

Exploring Muslim Feminisms: A Response to Orientalist  
Discourses About Muslim Women

by

Zahira Sarwar

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## **Abstract**

Does having women's positions and rights as one's core focus of discussion make movements *feminist*—a term that has historically been rejected by Muslim women fighting for recognition of women's rights? Moreover, if they are taking place in Muslim countries or have associations with Muslim cultures, communities and women, does that define these movements as *Muslim feminist*? In this thesis, I demonstrate that there are multiple types of *Muslim feminisms* and each type is not restricted to any specific geographic location but rather as feminist theories, span the globe. Using a post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminist theoretical framework to investigate literature on *Muslim feminisms* and the ways in which issues of violence against women, such as honour killings, are discussed within this literature, I aspire to introduce and include *Muslim feminist* voices among transnational and global feminist theorists within the academic field of Women's and Gender Studies.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Chapter: Defining “Muslim Feminisms”</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Secular Muslim Feminism.....	10
1.2 Islamic Feminism .....	21
1.3 Islamist Feminism .....	29
1.4 Muslim Feminism.....	31
1.5 Post-Colonial, Anti-racist, Anti-Orientalist Feminisms .....	38
<b>2 Chapter: Theory, Methodology and Method</b> .....	<b>48</b>
2.1 Methodology.....	48
2.2 Method.....	60
2.3 Reflexivity .....	63
2.4 Conclusion.....	66
<b>3 Chapter: Discussing Honour Killings from Muslim Feminist Perspectives</b> .....	<b>68</b>
3.1 Defining "Honour Killings".....	68
3.2 <i>Violence in the Name of Honour</i> and the Problem with Cultural Relativism.....	71
3.3 Case Study: The Shafia Family Murders.....	79
3.4 Orientalism and Binary Divisions .....	84
3.5 Future Avenues for Discourses on Honour Killings.....	87
3.6 Conclusion.....	88
<b>Thesis Conclusion</b> .....	<b>90</b>
<b>Bibliography or References</b> .....	<b>96</b>

## **Introduction:**

Often in news and mainstream media covering stories of the Muslim Middle East, Muslims living in the West and issues somehow relating to these two different entities, viewers hear of only one side of the story and mainly see the same reoccurring images. These images and stories tend to depict a single narrative that has Orientalist historical origins not only combining Arab cultures and Islam to create a monolithic conceptualization of Muslims, but also creating binaries between the so-called developed, liberal and secular West versus the underdeveloped, conservative and religious East, while simultaneously creating and reinforcing gendered stereotypes of both men and women. If one were to examine the severity of these images and narratives in addition to the ways in which they have been utilized to support civilizing missions in the Middle East, one would experience a feeling of *déjà vu* as it seems that history has indeed repeated itself. In my experience, an area that has often been left out of transnational and global feminist academic discourses in the field of Women's and Gender Studies has been the response to these Orientalist narratives by Muslim women and authors.

During my undergraduate degree, I took a Women's Studies course that required students to read two of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's texts—*Infidel* and *The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam*. At the time, I did not have the vocabulary to articulate why these texts made me uncomfortable because I had yet to be exposed to post-colonial feminisms but I remember voicing concern about the inaccuracies in Ali's work and wondering what the impact was of having a class more than one hundred students read these gross-misrepresentations of Muslim women's oppression. It was at that point when I wondered what could have been some alternative

texts for the class regarding similar themes of Muslim women's rights, questions of oppression and how to respond to particular types of violence against women.

When I began this MA thesis, these thoughts continued to echo in my mind, thus providing the motive for this thesis. After discussing these ideas and questions with several professors and again wondering what types of alternative texts the Women's and Gender Studies discipline could benefit from when included in discussions of Muslim women's rights and oppressions, another obstacle surfaced—the lack of knowledge on and awareness of alternative texts. In fact, Ali's name arose during some of these discussions. This experience inspired me to search for answers to my own questions because I knew that despite the lack of literature discussions of Muslim women's rights and oppressions contained a rich field of scholars and activists based on the news I had been keeping up with. One recent example has been the response by female drivers who defied the ban in Saudi Arabia by driving in protest (*BBC*, "Some Saudi Women Defy Driving Ban in Day of Protest", 2013). However, pinpointing which texts amongst the many that would contain information beneficial to academic discussions of transnational and global feminist theories was something I had yet to anticipate. The main aim of pursuing this topic is to analyse and introduce to myself and my colleagues some of these many voices and texts in the hopes of highlighting the differences in the quality of information that exist amongst the body of literature on Muslim women's rights and oppressions.

Since 9/11 and the popularity of promoting women's rights in Muslim countries in the name of Western liberal values, various self-identified Western feminists, journalists, and even individuals who claim to hold first-hand experiences of oppression

by Islam, have written on and spoken out against Muslim women's oppressions. While some of these concerned humanitarians have gained notoriety in their fields of expertise, others have capitalized on their experiences with Islamic oppression at the height of the media's interest in their sensationalized narratives. My interests arose in the overshadowed voices of Muslim women who have historically and recently responded to these narratives. The responses by Muslim women have not been a single, unified voice nor have they only taken place in a single region of the world. Moreover, some of these responses incorporate discussions of location *vis a vis* class, race, privilege and power. The responses have historic roots in the Middle East during times of de-colonization and the rise of nationalisms, but in recent times have made their ways to the West where questions of human rights and wider notions of hierarchies of power are brought into analyses.

Take for example the headline-making Ukrainian protest group FEMEN's actions towards Muslim communities in a feeble attempt to draw attention to what they deem as the causes of Muslim women's oppressions. A quick glance at the group's website leaves viewers with the impression that FEMEN is a sort of extremist group, as the homepage reveals the image of a topless Caucasian woman holding a machete in her right hand and a pair of testicles in her left hand with the words "Women's Movement Sextremism" painted across her body (FEMEN, "About", 2014). The group's website states that their ideologies are, "[s]extremism, atheism, and feminism" (FEMEN, "About", 2014). Therefore, it comes as no surprise when FEMEN made international headlines in 2013 for declaring April 4<sup>th</sup> as "Topless Jihad Day" in support of the release of Amina Tyler, a Tunisian activist who was imprisoned for baring her breasts with words of protest painted

across her naked body (Nelson, “Topless Jihad Day”, 2013). This event was one of the most pivotal moments in recent history of what I call *Muslim feminist* activism because of the wave of responses from Muslim women around the world who not only took a strong stance against FEMEN’s *Topless Jihad Day*, even though there was some level of support from Muslim women as the example of Amina Tyler demonstrates, but also challenged classical Orientalist stereotypes of Muslim women as a voiceless group in need of liberation, a concept that was originally analysed by Edward Said in his classical text *Orientalism* (1978). These stereotypes also depict Islam “as a monolithic, unchanging worldview outside of history, yet one which paradoxically determines all emotions and thoughts” (Hammami and Rieker, 1988: 94).

In response to FEMEN’s *Topless Jihad Day*, Muslim women took to social media and popularized the hashtag #MuslimahPride and shared photos of themselves holding up placards with various statements declaring that they are already liberated and are in no need of FEMEN’s so-called “help” (“Who Speaks for Muslim Women?”, 2013). What this response from Muslim women to FEMEN has demonstrated is that there are Muslim women who voice diverse opinions on topics related to their rights. Does having women’s positions and rights as their core focus of discussion make these movements feminist—a term that has historically been rejected by Muslim women fighting for recognition of women’s rights? For example, Leila Ahmed’s (1992) discussion of the historical origins of feminist movements in Egypt in the chapter “The First Feminists” in *Women and Gender in Islam*, highlights the nationalist reasoning behind the rejection of the term “feminism” as an foreign and colonial ideology (Ahmed, 1992: 169-188).

Moreover, if these movements are taking place in Muslim countries or have associations with Muslim cultures, communities and women, does that define these movements as *Muslim feminist*?<sup>1</sup> The desire to categorize these movements as *Muslim feminist* is not approached with the intentions of inhibiting the diversity they encompass, but rather to emphasize the significance of including their narratives in feminist discourses of transnational and global feminisms, as well as having a name or title to which they can be referred to once they are included in these feminist discourses. Additionally, the diversity of *Muslim feminist* voices will be acknowledged through a discussion of some of the different types of *Muslim feminisms*, such as secular Muslim feminism, Islamic feminism, Islamist feminism, and Muslim feminism. These are some of the areas that will be explored in *Chapter 1*.

*Chapter 2* discusses the method of critical reading and review in which this thesis is conducted. Additionally, this chapter explains the use of post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminist methodologies utilized in this thesis, and why these frameworks are beneficial to this particular thesis. Moreover this author thinks that an examination of narratives and literature put forth by Western feminists and individuals from within or *native informants*, is equally important to explore since the ways in which they have been utilized by governments, lawmakers and policymakers have been central to influencing public perceptions.

*Chapter 3* responds to questions of why discussions of *Muslim feminisms* are imperative to dialogues surrounding transnational and global feminisms. In order to illustrate this point, an analysis of discussions and literature around so-called honour killings and the 2009 murders of the Shafia Family will compare the works of post-

colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminists on this topic against those written by well-published and well-known Western feminists, some of whom may be considered *experts* on the topic of so-called honour killings.

Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis is to introduce some of the many voices of *Muslim feminist theorists* by producing a platform on which their voices can be included alongside other transnational and global feminist theorists. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, *Muslim feminists* hold diverse and at times conflicting positions with one another on topics relating to Muslim women's positions and oppressions. Just as there are multiple and diverse feminist voices in the West, so too does a multiplicity of voices exist amongst *Muslim feminists*. See for example, Judy Root Aulette and Judith Wittner's discussions of liberal feminists of the early twentieth century who drew attention to issues of gender, civil rights feminists of the 1950's who focused on issues of class and race, and radical feminists such as the feminist group Redstockings who focused on sexual inequalities (Aulette and Wittner, 2012: 11-18). Therefore, by discussing some of these positions and addressing the diversity within this field, I hope to highlight some of the rich knowledge *Muslim feminist theories* can bring to the field of transnational and global feminist theories when studied in an academic curriculum.

## 1 Chapter: Defining “Muslim Feminisms”

The term *feminism* is a broadly defined and often contested term because it holds a different meaning for everyone who uses the term based on their positionality, which includes race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation, history, and location— both geographically as well as socio-economically. Consequently, there are multiple types of feminisms that span the globe, including multiple *Muslim feminisms*<sup>2</sup>, yet another contested term that cannot be reduced to a monolithic conceptualization. Nonetheless, a common thread that weaves these various strands of feminisms together is the woman question— a concern for the plight of women, and the concern for social justice, which also hold different meanings to different people.

The reason why the term *Muslim feminisms* is contested is because some scholars view it as oxymoronic. How can women find liberation within what some scholars deem as the root causes of oppression? While some scholars raise concerns about the incompatibility of religion and feminism, in particular Islam and feminism, due to systemic patriarchy rooted in religious traditions, some *Muslim feminists* have responded in ways that other branches of feminisms have not by engaging in dialogues and activism in response to these claims. For example, Haideh Moghissi (1999) asks, “[h]ow could a religion which is based on gender hierarchy be adopted as the framework for struggle for gender democracy and women’s equality with men?” (Moghissi, 1999: 125-127). Rather than assuming *a priori* that the cause for Muslim women’s oppressions is rooted in Islam alone, some *Muslim feminists* look at broader issues concerning histories of colonialism, socio-economic circumstances, structural inequalities and how these factors intertwine to position Muslim women in oppressive circumstances. This is a

theme that will be echoed throughout this thesis but for now an example of the types of responses and critiques raised by *Muslim feminists* will be demonstrated. miriam cooke's<sup>3</sup> response to these concerns highlights the ways in which Islam and Islamic fundamentalism have in recent times been conflated. cooke contends that this conflation leads one to, "assert that there is a general pressure today to affirm Islam, regardless of whether or not one believes in it, so as to gain credibility" (cooke 2001: 58). This perspective in turn, reinforces Orientalist binaries of Muslims in the East against secular peoples in the West. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, notions of binary categories are problematic mainly because they erase diversity and consequently lead to the homogenization of peoples, especially in the context of discussing *Muslim feminisms*.

I use the term *Muslim feminisms* as an umbrella term for the assortment of feminisms associated with the Islamic faith, including secular Muslim feminism, Islamic feminism, Islamist feminism, and Muslim feminism. I will also discuss post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist scholars who do not necessarily fit into the categories of *Muslim feminisms* but have contributed a great deal of significant knowledge and literature that questions the ways in which colonial and Orientalist power operate against Muslim populations in the West, especially women. This group of scholars also place an emphasis on intersectionality in their analyses of the ways in which power operates against Muslim populations by considering positions of class, race, gender and religion. For example Nawal El Saadawi's discussions in *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980) reveal how sexism and class are interwoven to create inequalities (El Saadawi, 1980: i) and she discusses how certain types of violence against Egyptian women, such as female circumcision are prevalent regardless of class, thereby challenging misconceptions that

female circumcision was a practice common amongst uneducated families in rural areas (8). The scholars discussed in each category are by no means an overall representation of the scholars in their fields of research. Rather, the reappearance of their names and discussions of these scholars' works by others is what led to their inclusion in this thesis. It would take a much larger project to discuss each and every single scholar who has written on these topics, therefore, only a limited number of scholars and their works will be discussed.

Moreover, although these terms (secular Muslim feminism, Islamic feminism, Islamist feminism and Muslim feminism) sound similar to one another, and in fact flow in and out of each other, each one holds different theories on the woman question and how social justice is defined according to the respective ideologies. These are not fixed categories but rather the definitions and discussions provided are meant to offer insight into the movements that have existed historically in addition to how they affect current ideologies among *Muslim feminists*. Moreover, each type of *Muslim feminism* is not restricted to any specific geographic location but rather as different feminist theories they span the globe. One may find secular Muslim feminists in Tehran, the capital city of the Islamic Republic of Iran, just as one may find Islamist feminists in London, England. Nonetheless, an emphasis will be placed on the Middle East in the discussion of the origins of *Muslim feminisms* in order to understand the historical and geo-political contexts in which these movements took place and how these theories have spread across the globe and have been utilized in the West.

Defining each term has been further complicated by some of the renditions used by various academics as well as the fact that some scholars refuse the term *feminist*

altogether, a point that will be discussed in detail in reference to each type of *Muslim feminism*. As miriam cooke has mentioned, “we all have multiple identities and naming one seems, to many, to threaten their other identities” (cooke quoted in Badran, 2005: 15). During periods of de-colonization and rising nationalist movements throughout the Middle East, feminist ideologies were regarded as new methods for colonizers to exert power over populations.<sup>4</sup> The introduction of feminism in states vying for independence created tension between various groups focused on women’s issues while concurrently resisting any type of colonial mission. As Ziba Mir-Hosseini points out, “[f]or anticolonialists and most nationalists, feminism—that is, advocacy of women’s rights—was a colonialist project that had to be resisted” (Mir-Hosseini, 2006: 639). cooke highlights the complexities and possible contradictions that may arise in a *Muslim feminist* identity when she states that, “[a]ctions, behaviours, pieces of writing that bridge religious and gender issues in order to create conditions in which justice and freedom may prevail do not translate into a seamless identity” (cooke, 2001: 59). In order to understand some of these complexities a better understanding of each type of *Muslim feminism* is required.

### **1.1 Secular Muslim Feminism**

At first glance this may look like a typo or contradiction; however, secular Muslim feminism is in fact a type of *Muslim feminist theory* that has existed as early as the period of decolonization in the Middle East. In writing about the history of secular and religious-based feminist movements in the Middle East, Margot Badran states that, “[s]ecular feminism draws on and is constituted by multiple discourses including secular

nationalist, Islamic modernism, humanitarian/human rights, and democratic” (Badran, 2005: 6). Moreover, “... secular feminism arose in a largely ‘religious era,’ ... in a context in which religion, state, and society were highly enmeshed” (Badran, 2005: 10). Therefore, the term secular Muslim feminist holds multiple meanings that have historically been used by other parties, including other *Muslim feminists* to equate secular Muslim feminist values with Westernization. Nonetheless, a key feature of secular Muslim feminism is the criticisms of locating women’s liberation in religious traditions and texts. For example El Saadawi criticizes not just Islamic fundamentalists but also Jewish and Christian fundamentalists who are, “trying to push women back to the veil, back home, back under the domination of their husbands” (El Saadawi, 1997, 95). In the context of a colonized state, newly independent state or a state at threat of being colonized, a movement such as this one was viewed as threatening to the fabric of national identity.

In her discussion of feminist and nationalist movements in Egypt in “Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth- Century Egypt” Margot Badran explains how the use of the French language in feminist discourse created an environment of hostility for those who did not speak a foreign language associated with classed hierarchies and cultural colonization. “Because the [Egyptian Feminist Union] leadership was upper-class and because its feminist ideas were mainly expressed in French, feminism came to be considered, especially by detractors, as foreign” (Badran, 1991: 209). Founded in 1923 and led by Huda Sharawi, the EFU was a feminist movement that brought about significant gains for women, such as access to education at all levels for women and reforming marriage laws pertaining to divorce and polygamy

(Ahmed, 1992: 176). Created with the intentions of raising Egyptian women's intellectual and moral capacities, the goals of the EFU were to enable women to have access to social, political and legal equality (Ahmed, 1992: 176). However, due to its exclusionary practices of generally catering to the upper-class by engaging in feminist ideas in a foreign or colonizer's language, I do not personally view it as a form of secular Muslim feminism. Rather, it was a foreign type of feminism implanted in Egypt with a focus on a particular class of Egyptian women.

Examples of secular Muslim feminists include Nawal El Saadawi and Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Although both of these individuals are secular and considered by many to be a type of feminist in her own right, the quality of work by El Saadawi immensely differs from that of Ali's. While El Saadawi's work stems from first-hand interactions, research and fact-based sources, she criticizes other types of inequalities in her literature besides those associated with religion and this is where one of the strengths lies in her work. In the section "Why Keep Asking Me About my Identity?" from the *Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (1997) she states, "I am against the identities built on religion because the history of religion was written in the endless rivers of blood flowing in the name of God... I am against a nationalism, a patriotism, that does not see the rest of the world. I am against privilege of the rich man against the poor, against privilege of man against woman" (El Saadawi, 1997: 127). In returning to my initial inquiry in regards to identifying alternative types of literature one could turn to for an analysis on women's oppression, El Saadawi's work would be amongst those one could choose as opposed to Ali's work because both of their work focuses on Muslim women's oppression as it is tied to women's sexualities.

As an Egyptian physician Nawal El Saadawi came into contact with women of many social and political backgrounds who faced persecution simply because of their sexualities during her years in the medical field. Her work is unique from the other scholars discussed in this thesis because she writes both fiction<sup>5</sup> and non-fiction texts and short stories.<sup>6</sup> El Saadawi's unique method of combining fiction and politically charged feminist messages in her books permits her to reach a vast audience beyond academic disciplines of Middle East or Women's and Gender Studies. Amireh states that, "[h]er simple diction, crisp sentences, and short paragraphs give her books a journalistic flavor and appeal to a wide reading public" (Amireh, 2000: 231). For example, her book *Woman at Point Zero* is based on El Saadawi's encounter with Firdaus, a woman who was imprisoned and sentenced to death for the murder of a man. The reader is instantly drawn to the mystery surrounding Firdaus' story, as was El Saadawi herself who at the time worked as a psychiatrist in the women's ward.<sup>7</sup>

As one begins to read Firdaus's story, one comes to the realization that the book is not so much about Firdaus, although her story is used to illustrate these points, as it is about the hypocrisies and challenges women in Egypt face on a daily basis. Issues of child molestation are brought up through narratives of Firdaus's childhood when her uncle would inappropriately touch her (15, 22). Child marriage and domestic abuse are also brought up when Firdaus's uncle and his wife arrange her marriage to a man much older than she (36, 43). Sex work and questions of respect and women's honour (75, 91) and issues surrounding class inequality and political corruption (100) are also explored. Ultimately, because Firdaus challenged these inequalities by first murdering her pimp and then attempting to murder a prince, she was sentenced to death and looked forward to her

sentence without the slightest bit of fear. In the final sentences of the book, El Saadawi states that, “[a]nd because the world was full of lies, she had to pay the price” (1975: 108). Considering the date of publication (1975), this book was quite controversial and was only the beginning of the type of issues El Saadawi’s work raised awareness around—some of which landed her in jail in September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981.<sup>8</sup> Evidently, El Saadawi is a well-rounded scholar, activist and novelist who has written extensively on the Egyptian context who also, “dedicated her life to investigating the relationships among domestic, local, and international sources of oppression on women and to exposing the dangers in dichotomized thinking” (cooke, 2001: 76).

Although some of her critics point to the use of writing fiction novels to raise some of the issues that she does, stating that El Saadawi is simply writing for a Western audience and consequently reaffirming clichés about Egyptian women in particular and Muslim women in general (Amireh, 2000: 232-240), as was previously mentioned it is this very style of writing that enables her to reach a wider audience. Moreover, she draws attention to various types of inequalities that Egyptian women face rather than solely focusing on religious-based inequalities. Therefore, this criticism against El Saadawi can be seen as a strength—her abilities and success as a non-bourgeois feminist writing for an international audience. As Reza Hammami and Martina Rieker have pointed out, “[t]he importance of her work lies in her attempt to combine feminist struggle with Third World anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist struggle, in her attempt to show their interconnectedness” (Hammami and Rieker, 1988: 100, footnote 17).

Another individual who would be viewed as a secular Muslim feminist is Ayaan Hirsi Ali, whose voice according to Lila Abu-Lughod, “has been so crucial in the past

decade to defining North American and European views on women and Islam” (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 19). Hirsi Ali as a Somali émigré is a self-proclaimed “infidel” (Ali, 2007) who found liberation in the rejection of the Islamic religion, to which she attributed all past oppressions she and her loved ones experienced. She has written extensively about her experiences of oppression under Islam and continues to write op-ed columns for various newspapers, for example Ali’s piece in the *New York Times* “Raised on Hatred” (2013), and *The Wallstreet Journal* “How to Win the Clash of Civilizations” (2010). Additionally, Ali continues to write online blogs on themes of violence against women, honour crimes, and Muslim women’s oppression, which she always attributes to religion and culture. For example, in the *Huffington Post* Ali wrote a piece titled “How to Honour the Victims of Honour Killings” (2012), and another titled “Honour Killings Go Beyond Mere Homicide” (2011). As an active voice in the movement to address violence against women in Muslim communities, Ali opened the Ayaan Hirsi Ali (AHA) Foundation in 2007 to address issues of violence stemming from culture or religion which the website specifies as honour violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. The section titled “Issues,” defines each type of honour-related violence to coax website viewers to donate to the foundation or purchase items such as handbags or t-shirts with a percentage of the funds going towards the Foundation (*AHA Foundation*). Her focus on Muslim women’s oppression and dedication to raising awareness in the hopes of ending religious-based violence directed at women is what makes Ali a type of *Muslim feminist*. Moreover, her focus on being anti-religion, and anti-Islam in particular, makes her a secular Muslim feminist.

For example, Ali's book *The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam* (2006) is essentially dedicated to the villainization of Muslim men and demonization of Islam as a whole through various so-called analyses of issues within Muslim communities, such as domestic violence, female genital mutilation, how to leave an abusive home and faith, and how Western secularism ultimately holds the key to freedom and happiness. In the introduction of this text, Ali explains how the idea of the book came together when she began the process of critically reflecting on her religion only to find that Islam is a religion of fear that only knows one moral source and is led by tribal Arab values that commoditize women (Ali, 2006: x-xi). Moreover, this explanation of Islam is coupled with the creation of dichotomies between East and West to demonstrate why "Muslim nations are lagging behind the West" as she puts it (xi).

Although some of Ali's work on these themes will be discussed in *Chapter 3* of this thesis, for now one significant critique must be brought up to illustrate a reoccurring issue that arises in her work. One of the problems with Ali's work is that in her demonization of Islam and by placing Western values on a pedestal, she fails to critically analyse the ways in which Western secular democracy did not historically, and has not recently liberated women from oppression, nor is she aware of the self-Orientalization she engages in when pitting "Western freedom against imprisonment by Islam" (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 20). Chapters in *The Caged Virgin* (2006) with titles such as "Why Can't We Take a Critical Look at Ourselves?", "What Went Wrong? A Modern Clash of Cultures" and "Defending Western Ideals" reinforce Orientalist binary divisions that depict the East and subsequently Muslims as inferior to the West, which is equated with freedom and secularity. In other words, the West is everything that the East is not. For

example, in the chapter “Why Can’t We Take a Critical Look at Ourselves”, Ali asks, “[i]f nothing is wrong with Islam, why then are so many Muslims on the run?...If we Muslims are so tolerant and peaceful, why is there so much ethnic, religious, political, and cultural strife and violence in Muslim countries?” (Ali, 2006: 3). Moreover, in just three pages she explains “the world of Islam” as tribal and therefore outdated in its traditions, exclusionary as it emphasizes one particular way of life focusing on the Muslim community, and sexist because women are potential sources of “shame” and “financial burdens” to their families (Ali, 2006: 38-40). It is these types of generalizations about Islam and the lack of attention to complexities of critical analyses in her work that are highly problematic.

Although I have stated that both El Saadawi and Ali are secular Muslim feminists, their works differ in one key element: their understandings of the causes of Muslim women’s oppressions. While Ali ascribes the causes of violence against Muslim women to religion, El Saadawi analyses the wider picture of Muslim women’s oppressions that go beyond blaming culture and religion by analysing economic and political sources of oppression in the Egyptian context. For example, often in Ali’s work on the topic of honour killings, discussions of religious Eastern values are contrasted with liberal Western values thereby reinforcing Orientalist binary categories in a process of self-Orientalization that is reaffirming preconceived notions that have historically been created by colonialists. The website for the *AHA Foundation* demonstrates this point in its definition of honour violence in stating that:

Victims of honor violence are targeted because their actual or perceived behavior is deemed to be shameful or to violate cultural or religious norms. Conduct such as resisting an arranged marriage, seeking a divorce, adopting a Western lifestyle and wearing Western clothing, and having friends of the opposite sex have resulted in honor violence (“Honor Violence” *AHA Foundation*).

On the contrary, El Saadawi is aware of and challenges the difficulties that arise in the existence of binary categorizations. For example, she states that the economic and political must be considered when attempting to find solutions to issues pertaining to Muslim communities and that, “[w]e cannot look at the cultural gap without looking at the economic gap or at the inequality between countries, the inequality between classes in each country, and the inequalities between the sexes in the family and in the state” (El Saadawi 1997: 135). The scope of the critical lens with which El Saadawi carries out her research gives her work a quality that Ali’s work lacks. Therefore, although both El Saadawi and Ali would be considered secular individuals who focus on issues related to Muslim women’s oppressions, inequalities and sexual violence, El Saadawi’s work is the more credible of the two and would be a better choice of scholar whose work should have been taught in the Women’s and Gender Studies class such as the one I took in my undergraduate career.

Another scholar who would be categorized as a secular Muslim feminist would be Iranian-born activist and scholar Valentine Moghadam. Her text *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* could be categorized as a work of secular Muslim feminist literature because it seeks to evaluate factors that have kept Muslim women disproportionately disempowered compared to men throughout various Middle Eastern countries. Using a Marxist-feminist theoretical framework, Moghadam explores how, “stability and change in the status of women are shaped by a combination of structural factors that operate within the capitalist world system: economic development and state policies, class and the gender system” (Moghadam, 2013: 19). Therefore, the

focus of her work addresses women's roles and lack of participation in the public sphere, such as in the realm of politics and the economy, rather than discussing women's roles in the private sphere, such as one's own home.

This Marxist- Feminist theoretical approach gives Moghadam an advantage to finding viable solutions to issues affecting Muslim women in Muslim countries, whereas looking towards culture or religion does not necessarily lead to policy changes in similar ways. As Moghadam points out, “[w]hy Muslim women lag behind Western women in legal rights, mobility, autonomy, and so forth has more to do with modernization and development—the extent of urbanization, industrialization, and proletarianization, as well as the political ploys of political elites—than with religious and cultural factors” (Moghadam, 2013: 8). Thus, Moghadam analyses women in the Middle East's current status using a historical lens that examines the impact of a colonial or imperial presence in the region. Moreover, she uses this historical information to analyse how religion, specifically Islam, has been used to exclude women from the public sphere and confine them to their homes. However, what strengthens Moghadam's analysis here is not simply a dissection of Islam's role in excluding women from public spheres but also including Christianity and Judaism in her analyses to exemplify that some of the issues we see today affecting Muslim women cannot be attributed to Islam alone because similar incidences can be located in Christian and Jewish contexts as well. For example in her discussion of the “Family as Haven” she discusses the essentialist argument used by some to confine women to the home because it is their natural place where they can perform their biological duties, such as caring for her family and reproducing. Moghadam parallels arguments put forth by Christian conservatives in the West and Muslim

conservatives in the Middle East, alongside Western liberals such as Frederick Engels, who call for women's main roles as dutiful wives and mothers (Moghadam, 2013: 110-120). By discussing patriarchal inequalities in this manner, Moghadam draws attention to issues affecting women, such as a lack of involvement in the public sphere, without singling out one group of people and attributing their religion or cultural norms as the reason for gender inequalities.

Moghadam takes her analysis a step further by analysing specific countries in the Middle East and their histories to trace why women are excluded from the public sphere. Therefore, she not only critically reflects on histories that oppress women in general, but specifically looks at countries in order to outline feasible solutions to improve the issues she raises. For example, in her discussion of Iran's political history and how it has affected Iran's female population, Moghadam illustrates that Iranian women are not excluded from the public sphere in political participation or paid employment due to lack of education<sup>9</sup>, but rather because of structural and institutional barriers. For example, Moghadam states that, [u]nlike many other countries, Iran has not instituted quotas for women's political participation, even though it has instituted gender quotas for fields of study" (192). Moreover, because of Iran's *sharia* or religious-based laws, certain criteria restrict women from seeking jobs or the occupation of their choice without the approval of their fathers or husbands (195). Therefore, according to Moghadam's analysis, it appears that if these quotas in the Iranian system were filled and these barriers removed, women in Iran would have better access to paid employment and consequently result in a higher participation in the public sphere. These types of discussions are not only significant for understanding women's inequalities in a Middle Eastern context such as

Iran, but also in acknowledging that when specifically discussing Muslim women's inequalities, all forms of oppression cannot be attributed to religion alone.

The only main critique that can be directed towards Moghadam's body of work is that it focuses on the Middle East; therefore, her work has a significant amount of meaningful insight to contribute to understanding the plight of women in the Middle East but in the context of understanding why Muslim women who emigrate to the West are experiencing similar issues of oppression, her work does not offer the same type of insight. That being noted, her work should indeed be included amongst the list of key *Muslim feminist* scholars mainly because of the theoretical framework she utilizes in her research that examines structural and historical events leading up to current examples of women's inequalities in the Middle Eastern context.

## **1.2 Islamic Feminism**

Whereas secular Muslim feminists reject the notion of finding liberation in Islam, Islamic feminists locate the basis of their feminist understandings in Islamic scriptures, such as the Quran and Sunna: stories about the Prophet Muhammad's way of life, are often used by Muslims as a guide on how to live their own lives. As Jasmin Zine points out, religion has historically been associated with fundamentalism (Zine, 2004: 171). Islamic feminists are challenging these notions by breaking traditional roles assigned to Muslim women. Unlike secular Muslim feminists who do not believe that religion can liberate women, Islamic feminists such as Fatema Mernissi and Amina Wadud are reinterpreting traditional texts and the Quran and discovering that it is not religion that oppresses women so much as misinterpretations of it. In fact, this group of *Muslim*

*feminists* reject traditional patriarchal understandings of the faith and actively call for a re-reading of the texts with a focus on women's status in the religion and how historically, women have been afforded many rights in the Quran that have been misinterpreted.

Islamic feminist scholars such as Amina Wadud, an American professor and Islamic scholar who engages in what she has termed the “gender *jihad*,” (Wadud, 2008: 10) and Fatema Mernissi actively promote this message through their literature. Wadud explains her use of the term “gender *jihad*” in the text *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* in which she positions herself as an Afro-American Muslim woman engaging in justice for women in Islam through an exploration of the Quran, and the many challenges she faces during this journey. “The gender *jihad* is a struggle to establish gender justice in Muslim thought and praxis. At its simplest level, gender justice is gender mainstreaming—the inclusion of women in *all* aspects of Muslim practice, performance, policy construction, and in both political and religious leadership” (Wadud, 2008: 10). It should be noted that Wadud did not coin the term gender *jihad*, as it was first used in the 1980s during the anti-apartheid campaign. According to Margot Badran (2005), the term was initially coined by South Africa struggler Omar Rashied, “against multiple oppressions within the community and wider society in the 1980s at the height of the anti-apartheid campaign that South Africans called The Struggle” (Badran, 2005: 16).

One of the ways in which Wadud participates in the “gender *jihad*” is by dedicating herself to Islamic theology to equip herself with the best understandings of the Quran, juridical codes and Islamic practices (Wadud, 2008: 187). Although Wadud is

aware that disagreeing with certain verses of the Quran would be considered heresy under Islamic laws (2008: 191), she explains that her method of reinterpretation includes the idea of saying “no” to the text while still looking towards the text for solutions and answers. Wadud explains that this type of reinterpretation method is, “neither un-Islamic nor theoretical to the same extent as it might be deemed post-text in this post-revelation social, cultural, and philosophical context” (Wadud, 2008: 192). For Wadud, a literal interpretation and application of certain verses in the Quran may be problematic; therefore, she calls for a reinterpretation of these verses while considering the historical context in which they were revealed.<sup>10</sup> For example, she analyses one Quranic verse in particular that seemingly condones violence against women by using terms such as “scourge” to explain what should be done to a woman if she misbehaves or does not listen to her husband (Wadud, 1999: 70). For Wadud, the literal implementation of this verse is both “archaic and barbaric” and unacceptable to universal notions of human dignity (2008: 200). Therefore, in order to dig deeper at the historical context in which this verse was initially revealed Wadud focuses on the life of the Prophet only to discover that, “[h]e *never* implemented this text in his life. He never struck a woman or beat a slave” and therefore this example confirms that one can use his or her own understandings of the Quran in his or her own everyday life (2008: 202). Wadud even goes so far as to state that:

Whatever sexism might be found in the words of the immutable Qur’an is a reflection of the historical context of Qur’anic revelation... By rewriting the legal codes, through distinguishing their sexist assumptions, we can achieve an Islamic reality more meaningfully reflecting Qur’anic principles in a harmonious equilibrium (2008: 205).

For scholars like Wadud, it is important to not only study the Quran in order to reinterpret verses with an eye towards those verses that specifically mention women’s rights and status, but it is also important to practice what she preaches. Perhaps one of the most

notable events Wadud is known for aside from using the term “gender jihad” to explain her work, is when she became the first female to lead a mixed Friday prayer in 2005, something that was unheard of at the time.<sup>11</sup> This act was seen as challenging the “second-class” status of women in Islam by some and seen as “tarnishing the whole Islamic faith” by others who protested Wadud’s actions (*BBC*, “Woman Leads US in Muslim Prayer”, 2005). Evidently, Wadud is a firm believer in practicing what she preaches and makes her research and work a part of her everyday life.

Another popular Islamic feminist is Moroccan scholar Fatima Mernissi,<sup>12</sup> whose work challenges what she views as misogynistic interpretations of Islamic traditions and religious texts, such as the Quran. As miriam cooke points out, “Mernissi decided that if she were to question the reliability of this misogynist Tradition, she would have to study ‘the religious texts that everybody knows but no one really probes with the exception of the authorities on the subject: the mullahs and imams’” (cooke, 2001: 71). For example, one of her most popular texts is *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (1987), which was first published in 1975 and has been republished multiple times since in addition to being translated into a range of languages.<sup>13</sup> According to Mernissi, “*Beyond the Veil* is a book about sexual space boundaries” (Mernissi, 1987: xv). It is a compilation of historical analyses, a rereading of the Quran, and interviews with Moroccan women to recognize where Islamic understandings of women and space originate from and how those understandings affect Muslim societies today, especially women. The approach Mernissi took in this text was quite innovative at the time when this book was first published in 1975, in that rather than comparing Muslim women’s status to those of women in the West, she compares them to those of Muslim women in

the past. Mernissi does this by analysing seventh-century family laws (1987: 11), analysing the works of other scholars who have written on topics of sexual equality, while also rereading the Quran and about the life of the Prophet through the works of Islamic theologians such as Imam Ghazali (Mernissi, 1987: 34-41) and Imam Muslim (1987: 42-45). In searching through these historical and recent documents, Mernissi notes a common misinterpretation:

Since women are considered by Allah to be a destructive element, they are to be spatially confined and excluded from matters other than those of the family. Female access to non-domestic space is put under the control of males (1987: 19).

Mernissi asserts that this is a misinterpretation of Islam and that women's inequality and inferiority in much of modern-day Islamic societies is based on social institutions designed to restrain women's power, such as segregation and legal subordination in family structures (19). Mernissi takes Morocco as a case study and conducts about a hundred interviews amongst the "urban petty-bourgeoisie" (90) to analyse how various historical interpretations of Islam manage space to construct hierarchies and privileges (xvi). During the course of these interviews, which included interviews with mothers and daughters to compare generational experiences, and after reading over her interview notes, Mernissi noticed some common patterns associated with the interviewees' generations.

For the mothers, whom Mernissi refers to as "traditional women", sexual segregation was strict throughout their lives; however, for the daughters, whom she refers to as "modern women", sexual segregation was strict only around the time of puberty when they were taught about notion of family honour (91). She also concludes that these changes are tied to changes over the years in women's liberation and having access to public spaces and rights such as education, the right to vote and run for elections and the

right to work outside the home (168). It seems as though the state and democracy are threatening to conservative Islamic interpretations of women's status, whereas this text by Mernissi illustrates through a historical rereading of the Quran that these social and state changes, including democracy that affords women access to public spaces, are in line with Islam and concepts of women's status.

*Beyond the Veil* (1987) is an example of the method and focus of Mernissi's early work. Another early text by Mernissi that uses a similar type of method, historical analysis, is *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993). She frames her arguments within the context of the Prophet Muhammad and uses religious texts, such as the Quran, to support her claims. For example, in *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993), Mernissi analyses historical Islamic texts as she uncovers a side of Islamic history few even knew existed—a history dating back centuries involving vocal and powerful women who occupied some of the highest positions in Muslim communities (Mernissi, 1993: 4). Moreover, Mernissi reflects on how these hidden stories of Muslim “queens” as she calls them, have modern-day implications for the ways in which women are generally excluded from the domain of politics in the Muslim world as well as how politics in general are practiced in Muslim countries. Mernissi's early work, including *Beyond the Veil* and *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, focused on the historical re-reading and analysis of religious texts in response to historians who, “refused, or perhaps were afraid to acknowledge women's strong positions in Muhammad's (one of the Prophets whom Muslims look to for guidance in practising their faith) (cook, 2001: 73) society, where they knew they had the right to ask how Islam ‘would improve their situation’” (cooke, 2001: 73).

Whereas Mernissi's earlier work is quite significant in that it calls for a rereading and reinterpretation of the Quran to gain new perspectives on women's status and roles in Islam, her later work takes a different turn with a greater focus on politics, oil and the Arab World.<sup>14</sup> For example, the introduction in *Women's Rebellion and Islamic Memory* (1996) discusses in great detail Middle Eastern politics during the Gulf wars, concepts of petro-dollars funded by Islamism in the Arab World, and some broad generalizations about Muslim men as a whole. Mernissi poses questions to direct attention at the commodification of women's bodies in a manner that assumes all Muslim men think and are the same. For example, "Why can't politicians look at our hair and appreciate a Muslim woman standing defiant, her shoulders back, her breasts advanced, her eyes boldly scrutinizing them?" (Mernissi, 1996: xiii). Therefore, if one were to use Mernissi as an Islamic feminist scholar, one would have to emphasize this difference in her work over the years and note that her strength lies in her historical analyses of Islamic history and texts. As Miriam Cooke notes, Mernissi's later work focuses on the post-Gulf war Arab world where she argues first for and then against the West in similar ways that she argues against and then for Islamists (Cooke, 2001: 74). While the argument could be made that this is simply part of one's intellectual growth and as more knowledge is gained, one's position on certain topics may shift, Cooke argues that in some ways the basis of her arguments are lost in these contradictions, even though Mernissi's work focuses on different time periods, which may account for her shift in positions. (Cooke, 2001: 74).

One of the reasons why Mernissi is categorized as an Islamic feminist rather than an Islamist feminist, which will be discussed in further detail in the next section, is

because although she looks to religion to find women's emancipation and supports an Islamic community, "true to the principles of the founding community." Unlike Islamist feminists, she does not support the idea of an Islamic state, mainly because of the male presence in positions of authority in addition to patriarchal understandings of Islamic religious texts (Cooke, 2001: 74-75).

As both Wadud and Mernissi have demonstrated in their work, Islamic feminism incorporates a rereading of the Quran and historical Islamic texts and a reinterpretation of the Quran in the context of modern day society. Moreover, in the context of discussing Islam and Muslim women, using religion as a site of resistance, as Jasmin Zine points out "and as an epistemological terrain upon which to construct alternative visions of womanhood has not been validated in most anti-racist feminist discourses" (Zine, 2004: 173).

A common critique of the Islamic feminist movement brought up by their secular counterparts is that Islamic feminists are viewed as siding with patriarchy, "... by not unequivocally disavowing what they view as the doctrinal underpinning of women's subordination in Islam" (Zine, 2004: 173). This is also a concern carried over towards Islamist feminists, who take on a more radical approach and will be discussed in further detail in the next segment.

As Margot Badran points out in her historical analysis of the term Islamic feminism, "[t]his term, it should be noted, was invented by *observers* of the rise of a new feminist paradigm in the Middle East, who began to call it Islamic feminism" (Badran, 2005: 15). As previously discussed, hesitation of the use of the term *feminist* to identify oneself was also common amongst Islamic feminists due to the fact that it was a term

associated with Westernization and Western values, elements that were often pitted against national identity and values. However, after analysing some of the literature by Wadud and Mernissi, it is clear that these religiously engaged scholars are struggling on behalf of all Muslim women with the aim of enabling Islamic societies to understand that it is not un-Islamic to reinterpret the Quran with a focus on challenging verses that can be viewed as sexist or outdated. Islamic feminists not only reinterpret the Quran to highlight the emancipatory content it contains but also challenge patriarchal interpretations of the Quran that have impacted Islamic societies since the Middle Ages. (Moghadam, 2013: 4). Therefore, if one were to look at the type of work Islamic feminists such as Wadud and Mernissi engage in, as well as their overall goal of fighting for social justice and women's rights within the context of Islam, one would identify this group as a type of *Muslim feminist* group.

### **1.3 Islamist Feminism**

When the word Islamist is typically used in the media or literature, it is often disassociated from feminism because it has been represented as an anti-women movement that uses extreme interpretations of Islam to justify various forms of violence. Valentine Moghadam explains her use of the term Islamism, "...to refer to movements and ideas predicated on the expressed goal of spreading Islamic laws and norms, whether through Parliamentary means or violence means" (Moghadam, 2013: 4).

While some individuals specifically use the terms Islamist and Islamism, others such as Ali, have either conflated definitions of Islamists with all those who practice Islam as if to imply a monolithic conceptualization of this group of people, or they have

used other terminology to discuss the same topic. For example, in her article “Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Egypt,” Margot Badran uses the term “fundamentalist” to describe Islamists, perhaps because it is less alienating towards Muslims and can be extended towards other religious extremists. Although many of the authors referred to in this section do not specifically use the term Islamist feminism, but rather solely Islamist, the use of this term is designed to highlight the ways in which women involved in Islamist movements have had a particular interest in the woman question.

Although this thesis aims to introduce *Muslim feminist* voices and literature that can contribute to transnational and feminist discourses, Islamist feminists are briefly discussed to separate them from Islamic feminists. However, as a type of *Muslim feminist* group, there is insufficient primary research material to discuss Islamist feminism, its theorists and the contexts in which they operate. Nonetheless, the literature one comes across from authors who write about Islamist feminism points out some features that are similar to Islamic feminism, such as the focus on and use of religion to discuss women’s roles and status, and some that are dissimilar from Islamic feminism, such as emphasizing women’s primary roles as mothers and wives and restricting them to the home. To illustrate this point, Leila Ahmed (1992) discusses some of the positions held by members of the Society of Muslim Sisters, a group that branched off of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt who sought to return to the fundamentals of Islam to improve Egyptian society and move away from what they viewed as Western and threatening to Egyptian cultural and religious identities (Ahmed, 1992: 192-207).

Although both the Muslim Sisters and Muslim Brotherhood placed an importance on women's education and involvement in the movement to reform Egyptian society, they also emphasized women's primary roles as mothers, wives and caregivers in the home. According to one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, "[t]he woman's natural place is in the home, but if she finds that after doing her duty in the home she has time, she can use part of it in the service of society, on condition that this is done within the legal limits which preserve her dignity and morality" (Hasan Ismail Hudaybi quoted in Ahmed, 1992: 195). Hudaybi succeeded Hasan al-Banna, the leader of the Muslim Brother who held anti-British and anti-Western views (Ahmed, 1992: 195). Clearly this group of individuals considered women as key figures in upholding society; however, the focus on women's roles in the private sphere, such as in the home and away from public arenas, separates Islamist feminist ideologies from Islamic feminists. Moreover, the fact that there is a lack of primary literature by Islamist feminists poses a challenge in truly understanding what the goals of Islamist feminists are, how this ideology has spread to other regions and manifested into societal changes, and who the key figures<sup>15</sup> are in this movement.

#### **1.4 Muslim Feminism**

As previously stated, Muslim feminism is a type of *Muslim feminisms*, the umbrella term used in this thesis to refer to all different types of *Muslim feminist* groups that focus on women's rights in Muslim communities. Although some scholars have rephrased this term, this branch of *Muslim feminisms* has specific traits that differentiate it from the others, namely the ways in which a critical reflection is turned both internally and externally. For example, Jasmin Zine uses the term "critical faith-centered approach"

in her article “Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: The Politics of Muslim Women’s Feminist Engagement” (Zine, 2006: 11). One trait of Muslim feminism, which I would argue is also one of its strengths, is the emphasis on both inward and outward critical reflections on addressing issues of Muslim women’s oppressions. Additionally, Muslim feminists generally steer away from examining how culture or religion oppresses women because they are aware of other factors at play in determining causes of oppression that considers intersections of various factors: such as gender, race, religion, and socio-economic status— that coincide to systematically oppress women.

It is also important to note that “Muslim” used in the context of Muslim feminism does not necessarily refer to religion. Instead, it refers to the cultural background of the author and the ways in which culture, customs and norms shape the author’s understandings of women’s roles and status.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the ideology behind Muslim feminism can be utilized by Arab feminists, who may not be Muslim themselves but have an association with Muslim cultures.

An example of a Muslim feminist who should be included in this group of key *Muslim feminist* scholars is Leila Ahmed. After noticing a lack of literature on Middle Eastern Arab women, and specifically Muslim women in this region, Ahmed sought to dedicate her research to filling this gap. She states that, “a recent authoritative tome on the history of the Islamic peoples by Ira Lapidus makes no reference to women or the construction of gender prior to the nineteenth century and devotes only a small number of pages to women after 1800” (Ahmed, 1992: 2). In discussing her text, *Women and Gender in Islam*, Ahmed explains that, “the findings presented in the following pages are essentially provisional and preliminary and constitute in many ways a first attempt to

gain a perspective on the discourses on women and gender at crucial, defining moments in Middle Eastern Muslim history” (4). Thus, in some ways Ahmed’s work does not focus solely on women but Muslim history in general, thereby attempting to avoid neglecting one gender while focusing heavily on another. This is a significant strength in her work because it allows academics from various disciplines including Women’s and Gender Studies, Sociology and Anthropology, History, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as others, to utilize her work. In other words, it is written using an interdisciplinary language and strategy.

For example, Ahmed’s text uses a historical lens to explore how certain practices were adopted in the Middle East from outsiders, such as the practice of veiling, which has become synonymous with Islam. Ahmed reveals that the practice of veiling was widespread amongst upper-class women of the Byzantine Empire (26) along with Christian women during the spread of Christianity in the Middle East (33) because it was utilized as a method to differentiate women of honour from the rest of the female population. “Islam, then, did not bring radical change but a continuity and accentuation of the lifestyles already in place” (Ahmed, 1992: 33). These types of historical contexts and stages are necessary in wider discourses about the history of the Middle East because they are essential to understanding how the policing of women’s bodies was carried out historically and the ways in which it has recently manifested into state policies beyond the Middle East whereby women are forcibly unveiled as in the case of Turkey and France, or forcibly veiled as in the case of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.

While reading *Women and Gender in Islam*, parts of the text that discussed the use of the veil by the state to exercise control over women's bodies echoed Fatima Mernissi's position in *Beyond the Veil* (1987). However, what differentiates Ahmed's work from Mernissi's is her personal position on the veil and how that is reflected in her literature. For example, in "Veil of Ignorance: Have We Gotten the Headscarf all Wrong?" Ahmed (2011) explains that for a long period of time she stood firmly against the veil in all of its multiple forms including the hijab and niqab because she viewed it as a symbol of women's "disempowerment" (Ahmed, 2011: 41). Over the years after having done more research on the veil and interacting with veiled women to understand their perspectives (Ahmed, 1997: 268-270), Ahmed admits that her position transformed. She explains that, "[w]here I once saw the veil as a symbol of intolerance, I now understand that for many women, it is a badge of individuality and justice" (Ahmed, 2011: 41).

In acknowledging this experience and the intellectual growth resulting from it, Ahmed seems to take a step away from revealing her position on the veil in *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992) while opting for a more objective position in discussing the historical contexts in which the practice of veiling occurred and the benefits of veiling in certain contexts in Egyptian society. In discussing the practical advantages of veiling during the 1970's and 1980's in Egypt, Ahmed states that it is economical because Muslim women are saved the expense of acquiring fashionable clothes and having multiple outfits, and also that in some instances it serves as a protection from male harassment (Ahmed, 1992: 223). Therefore, Ahmed analyses the veil by discussing the fact that veiling was not historically a Muslim custom but rather it was tied to the larger patriarchal issue of viewing women as something to be controlled, while simultaneously

discussing how veiling has more recently been used by Muslim women as a method to take control of their own bodies. Ahmed reminds us that during the 1970's and 1980's in Egypt, and one could argue even today in Egypt, "[t]he adoption of the dress does not declare women's place to be in the home but, on the contrary, legitimizes their presence outside it" (Ahmed, 1992: 224). Given the date when *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992) was first published, this type of analysis of the veil was quite innovative.

Another example of a Muslim feminist scholar would be Jasmin Zine, whose work challenges binary categories between East and West and focuses on the politics of Muslim women's bodies. Zine's analysis examines how rules about Muslim women's dress are scripted by both men and the state within Muslim contexts, as the cases of forced veiling in Saudi Arabia and Iran have demonstrated, as well as by the state in non-Muslim contexts, such as forced unveiling in Turkey and France (Zine, 2006b: 244). Zine manages to highlight how in both cases of forced veiling and unveiling, the former in the name of religious values while the latter in the name of secular values, the outcome in both instances is the same in that Muslim women are stripped of their autonomy and are unable to make choices about their own bodies (Zine, 2006b: 244). By highlighting the similar ways that both so-called secular and Islamic states have policed Muslim women's bodies, Zine manages to avoid reinforcing binary categories that pit East against West while emphasizing the issue of Muslim women's autonomy, or lack thereof.

Zine discusses the term "gendered Islamophobia" in this context as a specific form of discrimination that Muslim women face, which is in many ways different from discrimination faced by Muslim men. She explains that gendered Islamophobia is rooted within Orientalist representations that, "cast colonial Muslim women as backward,

oppressed victims of misogynist societies” (240). It is within these Orientalist representations, which can be described quite simply as fantasies created in the minds of male European colonizers about the Middle East, Muslims, and Arab cultures (Moghissi, 2002: 14), which are combined into a single monolithic misrepresentation of that region of the world, that colonial descriptions indicate a desire to “save” Muslim women from their oppressive societies. Therefore, Orientalist representations of Muslim women as oppressed and in need of liberation serve the purpose of justifying and rationalizing the imperial domination of a society that is simply too “primitive” and incapable of governing its own people (Moghissi, 2002: 14; Zine, 2006b: 240).

In many ways, the colonial desire to save Muslim women from what they perceived and misunderstood as “oppressive” continues to play out in the ways in which some states have reacted towards Muslim women’s bodies and clothing: specifically the practice of veiling. Zine demonstrates that France’s banning of the *hijab* or headscarf is an extension of the ways in which gendered Islamophobia operates to deny Muslim women autonomy to make their own decisions. According to Zine, gendered Islamophobia has existed as early as the colonization of Middle Eastern countries; however, after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror, the West’s fixation on Muslim women’s bodies was exacerbated (Zine, 2006a: 10- 11). Within this context, veiling is perceived as a foreign threat to French identity and values (Zine, 2006a: 10). Therefore, although Islamophobia affects both Muslim men and women, gendered Islamophobia affects Muslim women in ways that it does not necessarily affect Muslim men because of the ways in which Muslim women’s bodies have been used historically, and recently, as sites on which colonial missions have been rationalized.

One of the strengths in Zine's work is when she discusses how Muslim women's bodies are scripted in specific Islamic discourses as well as Western secular discourses, and highlighting the similarities between the two. In examining the ways in which both of these discourses fail to allow Muslim women to speak in their own voices and make their own decisions, Zine is in fact drawing attention to the contradiction that arises in this context: that is the act of oppressing Muslim women when attempting to highlight how veiling supposedly oppresses Muslim women, thereby doubly oppressing Muslim women (Zine, 2004: 168). According to Zine, creating a space where Muslim women can articulate their subjectivities "through discourses they themselves have authorized is a contemporary challenge," yet Muslim feminist scholars such as Zine are beginning to accomplish this goal merely by raising awareness around issues of Muslim women's lack of autonomy in discussions of their own bodies without reinforcing binary categories between the East and West through cultural relativist paradigms (Zine, 2004: 168).

One critique that stood out while reading some of Zine's literature is the strong emphasis on Western secularism that has policed Muslim women's bodies in some states through forced unveiling, coupled with only a brief analysis of how some Islamic states police Muslim women's bodies through forced veiling. A site for future analysis in Zine's work could be closer examinations of how these Islamic states deny Muslim women autonomy, how the regulations have affected Muslim women's day-to-day experiences and what the responses have been in some cases. For example, in Saudi Arabia where women's bodies are policed through state legislations that ban them from driving, Muslim women have taken to the streets to challenge the state and the so-called religious legislation that denies them access to driving their own vehicles (BBC, "Some Saudi

Women Defy Driving Ban in Day of Protest”, 2013). An analysis of the justifications behind banning Muslim women from driving as it relates to the overall discussion of policing Muslim women’s bodies under Islamic governance, coupled with the responses by Muslim women in Saudi Arabia who have challenged this legislation (*BBC*, “Some Saudi Women Defy Driving Ban in Day of Protest”, 2013; Perazzo, “The Burden of Being Female in Saudi Arabia”, 2014) would strengthen Zine’s point about creating a space where Muslim women can articulate their own subjectivities. In other words, Zine has provided an insightful discussion of how the West has policed Muslim women’s bodies and the Orientalist narratives that underlie the justifications used to do so. However, using a similar method of tracing the historical origins of the justifications for policing Muslim women’s bodies in the context of Islamic states that forcibly veil Muslim women or ban them from driving would strengthen, balance, and expand the scope of Zine’s arguments.

### **1.5 Post-Colonial, Anti-racist, Anti-Orientalist Feminisms**

Although this final category of feminists is not necessarily a type of *Muslim feminism*, this group of scholars has nonetheless contributed vast amounts of meaningful knowledge and literature on topics of concern to *Muslim feminists*. For example, the work of Sherene Razack, a Sociology professor at the University of Toronto who has a Muslim background but does not identify as a Muslim scholar, explores how Orientalist imagery and ideologies have been utilized against Muslim, Middle Eastern and South Asian populations in North America after 9/11, in ways that deny these groups access to basic human rights in addition to their rights as citizens of Western states in some instances. In

her text *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*, Razack analyses the ways in which since 9/11 anyone believed to be Muslim is denied their rights as citizens in the name of state security in both Canada and the United States through for example, the surveillance of visible minority communities (Razack, 2011: 18). Additionally, she explores how gendered Orientalist imageries define Muslim women as voiceless and oppressed while defining Muslim men as threatening, and what these images mean in a wider context of militarism and civilizing missions. Razack states that, “[t]hree allegorical figures have come to dominate the social landscape of the ‘war on terror’ and its ideological underpinnings of a clash of civilizations: the dangerous Muslim man, the imperiled Muslim woman, and the civilized European, the latter a figure who is seldom explicitly named but who nevertheless anchors the first two figures” (2011: 18).

The reason why Razack’s work should be considered in discussions of *Muslim feminisms* is because it challenges Western notions of rescuing or saving Muslim women in other parts of the world, and even to some extent in our own communities in the West, while simultaneously challenging Orientalist depictions of Muslim men as violent and patriarchal. She is critical of not only politicians and militaries that utilize the gendered Orientalist image of Muslim women in need of saving from their violent male spouses and oppressive cultures, but is also critical of Western feminists who have taken part in reinforcing binaries between the so-called modern West and traditional East. In *Casting Out*, Razack dedicates a large portion to discuss how, “...some Western feminists participate in empire through the politics of rescue, unhesitatingly installing the idea that it is through gender that we can tell the difference between those who are modern and

those who are not” (17). If gender is employed in this manner to determine a society’s place in discussions of modernity, one would first have to debunk the concept of modernity as a term defined under Western Euro-Christian standards, then look at how the group of women in discussion are doubly oppressed first by the “patriarchs of their own community” and again by Westerners, including many liberal feminists, who deny these women their agency (18).

The main critique of this text would have to be the missing discussions on torture prisons such as Guantanamo Bay that have imprisoned and continue to imprison Canadian and American citizens, given that the theme of the book covers some of the ways in which Muslims have been evicted from Western law and politics. Razack does in fact discuss torture prisons in some of her other work, such as the talk she gave in 2010 titled “Reflections on Torture,” however, she does not specifically discuss Guantanamo Bay.<sup>17</sup> Instead she discusses the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and how “narratives about torture tell us which lives are considered worthwhile lives” and how torture is a method of imprinting power on bodies. Even so, her work would have benefitted from an in-depth discussion of the abandonment of Canadian, American and other Western-nation citizens who have been identified as terrorists and sent to Guantanamo Bay, as well as how these cases of racialization relate to her discussions of the war on terror and civilizing missions to rescue Muslim women in *Casting Out*.

Another prominent post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminist whose work is noteworthy when studying the topic of *Muslim feminisms* is Lila Abu-Lughod. As an anthropologist who has observed rural communities in Egypt, Abu-Lughod challenges Orientalist depictions of Middle Eastern and Muslim women, groups that have become

one and the same in the process of Orientalization, as voiceless women who are oppressed by their religions and cultures by listening to and retelling their stories in their own voices (Abu-Lughod, 2008). While Abu-Lughod's research does explore and try to address issues of oppression and patriarchy in Middle Eastern and even Muslim communities in both the East and the West, her work allows the women she investigates to define their systems of oppression in their own voices, which consequently reveals different understandings of the term "oppression."

For example, in *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Abu-Lughod narrates a discussion that took place with a woman named Zaynab from a village in Southern Egypt (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 1). In this discussion, Abu-Lughod explains to Zaynab how the topic of her book is about people in the West believing that Muslim women are oppressed. Zaynab confirms this belief by saying that Muslim women *are* in fact oppressed. However, after probing Zaynab with the question of whether or not the source of oppression is Islam, Zaynab is shocked at this revelation and explains that it is the government who is oppressing the population through economic neglect and rising levels of poverty but that these forms of oppression affect both men and women (2013: 1). This narration is but one example of many themes, including civilizing missions that utilize gendered Orientalist imagery as in the case of Afghanistan as well as discussions of specific forms of violence against women, such as honour killings, discussed in *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* that challenge gendered Oriental discourses about Muslim women from an anthropological position. These discussions are important to include in wider discussions of *Muslim feminisms* and Muslim women's rights and oppressions in both the East and West.

Abu-Lughod's work also has one significant theme she emphasizes when discussing women from the Middle East and from Muslim communities, and that is a critique of cultural explanations. She takes a strong stance against cultural explanations because, she argues, it is a tool essential for making the Other and using cultural relativism in disciplines such as anthropology "helps construct, produce, and maintain it" (Abu-Lughod, 2006: 157). Moreover, she argues that feminists who employ cultural relativism in their work "perpetuate some dangerous tendencies" by attributing oppression to culture while overlooking other factors, such as class, race, and sexuality, that operate collectively to oppress women (2006: 158). In many ways, Muslim women are doubly oppressed, first in their own communities by factors combining social class, race, sexuality, age and other modes of marginalization, and secondly by Western feminists, who will be discussed in *Chapter 3* of this thesis, who may be interested in raising awareness around Muslim women's oppression due to a lack of thorough analysis and fall into the trap of blaming culture and/or religion for Muslim women's inequalities.

As with some of the other scholars discussed thus far, a critique can be made of Abu-Lughod's discussion of women in Afghanistan in the chapter "Do Muslim Women (Still) Need Saving?" of this text. The chapter examines the ways in which discourses surrounding the War on Terror have employed Orientalist images of women in Afghanistan to bolster ongoing Western support for military involvement in Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 29). She raises important questions in this chapter about why culture and religious beliefs were heavily focused on by the West rather than looking at the geopolitical history of Afghanistan and the United States' role in this history, when trying to understand women's oppression. Although Abu-Lughod calls for a challenge to the

polarizations of East and West, she falls into the trap of homogenizing the experiences of both women and men in Afghanistan through the neglect of class and ethnic distinctions in her critiques of the ways in which images of women in Afghanistan have been mobilized by the West to support the War on Terror.

For example, in her discussion of Laura Bush's speech on November 17, 2001, Abu-Lughod discusses the ways in which images of oppressed women in Afghanistan were mobilized to justify military intervention, and the consequences of these types of actions. She quotes Laura Bush from a radio address to the nation that, "[b]ecause of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment" (2013: 32). What would have benefitted Abu-Lughod's argument in this instance is a brief discussion of the ways in which class and ethnic divisions are erased, and women's oppression in Afghanistan was, and continues to be, tied to simple everyday acts such as listening to music that we in the West take for granted. What stood out to me as a woman of Afghan heritage in stating that the Taliban are no longer in power and therefore women are free to leave their homes, is that Laura Bush and others in the West fail to acknowledge wider issues that continue to constrict women in Afghanistan. These issues include the increasing numbers of both male and female opium farmers indebted to drug lords from neighbouring countries and the consequent increase in drug addictions amongst local populations.<sup>18</sup> The "2013 Afghan Opium Survey" by UNODC indicated a 49 percent increase in opium production from 2012-2013 (UNODC, 2013: 3). Moreover, the lack of security in rural regions of the country that prevent girls from going to school

and women from going to and from work if and when such an option is available are yet another example of the challenges women in Afghanistan are faced with.

Unicef's *Overcoming Barriers to Girls' Education in South Asia: Deepening the Analysis* (2009) by Roshan Chitrakar states that, "Lack of female teachers and basic infrastructure are among the key obstacles to girls' education" (Chitrakar, 2009: 11).

As with almost any discussion of women's oppression in Afghanistan, a debate around the veil or burqa is brought up, as if to imply that this piece of cloth is the end-all cause of Muslim women's oppression; therefore, Abu-Lughod dedicates a section of this chapter specifically to address the "politics of the veil" as she calls it. In this section she poses an interesting question when she asks, "[d]id we expect that once 'free' from the extremist Taliban these women would go 'back' to belly shirts and blue jeans or dust off their Chanel suits?" (2013: 35). Although the question draws attention to the oversimplified ways in which Western liberals thought of the Taliban and the political climate in Afghanistan, it also draws attention to something Abu-Lughod had not intended: the homogenization of social classes in Afghanistan. In attempting to draw attention to the West's misunderstandings of the values of veiling in some Muslim contexts, Abu-Lughod fails to utilize an intersectional analysis that considers not only issues of gender and sexuality but class in Afghan society.

It seems as though every so often, roughly a dozen images of the *modern* Afghanistan of the 1950's and 1960's resurfaces, and the ensuing captions or comments on online social media convey feelings of sympathy to the *civilization* that has been lost over the many decades of war. The problem with these images is not so much the implication of Westernization through the clothing and hairstyles donned by the so-called

“modern” Afghan women of that era, although this is also a cause for concern for those interested in anti-colonial feminisms, but that these few images seem to misrepresent and homogenize the experiences of the entire country; a country I would add, that has over a dozen different types of ethnicities and languages amongst people who reside in rural and urban parts of the country. To assume that these peoples share in the *luxuries* of wearing blue jeans is to erase the differences in social classes, histories and experiences that are central to Afghan history. Additionally, when these images were first published in May 27, 2010 in a photo essay in *Foreign Policy* magazine with the accompanying title “Once Upon a Time in Afghanistan...” the author of the piece Mohammad Qayoumi briefly mentions that the images were compiled and published by Afghanistan’s planning ministry (Qayoumi, 2010). Any scholar with a critical lens would wonder what the purpose of this type of publication would be at a time when Afghanistan was experiencing mass societal changes that equated Westernization and secularism with liberal values and “modernity.”

It must also be noted that these images of “modern” Afghan women donning pencil skirts and partaking in “liberal” activities such as studying science at the University of Kabul alongside male peers, were taken in a handful of urban cities such as Kabul and Mazar. If the planning ministry had documented the experiences of men and women outside of these urban settings, one would find few differences in the state of civilization, or lack thereof so to speak, than from today.<sup>19</sup> Illiteracy existed in many rural regions of the country long before the Soviets and the Taliban due to the lack of basic infrastructure<sup>20</sup> which made traveling difficult, gave rise to high levels of poverty and lack of access to basic health services that often led to high infant and maternal mortality

rates. The World Health Organization indicates that maternal mortality rates have decreased over the years since 1990. For example, while in 2005 maternal deaths were at 39.4%, in 2010 that number decreased to 27.5% (*WHO, "Maternal Mortality in 1990-2013"*, 2013). Many if not all of these issues continue to exist to this very day. If one were to compare the quality of life in Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion, during civil war and then during Taliban regime, one would first have to tackle the issue concerning the country's lack of documentation because the first census was not conducted until 1979 (*Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2009-10*) and again, excluded populations residing in many rural regions of the country.

Although Abu-Lughod calls for a challenge to East-West polarizations, she falls into the trap of homogenizing the experiences of both women and men in Afghanistan through the neglect of class and ethnic<sup>21</sup> distinctions in her critiques of the ways in which images of women in Afghanistan have been mobilized by the West to support the War on Terror. This oversimplification is a trap that many feminist and non-feminist academics have fallen into and is not exclusive to Abu-Lughod's work. In order to move beyond the rhetoric of speaking up for or with Afghan women in addressing issues of oppression, the first step is to acknowledge the ethnic, cultural and class diversity within the population of Afghanistan and to avoid homogenization in discourses concerning them.

My attempt at defining and discussing some of the different types of *Muslim feminisms* is intended not only to deconstruct notions of what it means to be a *Muslim feminist* but also to challenge what constitutes as feminist research. Sandra Harding reminds us that, "if feminist research and scholarship were to start from women's lives, they would have to start from all women's lives" (Harding, 1991: 268). Subsequently, the

creation of a platform in this research paper where discussions of *Muslim feminisms* are able to take place, provides a space for knowledge-sharing and growth for the fields of transnational and global feminist research. *Chapter 2* of this thesis discusses the method and methodology used to carry out this research project. Additionally, the diversity of *Muslim feminist theorists* gives rise to issues of native informants and individuals who hold both insider and outsider positions when writing on topics concerning Islam as the root causes of Muslim women's oppressions.

## **2 Chapter: Theory, Methodology and Method**

This section of the thesis discusses the use of post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminist theoretical frameworks to analyse literature on and by *Muslim feminist theorists* as well as the process of locating literature, that is how to find books by and about *Muslim feminism*, and identifying some challenges that surfaced through the course of this thesis. Within this literature is information highlighting the diversity within *Muslim feminist* theories, including some theorists who may be categorized as native informants who produce information exclusively for Western consumption with the aims of reinforcing neo-Orientalist assumptions about Islam and Muslim women's oppression. Within this discussion of native informants and insider/outsider positionalities, I will discuss my own position as both an insider and outsider and how my position in relation to this research topic has shaped this thesis.

### **2.1 Theory and Methodology**

For this thesis, a post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminist theoretical framework is used to analyse literature on *Muslim feminisms* and the ways in which women's issues are discussed within this literature. Moreover, an underlying theme in all of these frameworks is the use of an intersectional lens to analyse Muslim women's oppressions in order to move beyond reducing explanations for oppression to culture or religion. The reason why these theoretical frameworks were chosen for this thesis is because the themes explored in post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminist literature are similar to those I wish to explore in my research. "Postcolonial feminists study relations of power and knowledge within a global context paying specific attention

to differences among women that result from what Patricia Hill Collins terms a matrix of domination” (Hesse-Biber and Brooks, 2012: 516). Therefore, in this thesis I hope to examine power hierarchies that may be represented in certain types of literature, both among *Muslim feminist* literature as well as other feminist literature on topics generally pertaining to issues affecting Muslim women, specifically with regard to so-called honour killings.

Moreover, post-colonial theory, “is closely allied with postmodernism in its attack on the hegemonic discourses of the West, in this case, particularly that of colonialism/imperialism. Postcolonial feminist theory thus seeks a space and discourse in which the knowledge, activism, and subjectivity of Third World women can be articulated” (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 2010: 54). Therefore, post-colonial feminist theory is significantly beneficial for this thesis in providing a framework to create a platform on which discussions of and about *Muslim feminisms* can take place in academia. For example, one of the elements post-colonial feminists seek to challenge is the homogenous use of the term “woman” in Western academia as a term that focuses solely on gender and not social, ethnic, racial or religious identities. In this thesis, the universal use of terms such as “Muslim woman” or *Muslim feminist* are challenged by exploring some of the various types of *Muslim feminisms* that have existed historically and some of their major contributions to the fields of global and transnational feminisms by providing valuable frameworks to use when discussing issues that disproportionately affect Muslim women, especially in communities in the West. An in-depth discussion of honour killings will take place in *Chapter 3* of this thesis to demonstrate this point by comparing and contrasting the works of some *Muslim feminist* scholars discussed in *Chapter 1* with

others whom have written on the topic of so-called honour killings, and what the implications are of writing on this topic using a cultural relativist approach. What makes this particular methodology feminist is that it challenges existing notions of what it means to be a *Muslim feminist*. According to Hesse-Biber, “to engage in feminist theory and praxis means to challenge knowledge that excludes, while seeming to include...Feminist research disrupts traditional ways of knowing to create rich new meanings” (Hesse-Biber and Brooks, 2012: 3). One of the main aims in writing this thesis is to challenge pre-existing notions of what it means to be a Muslim woman who holds feminist values without holding her against Western feminisms as a comparison. In doing so, these types of Muslims who hold feminist values not only create their own identities and are able to voice their concerns on a transnational and global platform with other feminists without being denied their agency, but also challenge Orientalist notions of a single homogenous group existing outside of history and therefore lacking any opportunity to grow or advance as a society.

In order to understand anti-Orientalist literature, let alone anti-Orientalist feminist literature, one must first understand the term “Orientalism” itself. In his analysis of European or Western constructions of the Orient, Edward Said popularized the term Orientalism, “as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient... authorizing views of it, describing it... In short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority of the Orient” (Said, 1978: 2). Additionally, Said emphasized the ways in which power operates in constructing the idea and image of an Other based on race, religion, and nation. According to Said, “Orientals” were rarely regarded or interacted with as human beings but as problems to be solved (Said, 1978: 207). In this

way, Orientals were viewed as lower than colonialists on the hierarchical scale. This was a view held towards all colonized subjects, including Africans, Indians, and those in the Caribbean, not just Middle Eastern Orientals, because “they” were not like the rest of “us,” and for that reason deserved to be ruled and taught to be civil or less barbaric than they were deemed by the colonizers (Said, 1993: xi). Therefore, binary categories were created and reinforced through Orientalist classifications of the Other and the subsequent hierarchies that were created. Sunaina Maira echoes Said’s discussion of power hierarchies in Orientalism when stating that:

Orientalism continues to be a deeply appealing binary frame for imagining the West in opposition to the Orient or the East— a “Western” style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient through the production of an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that has given it reality and presence in and for the West (Maira, 2000: 320).

Within Orientalist literature written by colonialists such as Cromer, as discussed in *Chapter 1* in reference to Leila Ahmed’s work, the Oriental is childlike, irrational and different (Said, 1978: 40). Therefore, Orientalism not only constructs the Oriental Other as inferior and everything that the Orientalist is not, but also silences Oriental subjects from articulating their own history and narratives by assuming that they are incapable of doing so. Thus, by disallowing the Oriental to share their own narratives, the Orientalist produces a single, if inaccurate, narrative about the Orient—arguably, a practice that continues to exist and has been utilized by some feminist groups as well.

It is significant to note here that colonisers were not the only ones making use of Orientalist dogma to justify their missions, but historically and recently certain groups of Western feminists have jumped on the same bandwagon. The term “feminist Orientalism” was coined by Joyce Zonana in her description of how British feminist

writers employed Orientalist stereotypes to illustrate that patriarchy was a foreign and specifically “Eastern” custom (Zonana, 1993: n.p; Weber, 2001: 144). Thus, if Western men behaved in patriarchal ways and oppressed women, they risked being categorized alongside Orientals in the lower strata of the hierarchical ladder. Moreover, Lila Abu-Lughod demonstrates how Orientalist imagery of Muslim women has been used by both feminists and non-feminists alike in the West to support the War on Terror (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 32). In this recent example of feminist Orientalist narratives, it is the West’s duty to fight Islamic terrorists because they not only challenge Western values of freedom and democracy, but also oppress the women and children of Afghanistan with their seemingly patriarchal values (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 32). In this example, Western feminists assumed the root of Afghan women and children’s oppression before engaging in meaningful dialogue with those particular groups: which in this case was thought to be patriarchy with culture and religion at its core. Another element that surfaces in this narrative is one of authority. An example can be found in the ways in which the U.S.-based feminist group, the Feminist Majority Foundation, advocated for the War on Terror on behalf of Afghan women from the position of saviour rather than solidarity with others in Afghanistan who were concerned about the plight of Afghan women (Jarmakani, 2011: 228). In this example, Western feminists assumed that women in Afghanistan were incapable of articulating their experiences of oppression in their own words by speaking and acting on their behalf. Charlotte Weber articulates these sentiments when stating that Western feminists were, “not only blind to the degree of social influence Muslim women actually possessed, but they also failed to consider how Muslim women interpreted their own status and needs” (Weber, 2001: 132). Thus, feminist Orientalists act as wolves in

sheep's clothing because they utilize the same patriarchal language historically used by colonisers, masked in the guise of feminist ideals attempting to liberate their so-called oppressed sisters in other regions of the world. Rather than considering that definitions of oppression differ from one individual or group to another and that feminist movements in other regions of the world do in fact exist and may take alternate routes without using the Western model as a guide, feminist Orientalists further oppress Muslim women by perpetuating colonialist discourses (Weber, 2001: 141, 144). In response to this body of Orientalist and feminist Orientalist literature that simultaneously seeks to silence and oppress the Other, arises anti-Orientalist discourse.

A central theme in anti-Orientalist discourse is to challenge distorted narratives of the Orient or the Middle East, especially those strengthened by the narratives of native informants. For example in , Haideh Moghissi's discussion in *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* she states that, "colonialism, feminists argued, by making the Muslim woman and her rights central to imperial policy in the Middle East, sharply reduced Muslim identity to the control of women's moral conduct and their appearance in colonized Islamic lands" (Moghissi: 1999: 35). Anti-Orientalist feminist literature challenges distorted narratives about Muslim women. In *Chapter 1* of this thesis, I demonstrated the many ways different *Muslim feminist* scholars have challenged stereotypical narratives about Muslim women being oppressed solely by religion or culture, operating on the assumption that so-called religious customs such as veiling further oppresses them. In contrast, anti-Orientalist literature contributes to wider understandings of feminist literature by demonstrating the ways in which Muslim women have been working to raise awareness around issues affecting women in Muslim

societies, and how best to solve them without further alienating, stigmatizing and marginalizing them.

Issues surrounding the notion of what Gayatri Spivak has termed the “native informant” arise in this context of awareness-raising. Hailed as a founding text in postcolonial studies, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” analyses the ways in which British colonial presence in India created hierarchies amongst the local population when the colonial presence attempted to learn about local customs, culture and populations, albeit in a somewhat distant manner. A group of Indian elite was created for the specific purpose of gathering knowledge about the so-called native populations for colonial consumption. Thus, in narrating nationalist writings for the colonizers, Spivak highlights the heterogeneity of this group by stating that, “[c]ertain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other” (Spivak, 1988: 284). This argument could be extended to other discourses where information from the native informant could be used against certain populations, as will be demonstrated in the discussion on reflexivity below. In this thesis, I highlight some of the ways in which narratives by native informants have been used in ways similar to those highlighted by Spivak, in that there is a group of individuals in the context of *Muslim feminisms* who write specifically for a Western audience in the manner that confirms stereotypes and reinforces binary divisions between the East and the West.

Sharing his own experiences of being deemed a native informant by Western journalists and reporters, Edward Said explains that after the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 when “the alarm was sounded that the Muslims had struck once again,” he received about twenty-five telephone calls that very day inquiring about the attacks (Said, 1981:

xiv). The assumption behind the telephone calls was that because Said was from the Middle East and had written about that region, he must have had access to knowledge that others did not. However, another underlying assumption at work here was the unquestionable association between Islam, Arabs and violence or terrorism (Said, 1981: xiv).

The topic of native informants and issues surrounding the work they put forth for Western consumption will be expanded on in *Chapter 3* of this thesis; however, for now it is important to provide a context in which the significance of native informants arises to provide an understanding of how *Muslim feminists* have had to navigate within the context where native voices have historically been silenced or used for colonialist projects. As Jasmin Zine points out, since the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, “Muslims have been positioned on the geo-political stage as anti-democratic, anti-liberal and living in societies located outside the western narratives of progress and modernity” (Zine, 2006: 2). Although it should be noted that these types of Orientalist depictions of Muslim populations have existed as early as the colonizers’ presence in the Middle East and other parts of the world where Muslim populations are located, these images have taken on new meanings since 9/11, and as previously stated, have been used even by some Western feminists to justify and advocate for the War on Terror to supposedly liberate Muslim women.

Thus, in a context where Muslims are placed in binary formulations against the West, both Islam and Muslims, “have become the foils for modernity, freedom and the civilized world” (Zine, 2006: 2). Therefore, when *Muslim feminists* who write on topics that may reaffirm Orientalist images of Muslim women and put forth publications on

something such as gender-based violence in a Muslim context, they must be aware of where their work fits within these opposing binary categories; how it will be interpreted by others; and how it may be used to do more harm than good against Muslim populations globally. There is a fine line that *Muslim feminists* walk between critiquing oppression and reinforcing Orientalist representation. However, after reading various types of literature on topics pertaining to Muslim women's rights, it becomes clear that there is a difference between literature that utilizes sensationalist appropriations of Muslim women to conflate violence with religious beliefs, and literature that examines reasons beyond religion alone, including factors such as economic inequalities and structural gaps in society. For example, Moghadam in *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (2013) analyses the complexities of why Muslim women are oppressed in specific ways, such as honour killings, and how Muslim societies can overcome or address these oppressions.

Moreover, discussions of native informants in the context of *Muslim feminisms* are significant because of the special position held by *Muslim feminist* scholars in the West. Jasmin Zine discusses how in the climate surrounding the War on Terror *Muslim feminist* scholars in the West are doubly positioned as native informants for the West but also as activists within the Muslim community trying to raise awareness around issues affecting women. Zine states that this climate has led to the creation of two categories: "good Muslims" and "bad Muslims" (Zine, 2006: 12). "The 'good Muslim' feminists locate the locus of their struggles in the North and South strictly within the 'religious paradigm' which neatly reduce the complexity of women's lives in theocratic societies to a singular religious *cause* for inequality and under-development" (Zine, 2006: 12;

Jarmakani, 2011: 230). On the other side, “[t]he ‘bad Muslim’ feminist provides deeper more holistic analyses that examine the root causes behind the rise of fundamentalism, global conflicts and terror, and makes the algebra of violence more transparent in relation to the global formations of economic and political power” (12).

In the context of *Muslim feminist* theorists, Nawal El Saadawi would not necessarily be considered a “good Muslim” so much as someone such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali mainly because of their underlying purposes in trying to shed light on issues concerning Muslim women. For example, while the main focus in El Saadawi’s work lies in raising awareness in the ways that Egyptian society, and perhaps Muslim societies beyond Egypt, oppress women through cultural phenomena such as honour, socio-economic inequalities and violence against women such as domestic abuse, Ali’s main focus it seems has been to capitalize on insider stories of oppression while over-generalizing and sensationalizing narratives of Muslim women’s oppressions. This is not to imply that Ali is the only individual who engages in this type of activity. On the contrary, she is merely one amongst many who have banked on the sensationalization of Muslim women’s oppression in the wake of 9/11. Both of these individuals raise awareness around various forms of violence against Muslim women; however, the quality of work between the two is vastly different. It is obvious in the tone and language used by Ali that her underlying goal is to shock her readers through sensationalism and sweeping generalizations, more of which will be discussed in the following chapter of this thesis. Nonetheless, the creation of categories such as so-called “good” and “bad Muslims” has created a challenging environment for *Muslim feminist* discourses to be taken for what they are— attempts at raising awareness around issues affecting Muslim women, rather than used

for ulterior purposes that the authors had not necessarily intended, such as reinforcing Orientalist images of Muslim men and women.

Finally, one of the reasons why the inclusion of an intersectional framework is important to this particular type of research project is to deconstruct monolithic conceptualizations of Islam, Muslims and particularly *Muslim feminist* movements in all parts of the world. Leslie McCall (2005) defines intersectionality as, “the relationships among multiple social dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005: 1771). Concepts of class and imperialism are especially noteworthy in discussions of *Muslim feminisms* because, as noted in *Chapter 1*, one of the main obstacles in women’s movements in the Middle East was the colonial presence that feminist values were associated with, consequently categorizing feminism and women’s issues as a foreign threat to national identity. Historically, feminist discourse in the Middle East often took form in the language of the colonizer, such as French or English, rather than the native tongue of the countries where it was taking place, such as Arabic. As Hammami and Rieker point out in a discussion of the reformulation of Middle Eastern women’s studies, “...[r]ecognition of the interrelationship between gender and class hierarchy demands that analysis of women’s oppression must be centered on subaltern women, because the nature of their subalternity leads them to struggle against the processes of hierarchization as a whole” (Hammami and Rieker, 1988: 101). This is not to imply the insignificance of the work and gains accomplished by the bourgeoisie in *Muslim feminisms*, but to highlight the ways in which subaltern voices have often been left out of these discourses on *Muslim feminist* movements.

Moreover, the inclusion of class in addition to histories of colonialism and imperialism in discussions of *Muslim feminisms* challenges Orientalist understandings on the Middle East, Arab populations and Muslims as being one and the same, a theme that often comes up in Western feminist literature. Hammami and Rieker have pointed out that, “[i]t is surprising in this period of post-Orientalist deconstruction that an unproblematized monolithic ‘Islam’ remains at the center of the analysis of Middle Eastern women” (Hammami and Rieker, 1988: 93-94). As I have attempted to illustrate in *Chapter 1*, there are different types of *Muslim feminisms* with diverse understandings of Islam and women’s positions. Thus, this thesis seeks to open a platform on which to deconstruct pre-conceived conceptions of *Muslim feminisms* in an attempt to highlight the benefits these scholars and theorists can contribute to the fields of transnational and global feminisms. In speaking of the advantages when including these types of diverse voices in feminist research and scholarship, Nahla Abdo states that, “[b]y challenging the monolith, Middle Eastern/Arab/Muslim which has been characteristic of traditional Amero-Euro writings on the region, these feminists have defied the Orientalizing-Othering approaches constructed as modes of knowing Arab/Middle Eastern women” (Abdo, 1993: 29). The very fact that these accomplishments are being acknowledged and discussed is one positive outcome of this thesis but when Women’s and Gender Studies curriculums include *Muslim feminist* voices within transnational and global feminist theory discourses, a space will be opened to engage in knowledge sharing with the inclusion of *Muslim feminist* scholars as active agents in these dialogues.

## 2.2 Method

For this thesis a qualitative application of critical discourse analysis is utilized to analyse various types of literature using a post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist theoretical framework. According to Patricia Lina Leavy, “content analysis is the systematic study of texts and other cultural products or nonliving data forms... In other words, the researcher does not create or co-create the raw data through surveys, ethnography, or interviews but rather collects pre-existing data” (Leavy, 2007: 227). For this thesis, secondary sources are analysed on the subject of *Muslim feminisms* rather than collecting and creating new raw or primary information.

The first step in locating literature for this thesis involved finding the names of theorists and scholars whose works would be investigated. A quick search in the Carleton University library catalogue in addition to a search on Google for the terms “Islamic feminism,” “Muslim feminism,” and “feminism in Muslim countries,” were the first steps taken. These searches yielded few results in terms of scholars’ names<sup>22</sup> but led the direction towards some texts with rich bibliographies and endnotes, providing another mechanism to search for scholars and texts. Searching for literature and scholars who have written about feminist movements and theories associated with Islam allowed me to gain a basic understanding of the historical contexts in which these feminist movements were born. However, I was aware that because of these historical contexts, which especially in the case of Egypt involved nationalist and anti-imperialist movements, that some voices were not represented in the literature available to me as an academic in the West who only has access to the English language and not for example Arabic, the language in which some *Muslim feminists* published in before their work was either

translated into English or before they began publishing their work in English. Although I am aware of some of the challenges in reading literature that has been translated from one language to another, such as the fact that in some cases vocabulary and terminologies may not neatly translate into English and therefore, some of the vocabulary is modified, my emphasis in this thesis has mainly been on literature published in English in the West. For example, in the case of Nawal El Saadawi who at the start of her career published her work in the Arabic language in Egypt, wrote a text with a title that was altered in the process of translation. The title of her text *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* was originally *Al-wajh al-'ari lil mara'a al-arabiyyah*, which when directly translated into English would be “The naked face of Eve” (Jamarkani, 2011: 234-235). However, it is evident that the meaning of the title has been completely altered through the process of translation from a title that simply describes Eve’s face as “naked” to one that metaphorically *veils* Eve’s face, thereby reinforcing Orientalist stereotypes of Arab and Muslim women.

As was discussed in *Chapter 1* of this thesis, the colonizer’s language—that is, French rather than Arabic, was used to carry out feminist messages in Egypt thereby excluding those who value women’s rights yet simultaneously oppose imperialism. Consequently, the title “feminist” was refused by many who had a desire to challenge patriarchal laws and traditions yet did not want to side with imperialists at the expense of their national identity. Therefore, the term “feminist” was not used in some of the literature I came across. Instead words such as “women’s rights” or “the woman question” were used (Badran, 1991: 201-236). This posed some challenges in categorizing this particular body of literature and these scholars and activists as

“feminist” because of the resistance to this very title. However, although I am conscious of this history of resistance, the term *Muslim feminisms* is used in my research as an umbrella term to refer to particular groups of individuals who challenge patriarchy and the status of women within the context of Islam and traditions associated with this faith, such as honour killings. The term *Muslim feminisms* is also used for a lack of a better word to fit in line with existing vocabulary. It is interesting to note that while some scholars self-identify and are identified by others as secularists, “scholars embracing the religious Islamic approach are not necessarily religious or Islamist themselves” (Abdo, 2006: 91). Therefore, when I use the label *Muslim feminist* in this thesis, it is more of a reference to the sort of works by specific individuals rather than the identity of the individuals themselves.

Using the content of the literature, I developed different categories of *Muslim feminisms*, such as secular Muslim feminism, Islamic feminism, Islamist feminism, Muslim feminism<sup>23</sup> and lastly a group of scholars who are not necessarily associated with Islam but have contributed significant knowledge and literature to the field of *Muslim feminist theories*. This last group of scholars are what I refer to as post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminists. It is important to include this group of scholars’ voices within discussions of issues that disproportionately affect Muslim women, such as honour killings, because when discussing these issues in a Western context, these particular scholars such as Sherene Razack, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Nahla Abdo among others, raise questions that draw attention to discussions surrounding histories of colonialism and hierarchies of power. As will be discussed in *Chapter 3*, these historical contexts are necessary not only in understanding how certain acts against women are

justified under religion, but also when attempting to develop laws and policies to address these issues without further marginalizing certain populations. As noted by Minoos Moallen, “questions of race, gender, and cosmopolitanism cannot be separated from old and new forms of colonialism and new formations of empire. Indeed, if we were to ignore the hidden operation of imperialist subtexts, it would be difficult to process either the imperialist plan of bringing gendered subjects into its temporal zone” (Moallen quoted in cooke et al., 2008: 106-107).

### **2.3 Reflexivity**

As an individual who identifies as both a Muslim and a feminist, perhaps even a *Muslim feminist*, being aware of the multiple identities I hold as well as how my words may be interpreted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike are essential in this thesis. The reason why this awareness is essential is because of the double position I hold as an insider and outsider when discussing not only *Muslim feminisms* but in particular the topic of honour killings in *Chapter 3* in this thesis. As previously discussed, Spivak’s term “native informant” would be considered an example of an insider because in the context of binary categories, the native informant is the Other—that is, someone who is not the colonizer but provides information about one’s own culture, customs, and traditions to the colonizer.

In the context of globalization and increasing involuntary and voluntary migrations, as a diasporic individual living in the West, the native informant is simultaneously positioned as both the insider and outsider when writing on themes pertaining to the Other. In referring to the binary categories of “us” and “them,” Nahla

Abdo states that, “the lines separating the two is blurred: at many junctures, the ‘us’ becomes ‘them’ and the ‘them’ becomes ‘us’. After all, many Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners form part and parcel of the European and North American social fabric” (Abdo 2002: 380). Within this particular context, Minoo Moallem explains, the success of certain diasporic women informants who mimic Western liberals and have taken part in self-civilizing missions raises critical questions about the spaces given to Muslim women to discuss issues that have been categorized as rooted in culture or religion. When Muslim women do in fact use this space to discuss issues such as violence against Muslim women, they may be expected to perform a form of “cultural authenticity that reproduces the axioms of imperialism,” (Moallem quoted in cooke et al., 2008: 109-110) lest they be categorized as the “bad Muslim” (Zine, 2006: 12) who questions the politics of power and neo-Orientalist ideologies at play in these contexts.

Within this already highly politicized environment, I write on the topic of *Muslim feminisms* with multiple identities that cannot be overlooked. Jasmin Zine highlights the complexities in holding a Muslim identity in the West when she states that, “[i]n Western contexts, the aftermath of 9/11 and the ‘war on terror’s’ effect on draconian state security policies, racial profiling, and closed borders make being ‘Muslim by name only’ impossible, as all Muslims face being ‘guilty by association’ with a Muslim name” (Zine, 2008: 112). Therefore, even if I attempted to conceal one aspect of my identity and consider myself only an outsider Muslim who has lived in the West for the majority of my life, simply having a Muslim name, being a Muslim woman, and having access to knowledge about Islam and its traditions and customs—which often gets homogenized as singular throughout the world in the creation of binary categories rooted in Orientalist

discourses—affords me an identity I cannot escape. This is not to imply that outsiders—that is, non-Muslims—cannot access knowledge about Islamic traditions and customs, but that in a post-9/11 epoch in which binary categories between the East and West are reinforced through Orientalist ideologies, by default diasporic individuals such as myself are categorized as the Other and are seen as having innate knowledge or expertise to which outsiders may not have access.

Consequently, the information diasporic individuals put forth for consumption in the West can be used for multiple purposes, including those unintended by the authors. While on the one hand this information can be used as a means of educating others and clarifying commonly held misconceptions, on the other hand it can be used to further marginalize and alienate certain groups by using this information as proof of their *Otherness* since the story came straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. A case in point would be the work of Irshad Manji, a Canadian journalist who refers to herself as a "Muslim Refusenick", which she explains does not mean that she refuses to be a Muslim, "... it simply means I refuse to join an army of automatons in the name of Allah" (Manji, 2003: 3). Not only was her book *The Trouble with Islam Today* on the Canadian bestseller list for twenty three weeks in its first year of publication, but as Saba Mahmood points out, "... she is invited to give lectures at elite academic institutions despite the fact that her writings and speeches are full of historical errors and willful inaccuracies about Islam" (Mahmood, 2008: 86). Although Manji raises some significant points, such as the lack of questioning or self-educating that takes place in *some* Muslim communities (2003: 31) and that it is people who interpret the Quran and oppress others not the teachings of the Holy book itself (35-36), these statements are drowned out in the

offensive language used to describe Muslims, which she homogenizes as being one and the same throughout the world. Through the reoccurring use of words such as “brain-dead,”(31) and “narrow-minded,”(22) as well as personal narratives that supposedly attest to the truth behind her arguments throughout the text, Manji feeds into Orientalist binaries that praises the West while simultaneously degrades the East. As an individual who claims to be both a Muslim and liberal, Manji not only possesses so-called credible insider knowledge about Islam but her political ideologies as a liberal individual allow her access to spaces, awards and recognition denied to other female scholars in the West who identify as Muslim and speak out against topics pertaining to self-critique within Muslim communities.<sup>24</sup>

The implications of writing on issues regarding Muslim women’s oppressions and for whose consumption within existing post 9/11 binary categories will be discussed further in *Chapter 3* in the context of honour killings through the works of another native informant Ayaan Hirsi Ali. In examining the work of Irshad Manji and the space she occupies in Western liberal, conservative and feminist discourses, my own awareness has risen to ensure that the same mistakes Manji commits does not occur in this thesis.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

By using a post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminist theoretical framework to critically investigate literature on *Muslim feminisms* and the ways in which issues of violence against women, such as honour killings, are discussed within this literature, I aspire to introduce and consciously include *Muslim feminist* voices among transnational and global feminist theorists within the academic field of Women’s and

Gender Studies. It is evident that there are different types of *Muslim feminists* who write an array of rich literature on topics pertaining to Muslim women's positions and oppressions, as was discussed in *Chapter 1*. However, the use of the umbrella term *Muslim feminism* is intended to refer to this particular group of theorists without compromising the diversity existing within their ideologies and literature. In attempting to highlight rather than overlook these diversities, discussions of native informants who write for Western consumption with the aim of reinforcing binary categories of "East" and "them" against the "West" and "us" are included in this thesis alongside those who may possess insider and outsider knowledge when writing about Muslim women's oppressions while simultaneously critiquing the complexities of oppression.

The next chapter of this thesis will analyse the murders of the Shafia family in 2009 to discuss the ways in which literature surrounding the topic of honour killings manifest into either reinforcing Orientalist assumptions about honour killings as cultural phenomena that feed into strengthening East versus West dichotomies, or has the potential to provide the necessary tools to produce laws and policies to address this issue head-on without further marginalizing Muslim communities living in the West. The works of various scholars who may be considered experts or influential theorists in their respective fields will be analysed, including Phyllis Chesler, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Julie Zeilinger, Lila Abu-Lughod and Nahla Abdo, to highlight the differences in the language used to discuss this particular type of violence against women.

### **3 Chapter: Discussing Honour Killings from Muslim Feminist Perspectives**

The topic of honour crimes has been a difficult one to discuss for feminists, legal scholars, activists and concerned citizens from all walks of life. Questions of cultural relativism or respect for cultural *difference*, in addition to issues of agency and feminist epistemology are but a few of the many complex challenges one will face in discussing the topic of honour crimes. In this chapter, a closer examination of the ways in which these discussions have taken on a critical anti-racist approach is called for by analysing the works of *Muslim feminists* in addition to post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminists. In comparison, some works put forth by other feminists who have written on topics of honour killings will also be analysed to highlight the differences in the tone and content of existing literature on the topic of honour killings. A closer look at the Shafia case in Canada will illustrate some of the gaps within and around these discourses in the hopes of locating legal and social solutions to this issue.

#### **3.1 Defining “Honour Killings”**

According to Lila Abu-Lughod, the honour crime is regarded as, “one of the most iconic symbols of the oppressions of women in IslamLand,” a term that Lila Abu-Lughod uses to describe a mythical place where individuals are permitted to carry out fantasies of advocating for women’s rights through the reinforcement of binary categories that separate the good and moral “us” from “them” (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 68-70). The term *honour crime* itself often invokes controversy because of the fact that the use of the term

*honour* in regards to murdering or attempting to murder women has been attributed by many to culture and religion, a phenomenon that will be critiqued following a discussion of the definitions of so-called *honour killings*.

Depending on the source of the definition, one can either interpret honour killings as a cultural phenomenon<sup>25</sup> or as a type of violence against women connected to wider systemic notions of exerting patriarchal power against women's bodies.<sup>26</sup> Although in this thesis, a discussion of *honour killings* as it relates to wider discussions of the ways in which patriarchy manifests physical harm onto women's bodies will take place, it is significant to briefly note that *honour killings* are not only committed against women who seemingly bring *dishonour* to their families, but are also committed against transsexual and homosexual populations who are also killed under the guise of "dishonor" in many countries including Turkey and Iraq (Hilton, 2011). The "honour killings" of transsexual and homosexual populations are increasingly gaining public attention as more cases are documented by international human rights organizations; however, for the purposes of this thesis, I will only focus on "honour killings" against heterosexual individuals who are biologically born as females, and the ways in which patriarchy and notions of honour are used to control these women's bodies.

Nawal El Saadawi discusses notions of honour as they relate to women's virginity in *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980) and the consequences of what happens to Arab women and girls who are so much as suspected of losing her virginity in a dishonourable way either through pre-marital sexual intercourse, rape or in some cases ensuing pregnancies following either of these scenarios. El Saadawi not only critiques the Egyptian legal system that favours "traditionalist conceptions of honour" by providing lenient

punishments to perpetrators of so-called honour crimes, but challenges the very concept of honour in Arab societies without blaming a single religion, group of people or culture. Rather, through a discussion of the combination of distorted understandings of tradition and a legal system ill-equipped to prosecuting individuals who engage in these acts of violence against women, El Saadawi raises critical questions that shed light on some of the controversies and hypocrisies surrounding this particular type of violence that disproportionately affects women. For example, El Saadawi states that:

A man's honour is safe as long as the female members of his family keep their hymens intact. It is more closely related to the behaviour of the women in the family, than to his own behaviour. He can be a womanizer of the worst calibre and yet be considered an honourable man as long as his womenfolk are able to protect their genital organs" (El Saadawi, 1980: 31).

Although this quote may reveal some broad generalizations about Arab men, El Saadawi speaks from personal experience as an individual who spent many years practicing medicine and carrying out psychological and sexual examinations on female patients in both urban and rural areas (El Saadawi, 1980: 1). El Saadawi is also careful not to blame religion and/or culture alone for these distorted notions of "honour," but rather through discussions of narratives of female patients she encountered through her years of medical practice in addition to brief historical analyses, she debunks some misconceptions of female chastity as it relates to female circumcision and sexuality. By specifically stating that certain Islamic leaders, such as the Prophet Muhammad, were opposed to practices of female circumcision because they "considered it harmful to the sexual health of the women," and by discussing how this was a common practice in societies with "widely varying religious backgrounds, in countries of the East and the West," El Saadawi sweeps aside the problematic binary categories that are often reinforced in discussions of honour and violence against women (El Saadawi, 1980: 39).

Furthermore, Lila Abu-Lughod provides a definition for honour crimes that draws upon both interpretations of so-called honour killings as cultural phenomena and as a manifestation of how patriarchy perpetuates violence against women:

Defined as the killing of a woman by her relatives for violation of a sexual code in the name of restoring family honour [sic], the honour [sic] crimes poses more starkly than any other contemporary category the dilemmas of rights activism in a transnational world. (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 113).

Additionally, Nahla Abdo and Shahrzad Mojab's (2004) text *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges* highlights the element of power involved in these types of killings when stating that it is systemic, "[i]n fact... women and even relatives often participate in the murder of a mother, daughter, sister or other female members of the family or kin" (Abdo and Mojab, 2004: 3-4). One of the main reasons why the works of *Muslim feminists* and post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminists are noteworthy to discussions of honour killings is the difference in tone when discussing the issue, perpetrators and victims, which ultimately aims to avoid reinforcing binary categories of "us"/West and "them"/East. A closer examination of some of the existing literature on the topic of honour killings reveals how central the element of Othering through the use of binary categories is in these discourses.

### **3.2 *Violence in the Name of Honour and the Problem with Cultural Relativism***

The text *Violence in the Name of Honour* (2004) posits that a host of theoretical positions have, "joined the chorus of Orientalists, mainstream media, and Western states in setting up a great divide between the East and the West" (Abdo and Mojab, 2004: 6). Although these theoretical positions were paved with the intentions of respecting cultural difference, the editors emphasize that these positions in fact deny the peoples of the

region their history of struggle against religious obscurantism and oppressive ethnic and cultural traditions (Abdo and Mojab, 2004: 6). Consequently, there is the dynamic of an Orientalist binary division between the so-called modern and forward-thinking West, and the backward or traditional-thinking East, a point that Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian (2006) reiterates.

In her review of *Violence in the Name of Honour*, a collection of essays on the topic of honour-related violence, Kevorkian (2006) writes that, “the main contribution of this edited volume lies in its investigation of Western epistemic practices, which however well meaning, have often created Orientalist ideologies that have in fact denied specific groups of people a contextual understanding of their struggles against oppression, and often eliminated serious inquiry by further subjugating them to the unproductive dynamics of an ‘us’/ ‘them’ binary” (Kevorkian, 2006: 203). Therefore, some feminist groups have refused the terms “honour crimes” and “honour killings” altogether. For example, in a discussion of the music video “If I Could Go back In Time” by Palestinian hip hop group DAM depicting the story of what one would at first assume is a so-called honour killing, Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian and Suhad Daher-Nashif point out the significance and power of language when discussing particular instances of violence against women. “For over ten years, Palestinian feminists have insisted on using the term ‘femicide,’ or ‘*qatl al-nisa*’ and not ‘honour (sic) crimes’ so as to refuse legitimization and justifications that bestow ‘honour’ (sic) on killers and abusers” (Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif, 2012). By refusing to use the term “honour,” these feminists are challenging the ways in which this term not only empowers the perpetrators but also the ways in which the term *honour* has been used by others to reinforce binary categories that

differentiate the “civilized”/“us” from the “not so civilized”/“them.” As Lila Abu-Lughod and Maya Mikdashi highlight, the problem that arises when using the term “honour killing” or “honour crimes” is that it, “highlights violence in certain contexts while obscuring it in others. It locates the cause in barbaric cultures and enduring tradition, out of time but in particular cases” (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi, 2012).

Take for example the work of Phyllis Chesler who has written extensively on the topic of honour killings.<sup>27</sup> Because of Chesler’s experience of having been married to a “wealthy and Westernized Afghan man” and supposedly having lived in a “harem” in Kabul, Afghanistan, Chesler draws on her personal experiences as a white, American woman living in Afghanistan to discuss notions of honour violence as it pertains to so-called Islamic traditions (Chesler, “Honour (sic) Killings in the West and the God of Poetic Justice”, 2013; Chesler, *An American Bride in Kabul: A Memoir*, 2013). These experiences have supposedly rendered Chesler an expert on Islamic traditions, violence against women in Afghanistan and the “Muslim world”, which tend to be conflated in her work and discussed as if to imply a homogenous entity worldwide that engages in similar practices of honour crimes. For example, in the *Jerusalem Post*, Chesler (December 2013) discusses how she nearly died in Kabul but managed to escape this harrowing experience to become a psychologist, author and human and women’s rights activist who has dedicated her life and work to exposing the truth about honour killings (Chesler, “Honour (sic) Killings in the West and the God of Poetic Justice”, 2013). A common theme within Chesler’s work is the deductive reasoning that honour killings are a trend within Muslim communities simply by virtue of the presence of Islamic culture and religion. For example, in “Worldwide Trends in Honour (sic) Killings” Chesler (2010)

states that honour killings are different from other forms of violence against women, such as crimes of passion and domestic violence because, “[t]heir motivation is different and based on codes of morality and behaviour (sic) that typify some cultures, often reinforced by fundamentalist religious dictates” (Chesler, 2010). In this report, Chesler also states that the trend in increasing rates of honour killings can be attributed to the rise in “jihadist extremism” and “Islamic fundamentalism” in the “Muslim world.”<sup>28</sup> This type of argument can be found in almost all of Chesler’s work on the topic of honour violence and is typical of those who employ cultural relativism to discuss certain types of violence against women in Other communities. Not only does this type of literature homogenize a diverse religion interwoven with various differing cultural practices, but this type of cultural relativist approach provides no insightful information in dealing with the actual issue at hand, which is reducing the number of deaths associated with these types of crimes while finding long-term solutions for communities where high rates of honour crimes are prevalent.

While Chesler’s work may have the potential to contribute meaningful material to these discussions, especially considering her influence in reaching wide audiences in the West, her work falls short of having a complete discussion on the topic of honour-related violence. For example, through her analyses of various case studies Chesler’s constant connection of Islamic culture and religion to the deaths of these women draws attention to common patterns of peoples and communities using religion as justification.<sup>29</sup> While I would agree that there is clearly something worth looking into when case after case of honour-related deaths demonstrate a correlation with the idea of using one’s faith as justification for this type of crime, I disagree with Chesler’s deductive reasoning that

Islam is the only religion responsible for or associated with honour crimes, an area that will be explored below with a focus on the Shafia murder cases of 2009. In doing so, Chesler fails to look at the wider context in which honour-related violence takes place across not only various geographical locations but also faiths and cultures. This is one of the many reasons why cultural relativism is problematic.

It is significant to note here that Chesler is not the only Western feminist who engages in a cultural relativist approach when discussing honour killings. Julie Zeilinger<sup>30</sup> is one of the feminists who has more recently engaged in this type of cultural relativism. Zeilinger gained popularity for writing her first book *A Little F'd Up: Why Feminism is Not A Dirty Word* (2012) at the young age of nineteen and has received a vast level of support from Western feminists.<sup>31</sup> This situation is concerning for non-Western feminists who also write about issues of gendered violence, such as so-called honour crimes, because feminists like Zeilinger's voice dominates the platform on which to discuss these issues, thereby overpowering others who are working hard to avoid cultural relativism when discussing honour crimes. For example, Zeilinger (2012) dedicates a chapter solely to honour killings in *A Little F'd Up* where she not only simplifies definitions of honour crimes by suggesting that these types of murders and beatings occur when women are "suspected of having lost her sexual 'purity'" (Zeilinger, 2012: 179) but she also goes on to homogenize the complexities behind honour crimes by stating that it happens in virtually all Muslim cultures (179). In this way, she reduces billions of Muslims of different races, ethnicities, histories and cultures to a single monolithic conceptualization that engages in this particular type of violence against women. Zeilinger also states that, "[t]he roots of honour (sic) crimes are deeply

embedded into the culture in which they occur” to reinforce the notion that this is a cultural problem unrelated to other systems of patriarchal power (Zeilinger, 2012: 180).

To drive her point home, Zeilinger then goes on to pose the question of who will stand up for these oppressed Muslim women by stating that “[a]nd even if women in these cultures do believe that honour (sic) crimes are wrong, who the *hell* is going to stand up for what’s right?” (Zeilinger, 2012: 180). This question is followed by the obvious answer: none other than Western feminists who should act on their feelings of guilt for having access to “relatively blessed lives” while their “sisters around the world” continue to be oppressed (Zeilinger, 2012: 181). The fact that Zeilinger feels that Other women’s issues deserve more attention than those occurring in her own city or country echoes on the actions of colonialists and Orientalist feminists who used a similar logic to help *liberate* women in once colonized regions of the world.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Zeilinger overshadows the voices of activists, scholars and others who have taken stances against honour killings without reducing acts of violence against Muslim women to culture or religion alone. For example, in the introduction to *The Hidden Face of Eve*, Nawal El Saadawi states that it is not Islam as a religion or culture that oppresses women and men but rather, “[t]he situation and problems of women in contemporary human society are born of developments in history that made one class rule over another, and men dominate over women. They are the product of class and sex” (El Saadawi, 1980: i). El Saadawi also speaks against imperialist feminists who think they can help liberate Arab or Muslim women by stating that, “[i]t is Arab women alone who can formulate the theory, the ideas and the modes of struggle needed to liberate themselves from all oppression” (1980: xvi). If El Saadawi’s and other *Muslim feminist* scholars are the types of voices Zeilinger

chooses to ignore in her literature when discussing activist and awareness-raising work around honour killings, her work is no better than colonialist literature that historically sought to silence colonized populations in the process of bringing *liberation* to supposedly uncivilized lands.

Zeilinger's arguments in *A Little F'd Up* would not be so concerning had it not been for the popularity of the book and the fact that she was named as one of *The Daily Beast's* "150 Women Who Shake the World."<sup>33</sup> If Zeilinger is amongst the group of most powerful and influential women of the next generation in the West and the type of information she presents holds a very Orientalist tone, this in itself should raise questions as to why her voice is more prominent and respected when discussing global issues of violence against women as opposed to others, such as the *Muslim feminists* in this thesis who do not make use of Orientalism and cultural relativism, whose names have not been included amongst those considered to "shake the world"? If there is only a single type of narrative that generally dominates feminist discussions of honour crimes, a narrative that is based on Orientalist assumptions that homogenize Muslim populations around the world, perhaps some may see no reason to hear what *Muslim feminists* have to say on this very topic since they are told all they need to know by a few select individuals. However, this is quite problematic in that it contradicts feminist notions of allowing women agency to tell their own stories in their own voices.

The problems with holding cultural relativist views, such as those promoted by the likes of Chesler and Zeilinger, are that these individuals not only present Muslim women outside of history and incapable of struggling for their own rights, but as Reza Hammami and Martina Rieker (1988) point out, "one has a sense that struggle and

equality are possible for Arab women only on a road which leads directly to a falsely idealized notion of the position of Western women” (Hammami and Rieker, 1988: 99-100). The problem here is not so much the fact that individuals like Chesler and Zeilinger are outside of Muslim culture and are therefore not *allowed* to discuss, write on or speak out against certain issues of violence against women in Muslim communities, but that these individuals make use of cultural relativist paradigms to discuss these issues and not so much to help locate meaningful solutions to issues of honour crimes. By continuously blaming religion and culture for so-called honour crimes, these individuals are wiping their hands clean of the situation while attempting to dictate what they assume to be the best solutions to address these issues since according to their logic, violence against women and particularly honour crimes do not occur in their own cultures, therefore part of the solution they indirectly if not directly suggest entails a move towards Westernization. As Nahla Abdo (1993) points out, power relations between researcher and researched must be removed so that the quality of research is, “[d]etermined by its ability to truly and clearly represent the interests and concerns of its subjects” (Abdo, 1993: 36).

Additionally, Lila Abu-Lughod addresses the problem of cultural relativism that is often prevalent in academic literature on the topic of honour crimes beyond Chesler and Zeilinger’s works. Abu-Lughod (2013) states that the tone of discourses around honour crimes is important in understanding a wider environment of imperialism.

Honour (sic) crimes are explained as the behaviour of a specific ethnic or cultural community. The culture itself is taken to be the cause of the criminal violence. Thus the category stigmatizes not a particular act but entire cultures or ethnic communities. (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 114)

She then poses the question of whether or not there are ways to raise awareness around these issues and achieve legal reform while creating shelters for survivors of honour crimes, “without defining acts of violence against women in a way that perpetuates a negative image of Islam or subaltern communities that itself produces animosity or violence?” (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 114). The point that Abu-Lughod is raising here is one of hypocrisy by feminists who claim to be concerned about the plight of Muslim women, yet engage in a type of violence against the very women they attempt to “rescue” by means of engaging from the point of West-knows-best in discussions of honour crimes. Moreover, Abu-Lughod (2013) questions the nature of certain documents, such as Amnesty International’s fact sheet on honor crimes or books about specific honour killing cases that are written for Western consumption and presented in ways that reinforce cultural relativism and the “us”/ “them” binary (Abu-Lughod, 2013: 116). *Muslim feminists* are also critical of these types of documents that provide statistical information regarding violence against women in the Muslim world and are careful to point out that Muslim women’s oppression cannot be solely characteristic of religion, but are often tied to economic and political inequalities as well. See for example Valentine Moghadam (2013) *Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, Nawal El Saadawi (1980) *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, Amina Wadud (2008) *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women’s Reform in Islam*. These are the types of perspectives missing from works put forth by authors such as Chesler, Zeilinger, which requires a closer analysis with regards to a specific murder case, that of the Shafia family.

### **3.3 Case Study: The Shafia Family Murders**

If one were to take an honour crime case and analyse the media coverage, the ensuing discussions from feminists and non-feminists alike, as well as the final verdict for the perpetrators of the said crime, one will be able to better comprehend what Abu-Lughod (2013) is emphasizing. Take for example the Shafia family case of 2009, where three young sisters Zainab, Sahar and Geeti along with their father's first wife Rona, were found in a vehicle, submerged in the Rideau Canal in Kingston. The family lived in Montreal but was originally of Afghan heritage. A quick look at several different news papers covering this case after the final verdict was given exemplifies the ways in which cultural relativism has been used to *understand* the reasoning behind these murders. According to *CTV News*, “[f]rom the start of the trial in October, prosecutors argued these were ‘honour killings’—the Afghan-Canadian family’s answer to the young sisters’ perceived shameful behaviour” (*CTV News*, January 20, 2012). Paul Schliesmann reported in the first sentence of his article in the *Toronto Sun* that, “[t]hree Afghan immigrants found guilty Sunday of murdering four family members and dumping their bodies in the Rideau Canal were condemned by the judge for what he called ‘cold-blooded’ killings based on their ‘twisted notion of honour’” (Schliesmann, January 20, 2012).

Similar sentiments were shared by Barbara Kay of the *National Post* who wrote that the Shafia killings were, “rooted in tribal codes that hold sway in the great swathe of land that extends from the Anatolian hinterlands of the Kurds, east toward the Hindu Kush and Kashmir” (Kay, January 1, 2012). If this does not Orientalize the Shafia case and all honour killings for that matter, especially since the title of her piece gives off the aura that it attempts to address feminist hypocrisy on honour killings and yet falls into

this very trap, another article in the *National Post* by Christie Blatchford sensationalizes the *love* story of one of the Shafia daughters. The following excerpt from the Blatchford article illustrates this point: “It was this behaviour—talking to boys; striking sexy poses for their cell phone camera; balking at the hijab—that prosecutors alleged in their opening statement was the motive for what they call a mass ‘honour killing’” (Blatchford, November 21, 2011). By constructing a doomed love story about a new immigrant involved in a bi-cultural relationship and playing on the public’s emotions of pity and sorrow, Blatchford manages to tarnish the face of Canadian journalism in an attempt to turn a story about an atrociously violent series of crimes into a Hollywood movie script.

Building on these news reports is a study published by the Universite de Sherbrooke in 2011 that claims to highlight the supposedly alarmingly high rates of honour killings taking place in Canada. The study<sup>34</sup> was headed by Law professor Marie-Pierre Robert and claims to underscore the fact that honour killings are on the rise in Canada and that the killers are immigrants (Wilton, January 24, 2012.). When asked if the Criminal Code should be altered to include an article for honour crimes, Robert is quoted as stating that the current system “doesn’t have any holes” (Wilton, January 24, 2012) thereby reaffirming the notion that it is not Western legal systems that are failing women of colour who fall victim to so-called honour crimes, but rather the culture and religion of Others that are responsible for the increasing rates at which these crimes occur. The elements missing from the Sherbrooke report relates to questions of how this group of university-educated researchers came to define honour killings as a type of violence only committed by men of colour against women of colour, what criteria was used to create this definition, how the study may have overlooked comparisons between the researchers’

definitions of honour killings and other types of violence committed by non-immigrant men against female spouses. Moreover, what exactly is the ultimate purpose of a study that fails to critically self-reflect on ways the Canadian justice system can be improved to help reduce the number of honour-related crimes while simultaneously repeating the same cultural relativist information that news outlets provide to the Canadian population that further marginalizes particular groups?

Chesler (December 2013) is another individual who offers her so-called expertise on the Shafia case by reaffirming Orientalist assumptions that honour killings are attributed not only to religion but also the culture of Others by stating that anyone who asks why the Shafia women were murdered for wanting to live a Western or Canadian lifestyle, whatever that may entail, simply does not understand Afghan customs (Chesler, December 2013). She then goes on to praise the Canadian justice system by stating that, “[t]he Canadian Prosecution and detectives did a painstaking and brilliant work” (Chesler, December 2013) without so much as questioning how it was this very “brilliant” Canadian justice system that failed the Shafia women by neglecting to intervene in every instance when the Shafia women sought help.

While it is obvious that a heinous crime was committed against four women, what these and other news articles about the Shafia case fail to account for are the reasons why particular types of violence against women are committed wherein notions of honour are used as justification, and are disproportionately committed amongst immigrant communities. Moreover, none of the news articles I have thus far come across so much as utter criticisms of or challenge the failure of Canadian social structures in place to help women or children in abusive homes. In a blog published in the *Huffington Post* around

the same date as all the articles referred to thus far, January 2012, Ayaan Hirsi Ali states that, “[t]he verdict in the Shafia case exemplifies the ability of Western legal systems to provide justice to victims of honour violence” (Ali, January 2012). Yet nowhere in this blog post does she address the ways in which the Western social and legal systems *failed* the Shafia women. Had her school councillors followed up with Sahar after she retracted statements of abuse at home in the presence of her ill-tempered father, had the police created a report and also followed up on Zainab after she ran away from home and was forced back when her brother contacted the police to file a missing person’s report, had child services intervened rather than claim that she was almost an adult and would have to look for help “elsewhere” when Sahar fainted at school and attempts at contacting her parents failed, perhaps all three Shafia daughters and Rona would still be alive today (*The Fifth Estate: House of Shafia*, 2012). It is obvious from these observations that much of the mainstream discussions around the Shafia family case have been incomplete, one-sided and in need of a self-critical, anti-racist feminist lens in order to provide justice for the fallen victims and also to avoid similar cases from reoccurring in the future.

When posed with the question of why no one monitored the family, Quebec authorities replied with the inexcusable reason that honour killings were not part of their understandings or the risks they were assessing (*The Fifth Estate: House of Shafia*: 2012). This again refers to Abu-Lughod’s discussion of cultural relativism and the idea that in order to respect *their* customs and cultures, *we* should stay out of it because we simply do not and will not understand *their* business. As Abu-Lughod puts it, “when one generalizes from experiences and conversations with a number of specific people in a community, one tends to flatten out differences among them and to homogenize them”

(Abu-Lughod, 2006: 162). Cultural relativist positions fail to provide an understanding of the ways in which patriarchy and power, rather than simply culture, are central tenets of honour crimes. This key component makes the difference between non-self critical, non-anti-racist academics who use cultural relativism to marginalize certain groups, and self-critical, anti-racist academics who look for long-term solutions rather than simply highlighting issues without offering any tangible solutions.

Although the perpetrators in the Shafia case were given strong sentences to send a clear message to others who may engage in similar crimes that these actions are illegal and will be followed with tough consequences, another message also sent is that one can still carry out honour crimes, albeit at a high price. The latter message highlights the gaps in the legal and social systems that are currently in place to help women in abusive homes but have failed those like the Shafia women. Moreover, the dialogues taking place around the Shafia case, as well as honour killings in general, highlight serious gaps that could lead to the lessening and perhaps overall elimination of honour killings in Canada. For example, referring back to the piece in the *Huffington Post* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali illustrates some of the ways in which current discussions around honour killings are incomplete and simplified.

“Violence and murder justified by perverted notions of family honour are happening here and the victims are most often the young women who embrace Western culture with their entire hearts and souls. It seems little to ask in return that we protect them from suffering unspeakable harm, and even death for doing so” (Ali, January 2012).

### **3.4 Orientalism and Binary Divisions**

While most would agree that honour killings are quite horrific, the cultural relativist language used by the likes of Chesler and Ali reinforce binary divisions between *us* and *them* because *they* have brought *their* barbaric customs to *our* country.

Furthermore, both Chesler and Ali victimize those killed in honour crimes once more through an Orientalist framework by stressing the need to *save* these women from their non-Western and thus backwards cultures, consequently denying honour crime victims their agency when narrating their stories. Chesler, as someone who was once married to an Afghan man and claims to have had access to first-hand experiences of violence against women rooted in Islam, and Ali as someone directly from that culture and religion who *escaped* her doomed fate as a Muslim women, speak from positions where they claim expertise by virtue of association. Thus, these so-called experts perpetuate colonial violence against Muslim women when reinforcing binary divisions that assume the East as everything negative that the West is not, a notion that is rooted in Orientalist mythologies.

According to Shahrzad Mojab the “[r]acist culturalization of honour killing ignores the fact that killing women is a universal phenomenon in patriarchal cultures in both the East and the West. Males, white and non-white, continue to kill women” (Abdo and Mojab, 2004: 29). If individuals like Ali were truly concerned about the “unspeakable harm” and “even death” that women face at the hands of abusers, why do they not draw public attention towards cases of abused, murdered or missing Aboriginal women in Canada? Amnesty International Canada published a report stating that, “Indigenous women are five times to seven times more likely than other women to die as the result of violence” and yet it seems as though honour killings receive more airtime on television news stations than these cases of women who also face extreme violence (*Amnesty International Canada*, “No More Stolen Sisters” October 2012). This is not to imply that one group deserves more media and public attention than another, but if the

main point being highlighted by Ali and Chesler is that Western society will not tolerate any manifestation of violence against women, then specific cases should not be cherry-picked to direct all attention towards while other cases are ignored and eventually forgotten.

In these comparisons between anti-racist feminist literature on honour killings versus non-anti-racist feminist literature on the same topic that, one seeks to address wider issues of patriarchy in violence against women without marginalizing individual groups, whereas the other engages in a sort of blame game while perpetuating racist ideals that inferiorize non-Western peoples. Mojab makes this point eloquently in stating that:

“In the (neo-) colonialist or Orientalist world view, the women of the Middle East constitute an anomaly, an exception, or abnormality: Unlike Western women, they are seen as blind followers of Islamic patriarchy. They are, according to neo-colonialist thought, without their own history since they do not struggle for equality or liberation” (Mojab, 2004: 35).

Turning back to the introduction of *Violence in the Name of Honour*, the question of why violence associated with honour crimes is on the rise is also addressed. While there is no simple answer to this question, the editors pose numerous possible reasons including some that turn to the question of wider discussions of patriarchal violence in the global context while remaining self-critical by not pinning the blame on others. For example, although the editors state that patriarchal violence is universal, they highlight the point that there is a particular unleashing of male violence in certain parts of the world, especially in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia (Abdo and Mojab, 2004: 5). To further this point of a self-critical approach in his review of *Violence in the Name of Honour*, Kaveh Hemmat states that this text underlines that honour crimes must not be

analysed within cultural relativist paradigms even though the role of religion and culture cannot be discounted in any consideration of honour- (sic) related violence” (Hemmat, 2006: 217-28).

Ultimately, *Violence in the Name of Honour* seeks long-term solutions to issues revolving around the topic of honour crimes by drawing attention to gaps within academic, activist and legal fields. Abdo calls for a contextualization and proper understanding of honour killing:

First, historically, in order to see and recognize changes over time; and second, structurally and institutionally, allowing for a proper comprehension of the socio-economic, political, legal, and juridical forces of the state, particularly the colonial state (Abdo and Mojab, 2004: 8).

In other words, rather than taking a cultural relativist approach when analysing so-called honour killing cases, academics, legal and social players as well as all concerned citizens must look at the broader picture, beyond simplistic explanations for these complex issues. As Shahrzad Mojab states in a chapter in this text, “[t]he values of one culture should not be judged by the values of another culture; for example, the veiling of women or even honour killing as practised in Middle Eastern cultures should not be rejected as wrong based on the values of contemporary Western cultures” (Mojab, 2004: 25). Claiming that something is wrong in other cultures simply by virtue of it being foreign to one’s own culture, hinders core feminist ideals of giving agency to oppressed groups and working in solidarity to overcome complex issues. Thus, it is clear that cultural relativists have no place in discussions around honour killings.

### **3.5 Future Avenues for Discourses on Honour Killings**

While the collection of essays in *Violence in the Name of Honour* provides an insightful place to start for anyone interested in researching the topic of honour crimes, both Hemmat and Shalhoub Kevorkian bring up possible venues for further study. Hemmat draws attention to the point raised in *Violence in the Name of Honour* about honour crimes being not only highly premeditated but also highly cooperative often by more than one family member (Hemmat, 2006: 217). Therefore, he states that, “if honour-related violence is to be treated as part of the larger, global phenomenon of patriarchal violence, an examination of the psychological dimension of honour killing is called for” (Hemmat, 2006: 218). Moreover, Shalhoub Kevorkian draws attention to the ways in which violence against women in the West is individualized while it is demonised as a cultural phenomenon elsewhere by stating that, “cases in the West are analysed as individual aberrations, not as representations of the violent tendencies of Western men as a collective” (Kevorkian, 2006: 203). Therefore, it would be interesting to analyse media and human rights reports of case studies of violence against women both in the West and elsewhere to see the type of discourse around these stories. One could use the analyses of these case studies to theorize on the ways in which popular discourses around violence against women reinforce or challenge deductive reasoning and cultural relativism.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

It is obvious that there exists a vast body of literature on the topic of honour crimes; however, the literature put forth by *Muslim feminists* and anti-racist, post-colonial and anti-Orientalist feminists are significantly different from non-critical, non-anti-racist

texts on the same topic because the former's discussions are tied to a wider picture of imperialism within the academic realm and media, and perhaps beyond. While individuals like Phyllis Chesler, Julie Zeilinger, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and the journalists who reported on the Shafia case are having incomplete and one-sided discussions about honour killings that further marginalize the Other, others such as Lila Abu-Lughod, and the authors who contributed to *Violence in the Name of Honour*, take a more self-critical anti-racist approach to offer valuable information on this topic. In doing so, these authors are taking proactive steps towards seeking long-term solutions to these types of horrific crimes, thereby filling a gap within academia that has existed for far too long.

## Thesis Conclusion

When the topic of *Muslim feminisms* was initially chosen for my thesis, I did not expect the plethora of information on the topic and the challenges in narrowing down the scholars whose literature I should analyse when making the argument that this body of work should be included in transnational and global feminist discourses. The lack of preparedness for the abundance of information I would come across during the research process partly stems from my own experiences of being exposed to information that generally focuses on Western feminist movements within academia. Although given that the context in which my knowledge about feminist movements was developed has been in an academic institution in the West, which perhaps may account for the curriculum placing a strong emphasis on Western feminist movements, the lack of discussions about feminist movements and theories that hold alternative beliefs on achieving social justice for women raised a red flag and drew my attention towards a gap in academia. In discussing this gap through an emphasis on one group of alternative feminist theories amongst many, I hope to use this opportunity to make the field of transnational and global feminist theories more inclusive of diverse feminist voices by introducing some *Muslim feminist theorists* to discussions of women's rights and achieving social justice.

As stated at the beginning of this thesis, the term *Muslim feminisms* and *Muslim feminists* are used as umbrella terminology to refer to a group of scholars who may not necessarily identify as Muslims themselves but whose work focuses on the woman question and achieving social justice for women in Muslim contexts. Within the umbrella term *Muslim feminists* one can find an array of diversity including but not limited to secular Muslim feminists, Islamic feminists, Islamist feminists and Muslim feminists. By

examining the different theories within these different branches of *Muslim feminisms* and critically examining some of the key scholars within these branches, I have attempted to highlight the fluidity of these categories of *Muslim feminisms* and the benefits these theories can establish within larger discourses of Muslim women's rights and how to avoid cultural relativism through reinforcing binary divisions that further marginalize this group. Moreover, the inclusion of a group of post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminist scholars is noted in this thesis to illustrate the significance of including literature from scholars who would not necessarily identify as *Muslim feminists* but whose works examine the ways in which colonial power and violence continue to be exerted onto Muslim women's bodies both in the East and West by Muslim communities and states, as well as individuals who claim to have an interest in *liberating* Muslim women through the guise of liberal, secular and/or feminist concerns.

Although the term *Muslim feminism* may be viewed as oxymoronic not only because some view the very notion of finding liberation within the parameters of religion to be contradictory but also because the idea of a *Muslim feminist* challenges Orientalist conceptions of what Muslim women are capable of. In other words, the very existence of *Muslim feminists* having the ability to narrate their own discourses is threatening to historical colonial narratives that depicted Muslim woman as silent, helpless and oppressed by her culture and religion. Thus, this Orientalist construction of the helpless Muslim woman served to justify colonial missions in various parts of the Middle East (Said, 1978: 6; Moghissi, 1999: 33). Although this stereotype has existed as early as the first colonial contact in the Middle East, it has been perpetuated and reinforced rigorously since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Consequently, the platform on which

*Muslim feminist* voices can be heard alongside other transnational and global feminist theorists is momentous in shattering these stereotypes and ending the cycle of colonial violence against Muslim women.

Although colonial violence against Muslim women is rooted in Orientalist mythologies, over time these instances of violence have manifested in other variations, such as cultural relativist paradigms when discussing so-called honour crimes and other forms of violence against Muslim women, to continue to silence Muslim women from narrating their own stories, in their own voices and ultimately having their voices heard. Though this thesis is meant to serve as a platform on which to introduce *Muslim feminist* voices and literature, it is also meant to serve as a possible avenue for future collaborations between different groups of feminists who are dedicated to finding meaningful solutions to issues that disproportionately affect Muslim women without further marginalizing or perpetuating violence against them. By discussing the nature of some *Muslim feminist* and post-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Orientalist feminist literature alongside other literature on the topic of so-called honour killings, I have attempted to highlight the ways in which colonial violence has been perpetuated against Muslim women and also how to avoid doing so by discussing the issues arising from culturally relativist language and analyses that lack a self-critical discussion. For example, the very fact that some Western feminists and native informants continue to use the term “honour killings” rather than “violence against women” not only perpetuates colonial violence against Muslim women who are discussed in these contexts but also reinforces the binary categories that attribute this type of violence to Eastern culture while redirecting attention from meaningful dialogue to discussions that detach the West from responsibility and

blames the victims' religion for the violence committed against her. As was demonstrated in this thesis, this very scenario took place in the case of the Shafia family murders.

Therefore, *Muslim feminists* and post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminists' voices are detrimental within these discourses in order to avoid perpetuating the cycle of violence against Muslim women by directing attention at the ways in which structural, socio-economical and political inequalities are combined with patriarchal interpretations of Islam to disempower Muslim women. It has been the work of these feminists that highlighted the problems with the term "honour killings," by illustrating that using this very term empowers the perpetrators of this type of violence against women through a confirmation that the killing was associated with distorted notions of honour that are subsequently associated with culture and religion. It has also been the work of these feminists that raised awareness around the hypocrisy of Western feminists, Orientalist feminists and native informants who claim to raise awareness around *honour killings* while simultaneously perpetuating colonial violence, silencing Muslim women and speaking on behalf of rather than with them.

This thesis was an attempt to engage with some of the existing *Muslim feminist* literature; however, it is by no means an overall representation of the literature that exists on this topic by *Muslim feminist* scholars. The information presented in this thesis demonstrates a drop of water in an ocean of *Muslim feminist* scholars, theorists and literature. I am confident that the next generation of *Muslim feminist* scholars and activists will continue to build on the work of the theorists discussed in this thesis. When I see discussions on social media by individuals, especially women, who identify as Muslim from around the world engaging in a meaningful dialogue that deconstructs and

redefines notions of what it means to be a Muslim woman and a feminist, perhaps even a *Muslim feminist*, I know that I am witnessing something significant. Early in 2014 the #LifeofaMuslimFeminist hashtag was popularized on Twitter and was utilized to demonstrate the day-to-day experiences of discrimination and hypocrisy experienced by Muslim women and those in solidarity with them. The popularity of the #LifeofaMuslimFeminist hashtag served as the incentive behind the creation of the blog “Life of a Muslim Feminist: A Platform for Muslim Feminists.” Launched in February 2014 by Noorulann Shahid and Halima<sup>35</sup>, two individuals who identify as *Muslim feminists*, this blog is meant to serve as an online platform that fosters artistic creativity by anyone who identifies as a type of *Muslim feminist* (*Life of a Muslim Feminist*, February 2014).

Another recent example of activists making use of online social media to raise awareness around issues affecting Muslim women has been the popularization of the #NotYourStockMuslim hashtag created by Kaye M<sup>36</sup> on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Utilized to deconstruct and combat Orientalist stereotypes of Muslim women in the media and society at large, the hashtag served as an opportunity to reach a wider audience ranging in ages who have access to Facebook and Twitter. The popularization of the hashtag was not only an opportunity to debunk Orientalist mythology about Muslim women while educating others about the lived experiences of Muslim women around the globe, as well as the realities and struggles they face, but was also an opportunity for Muslim women to narrate their own discourses.

These trends in online social media are but a few of the many noteworthy examples of the ways in which the next generation of *Muslim feminists*, post-colonial,

anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminists and solidarity activists are gaining a stronger foothold in challenging discourses that have historically oppressed Muslim women. Although online social media is accessible only to those who are literate and have access to the internet, those who do have access to it are able to utilize this technology and reach wider audiences in innovative ways while building on the work of the scholars discussed in this thesis in challenging binary categories and cultural relativist frameworks through which Muslim women's rights have been discussed.

In reflecting some of the diverse viewpoints held by Muslim women, *Muslim feminists* and post-colonial, anti-racist and anti-Orientalist feminists, the literature discussed in this thesis coupled with the examples of online social media trends solidify the point raised at the beginning of this thesis—that there exists a pertinent field of information worth looking into when discussing and analysing issues affecting Muslim women. These diverse viewpoints may not always agree on the methods of achieving social justice for Muslim women, nor do they always agree on the causes and definitions of Muslim women's oppressions. However, one element they do agree on is a concern for the plight of Muslim women without further marginalizing them. It is for this reason that the literature and scholars discussed in this thesis are essential to wider discourses in transnational and global feminisms.

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<sup>1</sup> Italics are used here to distinguish the umbrella term used to refer to the various types of *Muslim feminisms* associated with Islam, from Muslim feminism as a type of *Muslim feminisms* discussed in this thesis. Similarly *Muslim feminist theory* will be italicized to differentiate from Muslim feminist theory.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to *Introduction* for discussion on use of italics.

<sup>3</sup> cooke does not capitalize her first or last name.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Leila Ahmed's discussion of the practice of veiling in Egypt and how the presence of colonizers shaped attitudes towards veiling, questions of women's rights and Egyptian nationalism in *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence from the Middle East to America* (2011).

<sup>5</sup> Amongst El Saadawi's work of fiction are *God Dies by the Nile* (1974), and *Death of an Ex-Minister* (1987).

<sup>6</sup> See El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1977), *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* (1983), *Woman at Point Zero* (1975).

<sup>7</sup> El Saadawi states in the preface to the book that, "Firdaus is the story of a woman driven by despair to the darkest of ends. This woman, despite her misery and despair evoked in all those who, like me, witnessed the final moments of life, a need to challenge and to overcome those forces that deprive human beings of their right to live, to love and to real freedom" (1975: iii).

<sup>8</sup> See El Saadawi's memoir in which this account is documented, (1983) *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*.

<sup>9</sup> In 2005, female enrollment in college in Iran was only at 23 percent. However, by 2011 women's university enrollment surpassed that of men (Moghadam, 2013: 183).

<sup>10</sup> According to Muslim belief, verses of the Quran or the Holy book were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad throughout his life. Wadud and other scholars who focus on Islam refer to this when stating that Quranic verses were "revealed".

<sup>11</sup> According to a *BBC* news article titled, "Woman Leads US Muslim in Prayer," (2005) this act was seen as challenging the "second-class" status of women in Islam by some and seen as "tarnishing the whole Islamic faith" by others who protested Wadud's actions. Retrieved on February 19, 2014 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4361931.stm>)

<sup>12</sup> The spelling of Mernissi's first name alternates between "Fatema" and "Fatima" in a lot of her work. For example, in the French publication *Les Sindbads marocains* (2004) her name is spelled "Fatema" as well as in her article "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy: Oil, Arms and Irrationality," (1996) in *Development and Change*. Then there are certain texts that use both spellings of her name, such as *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (1989) which uses the spelling "Fatima" on the front cover while Google Books uses the spelling "Fatema". Some texts translated in different countries will also use different spellings, such as the Indian Kerala translation of *The Veil and the Male Elite* (2009) which uses "Fatema" while the English version uses "Fatima". Although her website also uses "Fatema" for the purposes of this thesis I will use "Fatima" since most of the texts I look at use this variation of spelling.

<sup>13</sup> According to Mernissi's website, *Beyond the Veil* (1975) has been translated into nine languages. ([http://www.mernissi.net/books/thematic\\_overview/](http://www.mernissi.net/books/thematic_overview/))

<sup>14</sup> See also "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy: Oil, Arms and Irrationality" by Mernissi (1996) for in depth discussions about fundamentalism as a political ideology and its association with Western liberal states.

<sup>15</sup> Although Zaynab al-Ghazali was a key figure in the Islamist feminist movement, I could only locate the name of one text she wrote that was translated in to English titled *Return of the Pharaoh: Memoirs in Nasir's Prison* (1994) which documents her life in prison after she was falsely accused of conspiring to assassinate Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser.

<sup>16</sup> There was an interesting discussion on Twitter and social media in early 2014 around questions of Muslim feminism using the hashtag #lifeofaMuslimfeminist and what it means to different individuals, echoing similar sentiments discussed in my thesis that "Muslim" can also be used a reference to cultural practices beyond religion.

<sup>17</sup> For full discussion, see Sherene Razack (2010) "Reflections on Torture: Part I," *Pacific Media Canada*, retrieved on January 6, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjwC4q6RJv4>.

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<sup>18</sup> See the PBS documentary *Opium Brides*(2012) by Najibullah Qureshi for discussion on neighbouring countries fuelling drug production and addictions in Afghanistan, retrieved on April 5, 2013, (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/opium-brides/>)

<sup>19</sup> See for example, photograph 1 and photograph 13 in the collection of photos published in *The Atlantic* in July, 2013. Both of these photographs were taken in Kabul only two years apart, yet one photograph depicts what the Soviet-backed Afghan government at the time wanted to portray to the world while the other photograph depicts the reality of the country, that is, a country where the majority of the population did not have access to Western luxuries such as pencil skirts and coiffed hairdos. Retrieved on December 4, 2013 (<http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2013/07/afghanistan-in-the-1950s-and-60s/100544/>).

<sup>20</sup> A USAID report on infrastructure projects in Afghanistan reveals that, “decades of war, harsh climatic conditions, and neglect due to extreme poverty left much of Afghanistan’s infrastructure in rubble and decay. In many remote areas, it was never developed at all”. Retrieved on Jan 5, 2014. (<http://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/infrastructure>)

<sup>21</sup> Although accurate figures have been difficult to come across due to a lack of population census recording over the decades of war, various ethnic groups exist in Afghanistan with Pashtuns making up the majority, followed by Tajiks. Other ethnic groups in the country include the Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Baloches and many others. An emphasis on ethnic groups is placed in this context because due to their population, Pashtuns have higher representations in politics whereas other minority groups have historically and recently been excluded from this arena. Moreover, within these various ethnic groups lie different religious and cultural beliefs that often conflict with those of majority ethnic groups. For example, while Pashtuns and Tajiks are mostly comprised of *Sunni* Muslims, Hazaras are mostly comprised of *Shi’a* Muslims. See “Afghanistan Overview” in *World Directory for Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* for further discussion of ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan at <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5429#peoples>.

<sup>22</sup> *Wikipedia* located individuals such as Leila Ahmed, Fatema Mernissi, Nawal El Saadawi, Amina Wadud and Margot Badran among others as “Islamic feminists.” Taking these names as a starting point, I then searched each individual and some of their most popular literature on the topic of “Islamic feminism.” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_feminism#Islamic\\_feminists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_feminism#Islamic_feminists)) Retrieved on October 3, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> As discussed in *Chapter 1*, the italicized version of *Muslim feminist theory* or *Muslim feminisms* is my use of the umbrella term to differentiate from Muslim feminism as a type of *Muslim feminism*.

<sup>24</sup> *The Trudeau Foundation* “supports outstanding individuals who make meaningful contributions to critical public issues,” recognizes Manji’s achievements on their website. Retrieved on February 2, 2014. <http://www.trudeaufoundation.ca/en/community/irshad-manji>.

<sup>25</sup> See the works of Phyllis Chesler, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Irshad Manji or memoirs that have been exposed as hoaxes by Norma Khouri (2003) *Honor Lost: Love and Death in Modern-Day Jordan* and Souad’s (2013) *Burned Alive: A Survivor of an “Honor Killing” Speaks Out*. See also Julie Zeilinger’s (2012) definition in *A Little F’d Up: Why Feminism is Not a Dirty Word* where she states that honour (sic) crimes, “essentially occur if a woman is suspected of having lost her sexual purity... If a woman has risked her chastity, then her family loses face within the community, which is unacceptable” (Zeilinger, 2012: 179). In this discussion she also emphasizes that honour crimes are attributed to culture which “virtually all are Muslim cultures” (179).

<sup>26</sup> See for example Lila Abu-Lughod’s (2013) “Seductions of the ‘Honor Crime’” in *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* p. 113-142; Saba Mahmood’s (2008) “Feminism, Democracy and Empire: Islam and the War on Terror,” in *Women’s Studies on the Edge*, ed. by Joan W. Scott, p. 81-114; and Shahrzad Mojab and Nahla Abdo’s (2004) *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges*.

<sup>27</sup> Chesler’s website lists over a hundred pieces written for various news outlets between 2004 and 2013, almost all of which hold an anti-Islam, pro-Zionist and ring wing extremist position. Among the news outlets that have published Chesler’s work are Fox News, Jerusalem Post, NewsRealBlog, and PJ Media. Refer to <http://www.phyllis-chesler.com/topics/8/honor-killings> for more information.

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to point out that there is no single “Muslim world” due to the multiple races, ethnicities and cultures associated with Islam—a point that all of the *Muslim feminists* discussed in Chapter 1 have raised in their work.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Phyllis Chesler “Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings” (2010) in *Middle East Quarterly* retrieved on Oct 29, 2013, <http://www.meforum.org/2646/worldwide-trends-in-honor-killings>; “Are Honour Killings Simply Domestic Violence?” (2009) in *Middle East Quarterly* retrieved on Oct 29, 2013, <http://www.meforum.org/2067/are-honor-killings-simply-domestic-violence>

<sup>30</sup> The autobiography in her book *A Little F’d Up: Why Feminism Is Not A Dirty Word* (2012) states some of her many accomplishments including being named one of “Eight Most Influential Bloggers under 21” and one of the “New Feminists You Need to Know” (Zeilinger, 2012: 249). Her website also states that Zeilinger is one of the leaders of the fourth wave of feminism, having been supported by other notable fourth wave Western feminists such as Jessica Valenti who wrote the forward in *A Little F’d Up*. For more information, see her website [http://www.juliezeilinger.com/jz/Julie\\_Zeilinger\\_Home.html](http://www.juliezeilinger.com/jz/Julie_Zeilinger_Home.html).

<sup>31</sup> For discussion of Zeilinger’s accomplishments, see her interview with *Taking on the Giant* (2014) <http://www.takingonthegiant.com/2014/01/28/19-year-old-author-blogger-julie-zeilinger-proclaims-feminism-dirty-word/>.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Leila Ahmed’s (2011) discussion of Lord Cromer, the British consul general and agent in Egypt in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in *A Quiet Revolution*. Cromer was notorious for advocating Egyptian women’s rights against Islam which he viewed as devaluing women through practices such as veiling (Ahmed, 2011: 30). However, Cromer strongly advocated against women’s rights in Britain, “having served for a time as the president of the Society Opposed to Women’s Suffrage” (2011: 31).

<sup>33</sup> Other women included in this list were Hilary Clinton, Angelina Jolie, and Meryl Streep. For full list see <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/03/06/dozens-of-women-who-have-made-the-planet-a-better-place-join-2012-women-in-the-world-summit.html>.

<sup>34</sup> “[Les crimes d'honneur ou le déshonneur du crime : étude des cas canadiens](#)” (2011) was published in French in the *Canadian Criminal Law Review*. Google Translate was used in this thesis to gain a general understanding of what the article entailed.

<sup>35</sup> Noorulann’s Twitter handle is @YxngHippie while Halima’s Twitter handle is @Fashionicide.

<sup>36</sup> Kaye’s Twitter handle is @gildedspine.