

Ewa Łukaszyk

Faculty "Artes Liberales"  
University of Warsaw

## Travelling away from the "artsy post-modern lefty-pinko university". Noor's Transcultural Experience and the Duties of the Intellectual

### Abstract

The volume *Qur'an and cricket* consists of several travelogues produced by a Malay intellectual, Farish A. Noor, during his trips to the most problematic places of the world, marked by the contemporary "battles of God". This book is interpreted in terms of a quest for transcultural condition understood as a dimension of experience transcending the multiplicity of cultural orders in dissent.

Noor sketches his own definition of the intellectual, contrasted in this article with the visions given by Gramsci, Adorno and Said. The subject of the transcultural condition is defined as "itinerant scholar" transgressing the limitations of the academia by his nomadic immersion in the world. The attitude of the traveller is marked by openness and readiness to listen, even if he is confronted to irrational mumbling. Precisely the mumbling of anger and hate becomes the most difficult challenge to the intellectual unable to deal with it rationally. The only remaining answer is a sheer presence and love, emotional attachment to the world, as the scholar rejects the temptation of the ivory tower that would isolate him from the otherness. The modality of speech that opposes the hateful mumbling isn't based on clear, persuasive argumentation, but on ironic ambivalence conjugated with directness and the rejection of euphemism. Most importantly, the "itinerant scholar" is not a preacher.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL License ([creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/)), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s), 2014

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Editor in chief: Jolanta Sujecka

Conception and academic editing of this issue: Maciej Falski

In opposition to the leftist tradition of defining the intellectual as a secular figure, the “itinerant scholar” remains deeply immersed in religion. The challenge of building up the transcultural dimension is connected to the necessity of finding a place for the authentic religious experience in times of “battles of God”.

**Key words:** Farish Noor; transcultural; religious conflicts; travel

## I.

*Qur'an and cricket. Travels through the madrasahs of Asia and other stories* is a volume of essays written between 2002 and 2009 by Farish A. Noor, a Malay intellectual and, at that time, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at Freie Universität in Berlin. Those years of travel, that led him to some of the most problematic points of the contemporary world, such as, among others, Zanzibar, the Libyan desert, Kashmir and Pakistan, coincided with the period when the map of the world, defined by the post-11th September state of mind, might appear to many as a contrastive pattern composed of patches of light and darkness. During the war against terrorism, the alliances tended to be clear and univalent. But, according to Noor's working hypothesis, the obviousness of the distinction between light and darkness can be sustained only as long as one stays in one's study. Proposing himself to give a live account of “a multiplicity of Pakistanis,” he had to challenge, first of all, the certitudes of the academic “security experts,” not so keen to know about the other side's stories.

Travelling, including a daring journey into the heart of darkness, exposes the inextricable complexities of the world. This is precisely the reason why the search for the direct experience of the world becomes a duty of the thinker who refuses to remain inside the ivory tower, which Noor sarcastically calls “some newfangled artsy post-modern lefty-pinko university like mine” (Noor 2009: 25). In a short autobiographical sketch preceding the travelogues, Noor gives a personal testimony, associating the progress of his intellectual evolution with the inevitability of travel:

Over the years my background in philosophy and literature served as the springboard for a move to politics, history and comparative area studies. Whether it was fate or chance that guided the steps I took I know not, but in the end my choice of research placed me in a situation where travel would be the order of the day; and where the nomadic life became my own (Noor 2009: 13).

The figure that he calls “itinerant scholar” imperceptibly becomes a personal ideal and an aspiration, helping to shape a new concept. Initially, the role impersonated by Noor could roughly correspond to the figure of the

“organic intellectual” emerging from Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. He has been involved in the democratization of the Malaysian society, writing for newspapers and independent websites such as [malaysiakini.com](http://malaysiakini.com)<sup>1</sup>, trying to persuade, change people's minds, shape opinions. Nonetheless, he did not incarnate exactly the Gramscian paradigm and, as it seems, the disturbing element that forced him to seek a new conceptualization of the intellectual's function appeared with his wanderings and his acute consciousness of the necessity of direct confrontation of the intellectual with reality.

Even if, initially, he was one of the well-intentioned academic activists travelling “as part of the project to preach the values of universal rights and gender equality” (Noor 2009: 19), he quickly realized the limitations implied by the role of a missionary among other missionaries that sell the truths of which they are certain and wage the “battle of Light and Darkness” (Noor 2009: 20). For sure, Noor's itinerant scholar is no longer a voice of a class, a social group or any other defined identity. Progressively, he becomes a mediating figure of “in-betweenness”. But his final option transcends this position, going beyond such simple neutrality at the margin of the conflict, concerned with keeping an equal distance from each of the parties. As the itinerant scholar focuses more and more on learning from others rather than preaching to them, he engages in a quest for a new dimension which would permit him not only to transcend the cultural and religious dissent, but also to reach an affective identification with the world. The stake in his travels is a transcultural experience: transgressing cultural limitations that condemn each of us to partial blindness.

## II.

Apparently, the sphere of transcultural experience is out of human range. Our mental world resembles a *cloisonné*, an ancient technique of decorating metal objects that consists in soldering to their surface silver or golden wires in order to form minuscule compartments that are filled with vitreous enamel. Each human being remains immersed in a single culture, even if accidents of biography may expose him or her to forces that, especially in the globalized world, tend to liquefy and merge identities together. Nonetheless, the proliferation of hybrids does not destroy the

---

<sup>1</sup> [Malaysiakini.com](http://Malaysiakini.com) (English: “Malaysia Today”), created in 1999, is a political online newspaper published in English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. Due to the liberal policy of Malaysian government concerning the question of censorship in the Internet, this website covers many topics that remain taboo for the print media and is considered as the most important non-government and pro-opposition news agency in Malaysia. Nonetheless, some of Noor's interventions in [malaysiakini.com](http://malaysiakini.com) have been collected and published in volumes (cf. e. g. Noor 2002).

general cloisonné pattern of human cultures. In spite of crossing some frontiers, an individual remains inscribed in the boundaries of the human condition, which is essentially a cultured one.

Seemingly, nobody lives outside or above his or her own culture. Nonetheless, the aspiration of transcending cultural limitations in order to gain a unique insight into the spheres of human experience, that usually remain inaccessible for most of us as we are closed behind our own cultural filters, is an important challenge, specially for an intellectual.

The particular function and duty of the intellectual, as Edward Said stated it, is inextricably related to alterity and exteriority. It consists in representing the other and making the voice of the otherness audible in the dominating discourse. This is why the intellectual destiny is that of eternal minority. Said prizes the “exilic” intellectual, associating this figure with audacity, daring and change. His condition of marginality frees him from “having always to proceed with caution, afraid to overturn the appercart, anxious about upsetting fellow members of the same corporation” (Said 1994: 47). Noor's departure for Pakistan, causing consternation among his colleagues, undoubtedly wins him the Saidian epithet of “exilic” thinker, striving to introduce the unheard voices into the dominating sphere, against the unwillingness of those impersonating the system: “My academic colleagues were not too keen on me going to these places, much less live there for whatever reason” (Noor 2009: 33), he confesses. Nonetheless, the itinerant scholar follows the precepts listed by Adorno who, in *Minima moralia*, stated that dwelling had become impossible. Through rejection of the residence and comfort he could find inside the academic institution, in order to claim the uncommitted, suspended existence of a nomad, he is fulfilling one of the basic duties of the intellectual (cf. Adorno 1951: 38).

Nonetheless, the temptation of exile is counterbalanced by a profound nostalgia for communitarian life. In a short commentary published recently in the on-line edition of the journal “Malaysian Insider,” Noor has confessed: “I have, since the age of 18, lived the life of a minority. In England, France, Holland, Germany and now in Singapore, I have always been counted as one among the minority groups. I was either of a minority ethnic background or religion, or both” (Noor 2013). But this consciousness makes him remember, with a certain nostalgia, his Malaysian school-times, when he, as well as other children, was drilled to sing the national anthem “Negaraku” during the daily morning assemblies as the national flag was raised. Such rites and rituals inscribe the individual into a dimension of belonging, drawing, at the same time, boundaries and placing the rest of humanity outside the frontiers of community.

At the same time, it is precisely the Malaysian example that shows very well how fragile the communitarian feeling may actually be and how powerful is the underlying condition of the eternal minority. Even if Noor records how powerful was the "common sense of Malaysianness" uniting him with the other schoolboys at St John's – a Jesuit institution – in the 1970s and 1980s, the Malaysian cultural circumstances constantly split apart all communities and associations. The gregarious impulse of mutuality is counterbalanced by the latent disparity of origins. A testimony on the "old Malaysia" given by Dawn Morais helps the European reader to realize what multiculturalism may really be "in an emerging plural society, where the language spoken at home was still mainly Malay, Cantonese or Hokkien, Tamil or Malayalam" (Morais 2010: 89). Presenting the life of her own father, a journalist concerned with the construction of the national identity in the early post-colonial period, she sketches a landscape of constant cultural ruptures, accretions and adaptations:

Morais knew what it was like to be at the confluence of several cultural streams. The name "Morais" is Portuguese, as is my mother's family name, "Vaz." The family believes that those names were acquired with conversion to Catholicism during Portugal's nearly five hundred year control of neighbouring Goa. [...] My father's biographies and memoirs record that process of negotiation. In venturing beyond the Kerala coastline, he and others like him took with them a tradition of dealing with foreign cultures, and making them their own. A critical part of that tradition was an emphasis on literacy and education (Morais 2010: 87).

If there is any common background of "Malaysianness," it could possibly be conceived as this kind of coastline and sea-born identity, defined by constant dealing with otherness. At the same time, as the example of this Goan Malaysian patriot shows, the "Malaysianness" seems to be something situated beyond the autochthonous condition or the accident of a given birthplace. The "Malaysianness" could be defined as a particular case of in-betweenness, an inborn position at the cross-section of cultural systems. One could venture that any Malaysian biography is quite naturally a multiple one. This essential multiplicity of life finds its fulfilment, as it seems, in the double experience of travel and education, which is essentially just another kind of experience of penetrating into the world inhabited by others. A Malaysian intellectual traveller, as I suppose for this essay, must be indeed an example of a unique cultural case and condition. Already at the starting point, the characteristics of his or her particular cultural background bring such an individual closer to my hypothetical transcultural condition, the dimension I'm trying to find in Noor's travelogues.

### III.

Undoubtedly, Noor's multiple biography gives him an excellent starting point. As a Malay scholar established in Europe, educated in British institutions such as the University of Sussex and the famous SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) in London, where he received his MA in South-East Asian Studies before completing his Ph.D. in governance and politics at the University of Essex, he gains a deep insight into more than one intellectual tradition. He has gained competence to address successfully the Western public; on the other hand, he is also able to talk as a Muslim among the Muslims.

Nonetheless, his wanderings confront him with a reality that surpasses him. Leaving behind his "artsy post-modern university," he enters the world of Ustaz Mwalongo, a product of traditional religious education, who receives him with a smile "so sweet that his chubby cheeks make [him] think of hot chocolate laced with cinnamon" (Noor 2009: 25) before passing to a session of Qur'anic exegesis. But the worse is to come on the morrow, as nothing could possibly have prepared the itinerant scholar for the discussion with a young Tanzanian imam who complains that the Christian missionaries surreptitiously produce and sell mats for the mosques, covering them with tiny crosses: "I look at the prayer mats closely, and you know what I see? I see crosses everywhere. Here, there, crosses and crosses everywhere. This is what they want, so that when we pray our heads will touch their crosses!", bitterly claims the angry imam (Noor 2009: 26).

According to the Saidian definition of the intellectual's function, the crucial duty consists in bringing the marginalized voices into the sphere of the dominating discourse, making them audible in the name of higher ethical values. The intellectual is "an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public" (Said 1994: 9). This is a clear, apparently handy definition. But what to do if the voice of the other sounds to the intellectual's ear as nothing more than mumbling? Where is the message, the philosophy, the opinion in the gibberish of the angry imam?

Nonetheless, the Tanzanian imam and his problems undoubtedly belong to the Saidian category of "people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug" (Said 1994: 9). His anger, expressed by a mere torrent of nonsense, probably has its own logic and reasons. His fear concerning the crosses on the prayer mat reflects in a distorted and paranoid way quite well founded anxieties of neo-colonial exploitation of a country transformed into a tourist paradise, offering no resistance to external influence and affluence. But Noor hardly tries to explain all this to

the external public, concentrated rather on reporting quite faithfully the drivel of his interlocutors.

Paradoxically, this experience of listening to the angry mumbling becomes perhaps one of the crucial steps in the spiritual quest of the itinerant scholar. One of the organic intellectual's illusions might be rooted in the ancient mistake of Averroes, who believed in the existence of a universal intellect that forms a common platform, enabling humans to rely on argumentation in a discussion transcending the difference of cultural or religious backgrounds. Universality of reason should make it possible to argue, to mediate and to convince. But the Tanzanian adventure makes the itinerant scholar rather sceptical about the possibility of appealing to such a sphere of rationality. As he supposes that the Christians must think as well "that there are crescents surreptitiously smuggled into their Bibles" (Noor 2009: 27), a universalism of irrationality seems to be closer at hand.

The image of the intellectual often resembles that of Orpheus supposed to produce some marvellously sophisticated music to pacify the beasts. But the confrontation with the world proves that the intellectual has no Orphic powers. The conclusion of his helplessness is close at hand; if he cannot sing the song that disarms hate, let him rather remain silent or seek refuge in the ivory tower. The inglorious return of Noor from Stonetown on Zanzibar could seem just a repetition of Plato's Syracusan adventure, where he failed to convert the tyrant Dionysus to his own philosophical faith. But the itinerant scholar refuses to leave. "Suddenly the thought comes to me: I love this country," he concludes (Noor 2009: 31)<sup>2</sup>. When the intellectual travels away from the "artsy post-modern university," the conclusion of the journey is never of an intellectual kind. Neither it is ethical, as he no longer tries to establish the distinction between the good and the evil. The only positive outcome lies in the domain of the affects. This emotional confession supplements the missing intellectual and ethical solution.

The essential in-betweenness of the Malaysian identity and Noor's own double biography could become a cursed blessing, according to the warning that Said discovers reading Adorno: "the state of in-betweenness can itself become a rigid ideological position, a sort of dwelling whose falseness is covered over in time, and to which one can all too easily become accustomed" (Said 1994: 43). The necessity of transcending the in-betweenness becomes thus a constant challenge. Conceptualized by Adorno and Said as a road of eternal exile, it becomes for Noor the condition of the nomad who inhabits all places and, rather than seeking distance and detachment, becomes

<sup>2</sup> Similar formulas of affect and identification are repeated on the occasion of other journeys, together with statements recognizing that the itinerant scholar is weighed down by the burden of responsibility concerning each of the places he visits (cf. Noor 2009: 41, 64, and other).

emotionally involved with them. The paradoxical nature of this nomadic act of inhabiting, its virtual character, establishes a special, non-invading modality of coexistence.

As Peter Sloterdijk states, “every act of solidarity is an act of sphere formation, that is to say the creation of an interior” (Sloterdijk 2011: 12). Even if Noor does not manage to convince or explain anything to the inhabitants of Stonetown, his sheer presence becomes such an act of solidarity, a mark of unforgetfulness of the intellectual. Sloterdijk accentuates the importance of the spatial experience, the crucial function of such “primary movements onto remote locations”. The “interior” in the Sloterdijkian terminology is precisely the incipience of the new dimension, creating a potentially expanding sphere of transcultural experience. Its emergence is provoked by the gratuitous affect of the itinerant scholar, who, against the odds, discovers his love for “the country”. The mental occupation of this particular location establishes the “primary movement” that transcends the cloisonné structure of the cultural world. “Being there,” a sheer physical presence of the thinker *in situ* marks a turning point in the process of re-conceptualization of the reality.

No wonder that the bitterest part of his experience is the moment when he feels reduced to the status of foreigner that he rejects. Such moments of falling apart from the place and the local community are always dictated by some exterior force that steals him a country he identifies with. At the end of his journey to Pakistan, he confesses: “Yet it is not my home and never shall I be part of it”. But this feeling of non-belonging is entirely due to trans-historical imperial presence: “And all of us – kings and beggars and errant scholars alike – are caught in its suffocating grip” (Noor 2009: 64).

#### IV.

If the cultural dimension of the human condition seems to be given, nearly inborn in all of us, the transcultural dimension remains hypothetical; it exists as a challenge and a potentiality that probably can be facilitated by some lucky conditions of one's cultural background or multiplicity of one's own biography, but still it should be constructed, laboriously, by the individual. If culture and education is received as a gift of others, the transcultural experience that consists in transcending the cultural limitations, paradoxically acquired through education, is essentially an individual, perhaps even a non-transferable achievement.

If Noor achieves the transcultural condition or state of mind, he hardly offers any discursive account of it. Language and discourse remain circumscribed in culture. Transcultural experience, like mystical insight,

cannot be transformed into narration, much less into argumentation. Nonetheless, Noor writes about his travels and obviously it means he managed to evade somehow the problem of the non-describable character of his experience. Thus, he deals successfully with a double problem of language: the inarticulacy of the message transmitted by the other and the "unspeakable" character of his own experience.

The silence inherent in the transcultural dimension, as evolving in a sphere located beyond language, is bypassed, due to the constant recourse to particular rhetorical strategies. His use of ellipsis and irony is constant. Noor frequently overturns the perspectives. His travelogues are written in a direct, daring style that becomes in some moments quite strong of flavour. Undoubtedly, one of his aims is to avoid any temptation of euphemism. Noor's daring plume doesn't retreat even before scabrous or shocking realities, such as the sudden presence of a hand "groping southwards" in his sarong or a lesson on how to distinguish between a Russian-made Kalashnikov and a Chinese one that was imparted to him (Noor 2009: 14-15, 48). But once again, the Saidian description fits him very well: "The intellectual in exile is necessarily ironic, sceptical, even playful – but not cynical" (Said 1994: 45).

The realities Noor proposes to describe and to bring into the consciousness of the global reader are particularly dismal. After the visit to the Kachageri camp, created to lodge the Afghan refugees after the Soviet invasion, he notes:

They say there are eighty thousand refugees in this camp, yet I see only one working tap that spits out brownish water. The 'river' nearby seems to be the only other source of water, and one can smell the garbage and sewage from a kilometre away. While talking to the refugees I accept their offer of *kava* tea, and for the next few days I lie in bed with food poisoning as a result (Noor 2009: 49).

A playful tone might seem quite inappropriate to deal with such circumstances. Nonetheless, Noor's style is purposefully rich in allusions to popular culture, like in this passage describing the atmosphere in the US-controlled Pakistan: "Concentric ripples wave across the surface of my tea cup, like in that scene in Jurassic Park when the dinosaur is about to have the team of scientists for breakfast" (Noor 2009: 71). Or again, taking another cup of tea in Uttar Pradesh, he reports: "We saunter into Kareem's dimly lit grotto that looks like a set-piece from the Tatooine in *Star Wars*" (Noor 2009: 85).

Reporting these battles for God may be seen as a particularly ungrateful task. How could the intellectual be playful on such an occasion? On the

other hand, the tragic seriousness with which these are waged may create the temptation of opposing them with irony. Over and over again, the intellectual crashes against the invincible human silliness that only humour may disarm. On the other hand, we should talk about transcultural irony as a specific mode of expression for a condition that could otherwise be doomed to silence. The itinerant scholar must become an ironist to spice up the essential bitterness of his experience and perhaps also a sense of shame that accompanies him in his wanderings:

Walking around the camp and talking to its hapless denizens I once again feel like an intrusive outsider burdened by my own privileges and status as a foreigner. In the following week I will be on a plane to Berlin, and then to Paris, where I will work as a visiting professor. But for the children of Kachageri camp, such an option simply does not exist: sooner or later the bulldozers will come to their doorsteps, and they will be packed on board trucks to be sent on a journey home to a land devastated by nearly three decades of incessant warfare (Noor 2009: 51).

## V.

Who thus is the itinerant scholar? A jester endowed with the unique privilege of talking truth to power? Or is there rather a background of seriousness behind the apparent frivolity of his tone? For sure he aspires neither to the status of the conscience of mankind nor to that of a philosopher-king. The jester speaks in earnest in quite another sense. Against all the tragedies caused by the battles for God, he speaks from a religious standpoint.

The figure of the itinerant scholar, even if Noor inscribes it into the conditions of the contemporary world, is inspired by the pre-colonial history of South-East Asia: “For years I have been studying the networks of itinerant scholars who travelled across the world in search of knowledge, and with the passing of time the analyst became one with his subject” (Noor 2009: 82), he confesses. Contrary to the leftist tradition of defining the intellectual’s secular ethos, Noor rebuilds the figure of the scholar as a religious man, associating all the characteristics of the Western liberal thinker with a spiritual depth rooted in an ancient, and perhaps reinvented, Islamic tradition.

The intellectual destiny, as defined in the poem “The Nomad’s Prayer” opening the volume of Noor’s essays, forms a paradoxical fusion of wandering and dwelling: “God, take me home. And let my home be everywhere” (Noor 2009: 9). Over the pages of his travelogues, the author remains rather discreet as to his own faith. Nonetheless, the religious

dimension is absolutely essential to the perception of the whole and to the understanding of the conception of intellectual as itinerant scholar. The spiritual inspiration expressed in "The Nomad's Prayer" is – not by accident – placed in the paratextual framing of the volume, separated from the narrations that form it. The experience of God is situated at a different level, a long distance above the battles for God. Nonetheless the endeavour of the intellectual is inscribed in the demand for God, and it is this aspiration that permits him to transcend the limits of the cultured condition of man.

Against the appearance of fragmentation introduced into the world by the human disagreement concerning the matters of faith, the religious perspective is the crucial factor that introduces the dimension of wholeness. "Let nothing be repugnant to me," prays the nomad, as the divine presence in all things that he seeks transcends the cultural triggers of abjection, revulsion and spite. One might think that the universal acceptance that moves the itinerant scholar is rooted in some sort of Terentian philosophy of "humani nihil a me alienum puto." But in fact it is the perspective of a supra-religious quest for the divine that concedes viability to Noor's transcultural project. Against the fear of metaphysics that reigns at the "artsy post-modern lefty-pinko university," the itinerary of the scholar is conceptualized as a way of gradual approximation to God. In order to transcend the revulsion experienced in contact with the otherness it is not enough to invoke the common human condition. It is necessary to take the otherness for a trace and a reminder of the divine.

The plurality of the human cultured condition acquires thus a residual and indicative status. It is interpreted as a trace of a stronger, transcendent reality. The present condition of the world torn apart by the battles for God urges for an epiphany. If only we could know for sure on which side the truth is... But the only way to find the crucial insight into the affairs of the divine lies in seeing through the plurality of beliefs, and that implies a fragile and untenable nomadic condition that Noor acquires in his travels.

## References

- Adorno T. (1951). *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. London: New Left Books.
- Gramsci A. (1973). *The Prison Notebooks: Selections*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Morais D. (2010). "Malaysia: The Writing of Lives and the Constructing of Nation". *Biography*, 1(33): 84-109.
- Noor F. A. (2002). *The Other Malaysia. Writings on Malaysia's Subaltern History*. Kuala Lumpur: Silverfish Books.

- Noor F. A. (2009). *Qur'an and cricket. Travels through the madrasahs of Asia and other stories*. Kuala Lumpur: Silverfish Books.
- Noor F. A. (2013). *Negaraku*. "Malaysian Insider" 9.05.2013. <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/sideviews/article/negaraku-farish-a.-noor>
- Said E. (1994). *Representations of the Intellectual. The 1993 Reith Lectures*. London: Vintage.
- Sloterdijk P. (2011). *Bubbles. Spheres I*, trans. Wieland Hoban. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

---

---

## **Z dała od "nowinkarskiego, postmodernistycznego, lewicująco-różowego uniwersytetu". O doświadczeniach transkulturowych Farisha Noora i powinnościach intelektualisty**

Książka *Qur'an and cricket* stanowi zbiór notatek z podróży malajskiego intelektualisty Farisha A. Noora do najbardziej problematycznych miejsc świata, gdzie toczony są „bitwy o Boga”. W niniejszym artykule jest ona interpretowana jako zapis poszukiwania kondycji transkulturowej, polegającej nie na zajmowaniu pozycji pomiędzy stronami konfliktu lub też poza nim, ale na poszukiwaniu przestrzeni doświadczenia mieszczącej się ponad porządkami kulturowymi. Noor szkicuje własną koncepcję intelektualisty, która w artykule zostaje skontrastowana z zapatrywaniami Gramsciego, Adorno i Saida. Podmiotem kondycji transkulturowej ma być „wędrowny uczonec”, przełamujący ograniczenia akademickich zapatrywań dzięki nomadycznemu doświadczeniu świata w podróży. Stanowi ona sposób wyjścia ku innemu z gotowością do wysłuchania, nawet jeśli jedynym, co się pojawia, jest bełkot. Właśnie bełkotliwość gniewu i nienawiści stanowi wszakże największe wyzwanie dla intelektualisty, który nie może jej sprostać racjonalną argumentacją, w jakiej jest biegły. Jedyną możliwą odpowiedzią jest więc obecność i miłość, emocjonalne przywiązanie do świata, odmowa porzucenia, opuszczenia, zdystansowania się wobec niego. Natomiast sposobem mówienia, jaki przeciwstawia się bełkotowi nie jest jasność i jednoznaczność dyskursu perswazyjnego, lecz przeciwnie, niejednoznaczność i ambiwalencja wypowiedzi ironicznej. „Wędrowny uczonec” nie jest więc kaznodzieją, lecz ironistą. W przeciwieństwie do lewicowej tradycji definiowania sylwetki i powinności intelektualisty, „wędrowny uczonec” zostaje scharakteryzowany, choć w bardzo dyskretny sposób, jako postać zakorzeniona w wymiarze religijnym. Wyzwanie zbudowania przestrzeni transkulturowej powiązane jest więc z potrzebą ocalenia i pomieszczenia w niej autentycznego doświadczenia religijnego w dobie „bitew o Boga”.