 'produce experiences of ambiguity, suffering and injustice, thereby simultaneously creating conditions for the intensifications of ethical labour' (2015: 4). As such, her work contributes to and furthers the anthropology of Islam, and the study of gender, power and ethics.

The book is organised into two parts according to Jouili's twofold research focus. Chapters 2–4 discuss young Muslim women's techniques for pious self-cultivation. They cover Islamic learning as the basic technique for cultivating an Islamic habitus, the mastery of ritual prayers and the implementation of female modesty through dress and conduct, and the production of an Islamic language

for women's dignity and self-realisation as an alternative to dominant secular language of equality, rights and autonomy. Chapters 5–7 then move to centring the dilemmas women are confronted with when desiring to become and be a virtuous Islamic subject in a non-Muslim society, including a secular state that seeks to regulate Islamic practices. They discuss women's dilemma of combining professional life and motherhood, their everyday negotiation of Islamic practices, and their potential reformulation of notions of citizenship and civic virtues. Theoretically, Jouili argues consistently that both Islamic self-cultivation and everyday practices appear non-linear and never-completed, and that the set of moral codes that inspire them is plurivocal. Her Aristotelian-Bourdieuian analytical reading helps to expose how onerous any willed self-transformation necessarily is.

After having outlined the different French and German political-social settings, and the specific urban and institutional contexts of the fieldwork (institutions in Paris and Cologne that aim at forging an orthodox French or German Islam), Jouili, in Chapter 2, focuses on new kinds of Islamic learning experiences and pedagogical approaches that have been instituted in the European Islamic revival structures. Analysing the 'learning stories' of her interlocutors (2015: 30), Jouili reveals the ways in which notions of Islamic knowledge are rearticulated through modern ideas about selfhood. She moreover explores how Islamic learning is expected to convey not just cognitive knowledge but also emotional experiences. Chapter 3 then examines women's difficulties, impediments, and non-linear developments in their efforts to realise a pious self. Jouili investigates here 'accounts of self-cultivation' by focusing on ritual prayer and female modesty as bodily and discursive practices. She demonstrates that women's process of learning Islamic conduct and practice includes reasoning, reflecting, questioning and justifying their own approaches, taking into account the advice from teachers, and the repetitive enactment of prayer and modesty. Chapter 4 examines pious women's stances regarding gender issues. Jouili discusses here the complex connections she sees between the women's desire for virtue and piety, and their understandings of female empowerment and gender relations. The chapter shifts from ethics as self-cultivation to a notion of social ethics (2015: 114) as obligation, responsibility, and care. This shift in focus to social ethics is furthered in the book's second section.

Chapter 5 explores the potential conflict embedded in the twofold definition of women's roles in contemporary Islamic discourse in Europe: as service to the family and to the broader society. Such an understanding necessitates pragmatic negotiations of professional life and motherhood, but also yields deep moral dilemmas that result in a highly ambivalent ethical project. Jouili argues that this ethical project based on an 'ethics of care' is not just challenged or contradicted by potentially conflicting desires. Rather, it is rendered more complicated and complex, and may in turn also be nourished by divergent desires (2015: 142). The main concern of Chapter 6 is to investigate how pious women inhabit on an everyday basis the often hostile spaces of French and German societies. Again focusing on prayer and modesty, Jouili looks into how Islamic practices get entangled in considerations about representation and recognition, which leads her to analyse everyday struggles as a complex interlacing of self-cultivation and (re)signification practices. Following anthropologists of ethics, she approaches the results as 'ordinary ethics' that emphasises the intersubjective character of ethical action (2015: 155). In Chapter 7, Jouili probes her research

findings for their potential to contribute to contemporary discussions about civic virtues in Western pluralist contexts. Here, Jouili argues that Islamic ethical traditions may challenge dominant secular assumptions about citizenship ethics that exclude religious perspectives. Her ethnographic material provides insights into how citizens can indeed be informed by particular religious ethics in their understanding of the common good and social justice (2015: 192–199).

To conclude, *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints* engages with various academic disciplines and theoretical approaches. The book critically combines the anthropology of Islam with Aristotelian ethical thinking, but also speaks to and with ongoing discussions in gender studies, political philosophy, and religious studies. In order to study European-born Muslim women's trajectories of self-cultivation, Jouili builds an innovative and sophisticated analytical framework that, I believe, suits the study of Muslims in European contexts. Refusing, for example, a sole focus on the cultivation of piety as generated by Islamic tradition, Jouili talks about how her interlocutors addressed liberal and feminist public discourses head on, in terms of piety as well as in terms of a different kind of empowerment. Instead of regarding Islamic and liberal or feminist discourse as irreconcilably different, she demonstrates how these discourses get imbricated in the lives of Muslim women to the point that they can indeed be traced, but not disentangled. At the same time, she does not neglect other societal contexts of power and also shows how pious women contribute to the reformulation of Islamic faith and practice on the basis of various impulses, not least the pressure and hostility on the part of the non-Muslim majority. Jouili's study greatly contributes to theoretical discussions, and offers rich empirical research findings. The book is therefore an important reading for all those interested in the interdisciplinary field of the study of Islam, women, feminism, race/ethnicity and Islamophobia.