FEMINISM, SECULARISM, AND THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF AN ISLAMIC FEMINISM

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This project considers attempts by scholars from within as well as outside Muslim countries to analyze gender and sex equality with a new approach that brings Islam and feminism into one discourse, often called "Islamic feminism." I will specifically consider works that find Islamic feminism to be a viable solution for advancing the situation of women in Muslim majority countries. My project will challenge the assumption of such works and argue for maintaining a critical space between Islam and feminism, by undertaking a phenomenological study of Muslim women's lived experience of embodiment, space, and time to offer new insights regarding how specific aspects and practices of Islam and Muslim societies constitute these experiences, with a focus on those that are experienced as oppressive. By having to conform to oppressive treatments of their bodies, by having to live in a world that limits their freedom, and by having to associate with a past and ideals they feel disconnected from, many women (and men) living in Muslim countries are alienated from themselves. This has created a crisis of identity for many women living in Muslim countries. The experiences discussed in this project point to fundamental power structures that perpetuate oppression in Muslim societies, and by not challenging these structures, Islamic feminism provides a merely reactionary response to the problem.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been an extensive discussion on the relation of women's rights and Islam, leading to a theoretical movement that brings Islam and feminism into one discourse, called "Islamic feminism." To clarify, Islamic feminism does not include all attempts by Muslim scholars and activists who seek to promote the situation of women, rather it refers to a specific theoretical movement that aims to advance the status of Muslim women through arguments that are grounded in Islamic texts and traditions. Specifically, they present or advocate reinterpretations of the Qur'an, that can be used to support further rights for women compared to what has historically been granted to them.

As a woman who comes from a Muslim majority country and works on feminist philosophy I have found this topic very interesting and started studying it a number of years ago. In doing so, I found that most of the literature on the topic is fixed in a dichotomy of approach: On the one hand we have the Orientalist/Neo-Orientalist approach which sees Muslim societies culturally, socially and politically underdeveloped compared to their Western counterparts, at least partially due to Islamic traditions, and the solution for the problems of these societies is to follow the lead of the West. Among this group are those who seek to "save" Muslim women, which as we know has been used to justify violent interventions in the affairs of Muslim countries. I should clarify that there is neither a generic "Muslim woman" nor a generic "Muslim country". These terms carry as much meaning with them as "Christian woman" or "Christian country" do. If I use the term "Muslim country" it is only to refer to a country where the majority of people happen to be Muslims, some devout, and some only nominally.

The second approach is advocated most prominently by academic feminists who seek to correct the notion that Islam and Islamic practices are inherently oppressive, but a lot of times end up making oppression more intellectually acceptable. Aiming to rectify the misconceptions of the Neo-Orientalist approach, these scholars address and write for a Western audience, who is not familiar with the situation of women in Muslim countries, and they seek to reclaim agency for Muslim women. Islamic feminism, therefore, has been embraced rather hastily by these scholars. Thus, the discourse on the issue of sexual equality in relation to Islam has often taken the form of a prejudicial or an apologetic one, which I believe are insufficient for understanding the situation of Muslim women and consequently insufficient in providing groundwork for responding to the issues faced by them. Given this, I decided to write my project from a third perspective of a critical phenomenological view.

What is scarce in the discourse on women's rights and Islam are accounts that centralize the lived experiences of women living in Muslim societies, which I believe present serious challenges to Islamic feminism. I have undertaken a phenomenological study of Muslim women's lived experience of embodiment, space, and time to offer new insights regarding how specific aspects and practices of Islam and Muslim societies constitute these experiences, with a focus on those that are experienced as oppressive. I chose phenomenology as the main framework of this project for its potential to describe concrete, lived human experience in its richness and complexity. As Islamic feminism seeks to provide concrete solutions to the problems faced by women in Muslim societies today, I argue it needs to show attentiveness to the experiences of these women. In my project, I do not give priority to correcting the misconceptions of people living in the

West, but to giving voice to the experiences of oppressed women in Muslim societies.

Following the works of philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir, phenomenology attends to what is being experienced, the givenness of what is being experienced, and the intentions of the one undergoing the experience while conditioned as being-in-the-world. I have specifically relied on the works of feminist and critical phenomenologists who maintains that being-in-the-world is not an abstract condition. Feminist phenomenology, for instance, examines how sex and gender impact one's experiences and understandings of the world, and its social and political consequences.

Chapter two presents a brief historical introduction to Islamic feminism and a survey of different responses to the convergence of Islam and feminism. This chapter also examines arguments in support of Islamic feminism. Chapter three begins by a survey of two important works about the practice of veiling among Muslim women, Namely Katherine Bullock's *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil* and Marnia Lazreg's *Questioning the Veil.* These two works have been chosen to engage with the current literature the very controversial topic as any discussion of female embodiment in Muslim societies, inevitably includes the issue of veiling. While Bullock's work is an example of attempts by Western feminists who give positive interpretations of veiling and associate it with Muslim women's empowerment and agency, Lazreg's is an example of a smaller body of literature that remains critical of the practice of veiling without falling into the category of Neo-Orientalism. The chapter proceeds with an account of the living body in phenomenology through the works of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir, Iris Marion Young and Sandra Bartky, before demonstrating how some Islamic practices including

veiling leads to experiences of alienation and inhibited intentionality in some women. I argue that some of the attitudes of Islamic tradition toward female embodiment imply that a woman's body is an affliction, which means that she is a fundamentally deficient being, and it is this deficiency that must be concealed and covered through the practice of veiling.

Chapter four, focuses on the experience of space and world informed by the works of Heidegger, Mariana Ortega and María Lugones. Further developing the phenomenological account, I discuss Muslim women's constant experience of ruptures in their lived experience of the world as they crossover from one space to another, specifically from private to public spaces, the latter often being accompanied by a feeling of not being-at-ease.

Finally, chapter five presents an argument for a doubled closing of future time for some women living in Muslim societies through an examination of the past being invoked by Islamic theocratic societies as a way of justifying the present, on the one hand, and the imposition of a rupture in time on female existence that closes the future on the other hand. The relation between time and freedom is discussed through the work of Hannah Arendt and some of Muslim societies' attitudes toward time is presented through the work of Fatima Mernissi. I argue that these attitudes ignore the temporality of human life and as a result impede the experience of freedom. The second part of the chapter provides an account of temporality from a phenomenological perspective through accounts by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir and focuses on the relation between time and gender. Through phenomenological examination of testimonies from Women living in Muslim societies, I argue that female existence is subjected to a rupture

in time that closes the future. The relation between political freedom and gendered experience of time is further problematized in this chapter. The experiences discussed in this project in relation to the three main concepts of body, space, and time, point to fundamental power structures that perpetuate oppression in Muslim societies, and by not challenging these structures, Islamic feminism provides a merely reactionary response to the problem.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS ISLAMIC FEMINISM?

In the Spring of 2015 I was auditing a course on Islam and Gender offered by the WGSS department at the University of Oregon. In one class the discussion was geared toward what people in first world countries can do to help women living in Muslim countries. An American student was defending her position that *we*—in the first world—have a duty to help Muslim women, to provide them, for instance, with education. The professor asked "What if they don't want education?" In response to which the student stated "then *we* will give them whatever they want." To this day, I do not know which annoyed me more: The professor's question intended to challenge the student's beliefs but at the same time implying that Muslim women's wants, by virtue of being Muslim, are so different from people in the West that they might not even want education—presumably preferring to remain ignorant, or the student's contention that Muslim women need or want the help of first world countries in fighting for their rights, specifically help from women living in the West who clearly don't see Muslim women as their equals. This experience, in part, is why I am writing this dissertation.

Another experience occurred when I was about 13, living in Iran and going to an all-girls school. Our bodies and hair needed to be covered at all times while attending school despite the fact that there were rarely any men on campus, most teachers and staff being women. Every morning all students had to gather in the school yard and after some activities go to their first class in lines. One of the school staff would stand by the front door and warn us if there was something "wrong" with our appearance, for instance if our hair was showing beneath our scarves. We used to cover our hair completely right before

reaching that point to avoid having to confront her. One day as I was passing her she started telling me to cover my hair fully. Annoyed by her insistence on this while there were no men around, I ignored her and continued to walk to my class. The staff asked my mother to come to school. My mother told them that she didn't think this was a big deal, given that I was very young and in an all-girls school. Seeing that my mother did not care about my *hijab*, the staff person tried another angle. She told my mother and me that she was surprised I insisted on having bangs and showing them, because I didn't have a long enough forehead to pull that off. Shocked by the implications of her words I told her that I didn't care about looking good for others, rather I wanted to be free to choose how I look. I didn't know what to call it then, but I couldn't forget the uneasy feeling arising from both that kind of objectification, and the implied suggestion that all I cared about—or should care about—is how others see me.

Today, many years after that experience, now and again I come across people—Americans or Europeans—who think my concern with compulsory *hijab* is out of proportion. They think that I am focusing on a rather superficial aspect of Islam and Muslim women's lives. They think that I am being narrow-minded and intolerant of different life styles. And worst of all they think that I feel this way because I have been living in the US, I have been liberated, I idolize the West and think that women here are not oppressed and that I am so naive as to think to liberate Muslim women we need to make them look like Western women. It's as if they don't understand how being objectified to the extent that one has to cover parts of their body—with the made-up justification that it's for the benefit of men who can't control their impulses and are not responsible for what may happen if a woman does not cover herself properly in their

presence—feels. As if they don't understand the experience of being marked as different in all public places by having to conform to a certain way of dressing. After all, they haven't had the experience of being called a precious pearl that needs to be protected by a shell which is their *hijab*. At least not in so many words. This, in part, is why I am writing this dissertation.

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What has been mostly absent from the discourse on Islam and feminism, I argue, are accounts that centralize the lived experiences of women in Muslim countries. While many of the scholars who work on feminism and Islam come from Muslim countries themselves, their discussions address the West. Misrepresentations of Muslim women and Muslim societies in Western media, as well as some well-intentioned yet ill-fated attempts by Western feminists who seek to "save" women in Muslim countries, have caused many scholars to warn against problematic interventions in the affairs of Muslim countries in the name of women's rights. As such, many of the scholars working on Islam and feminism write for a Western audience, which is not familiar with the situation of women in Muslim countries, seeking to reclaim agency for Muslim women. While I am sympathetic to this cause, my own project deviates from this path, as I am concerned with whether Islamic feminism is a viable solution for women living in Muslim countries. The aforementioned "outsider" view, I argue, is not enough to evaluate the viability of Islamic feminism.

I was born and raised in Iran, moving to U.S. at the age of 25 to start a PhD program. This position has provided me with the opportunity to think and write about the experiences of myself and many other women living in a Muslim society. I could not

have done so, because of censorship, if I were still living in Iran. Neither could I have done so in the same way if I had not lived in Iran for so many years. Being motivated by and drawing on the experience of living in a Muslim theocratic society, my aim is to show that on the level of lived experience Islam and feminism are not compatible. I do not seek to correct the misconceptions of people living in the West, but to give voice to the experiences of oppressed women in Muslim societies. Needless to say, this does not mean that I believe Muslim women are the only oppressed women, that they do not have agency, or that they need to be saved by the West. Indeed, I argue against essentializing conceptions of Muslim women which reduce their identity to their being Muslims, so much so that it legitimizes using different standards for evaluating the situation of women in Muslim countries. If we highlight their Muslimness out of all proportion, then there isn't much in common between them and people in the West-- we can then assume that they are so different from "us" that they don't value education, that it is acceptable for them to observe *hijab*, even though we would never consent to that for any other group of women, and that any successful theory and movement for them needs to be "Islamic" or it will not work or gain support (even though we would never assume feminism needs to be Christian in the US on the account of the majority of US citizens being Christian). I argue that Islamic feminism itself not only has largely ignored the lived experiences of Muslim women and the "insider" voice, but is also guilty of essentializing Muslim women and of using different standards for Muslim women by virtue of them being Muslims. Let's see how that has happened.

What is Islamic Feminism?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a trend was beginning to form that came to be called, although not necessarily by its participants, "Islamic feminism." What was unique about this trend was that its arguments were not based on Western ideas, but Islamic texts and traditions. At the center of this debate was the idea of a reinterpretation of the Qur'an, one that emphasizes the equality of Muslim women and men before God. Scholars who work in this area argue that Islam is open to interpretation and that the shortcomings of many Muslim countries regarding the status of women are a result of their laws and regulations and their being grounded on a rather limited reading of Islamic texts. These scholars' pluralistic understanding of Islam enables them to provide alternative views of Muslim women's rights. Some of them employ the Islamic methodology of *ijtihad*[1] to realize the full potential of Islam, which they see as guaranteeing social justice, including gender justice and equality.

Iranian scholars Afsaneh Najmabadi and Ziba Mir-Hosseini used the term Islamic feminism in their works while examining the writings of scholars and activists in Iran, specifically women writing for journals discussing issues related to gender equality and women's rights.[2] South African activist Shamima Shaikh employed the term "Islamic

[1] *Ijtehad* is independent reasoning and making a decision according to Islamic law. *Mujtahed*, the person who practices *Ijtehad*, decides on rules and regulations according to the current needs of Islamic society. These rules must be rooted in the Qur'an and the *Hadith (*sayings of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad), and must be in agreement with other Islamic rules. *Mujtaheds* have the authority to interpret Qur'an, and other Muslims who are not a Mujtahed themselves, should follow them. Being a Mujtahed is a very high rank among Islamic clergies, and requires so many years of studying in Islamic sources. Traditionally, in *Shia* branch of Islam, only men are believed to be qualified to become a *Mujtahed*. But there is contemporary debate on whether or not being male is one of the conditions of being able to become a *Mujtahed*.

[2] Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Feminism in an Islamic Republic: Years of Hardship, Years of Growth," in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, eds. Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 59-84; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Stretching the Limits: A Feminist

feminism" in her speeches and articles in the 1990s. Turkish scholars Yesim Arat and Feride Acar, in their articles, and Nilufer Gole in her book *The Forbidden Modern,* used the term "Islamic feminism" in their writings in the 1990s to describe a new feminist paradigm they detected emerging in Turkey.[3] Saudi Arabian scholar Mai Yamani used the term in her 1996 book *Feminism and Islam*.[4] By the mid-1990s, Islamic feminism as a term was already in use and circulated among scholars around the world.

Margot Badran, one of the most well-known scholars who promotes Islamic feminism as an analytic construct defines it as "a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm. Islamic feminism, which derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeks rights and justice for women, and for men, in the totality of their existence. Islamic feminism is both highly contested and firmly embraced."[5] Another scholar who actively engages in the production of Islamic feminism, Na'eem Jeenah defines it as "firstly, an ideology which uses the Qur'an and Sunnah to provide the ideals for gender relationships, as well as the weapons in the struggle to transform society in a way that gender equality is accepted as a principle around which society is structured. Secondly, it is the struggle of Muslim women and

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Reading of the Shari'a in Post-Khomeini Iran," in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed. Mai Yamani (London: Ithaca Press, 1996), 285-320.

[3] Yeşim Arat, "Feminism and Islam: Considerations on the Journal Kadın ve Aile," in *Women in Modern Turkish Society*, ed. Şirin Tekeli (London: Zed Press, 1991), 66-78; Feride Acar, "Women in the Ideology of Islamic Revivalism in Turkey: Three Islamic Women's Journals," in *Islamic Literature in Contemporary Turkey* (1991): 280-303; Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

[4] Mai Yamani, *Feminism and Islam* (New York: New York University, 1996).

[5] Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergence* (Oxford: One World, 2009), 242.

men for the emancipation of women based on this ideology."[6] The anthology of essays titled *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America,* which looks at "women's issues *from within* the Islamic perspective [which] must include, and indeed unite, issues of theory and practice,"[7] is an example of Islamic feminism.

It is important to note that not everyone whose work has been included in the Islamic feminist discourse identifies with this label. Islamic feminism has been used to categorize works of religious Muslims, 'secular Muslims' and non-Muslims. Some who engage in the practice of what has been called Islamic feminism assert an Islamic feminist identity from the start, while others have been reluctant to identify themselves as Islamic feminists. Yet still, some have changed their positions in more recent years.[8]

Responses to the Convergence of Islam and Feminism

Scholars respond in various ways to the convergence of Islam and feminism. This section presents a survey of these responses as well as an attempt to recognize patterns and similarities among them. There are at least four categories of responses, but this is not to suggest that these categories are exclusive or that any work on Islam and feminism should be classified under only one of these categories. The first response is to actively construct a paradigm based on the convergence of Islam and feminism and name it

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[6] Na'eem Jeenah, "The National Liberation Struggle and Islamic Feminism in South Africa," *Women's Studies International Forum* 29, no.1 (2006): 29.

[7] Gisela Webb, "Introduction: 'May Muslim Women Speak for Themselves, Please?'," in *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America*, ed. Gisela Webb (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), xi.

[8] In the past, Amina Wadud, the African-American Muslim theologian and author of *Qur'an and Woman* and Asma Barlas the Pakistani-American Muslim scholar initially objected to being labelled an Islamic feminist but later showed less concern if others identified them as such. American based theologian Riffat Hassan of Pakistani origin has also come to accept the Islamic feminist designation, concerned most, like Wadud and Barlas, not with the label but that her work be understood.

"Islamic feminism," as have Afsaneh Najmabadi, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, and later Margot Badran, miriam cooke, and Naeem Jeenah.[9] Second, is to deny the possibility of a convergence and keep the two apart, as do Zeenath Kausar, Haideh Moghissi, and Reza Afshari.[10] A third response is to challenge how the convergence of Islam and feminism is presented. This is true of works by Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas who resist the easy application of the label 'feminist' to their work.[11] Finally, there are scholars who have adopted a feminist analysis, aligned it with critical readings on women in Islam, but did not classify their work as "Islamic feminism." Fatima Seedat describes this response as

[9] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Women and Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran: Divorce, Veiling and Emerging Feminist voices," in *Women and Politics in the Third World*, ed. Haleh Afshar (London: Routledge, 1996),149-696; Margot Badran, "Toward Islamic Feminism: A Look at the Middle East," in *Hermeneutics of Honor: Negotiating Female 'Public' Space in Islamicate Societies,* eds. Asma Afsaruddin and Anan Ameri (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 159-188; Jeenah, "The National Liberation Struggle"; Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating lslamic Feminism through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 59.

[10] Zeenath Kausar, *Women in Feminism and Politic(s): New Directions Towards Islamization* (Selangor: Women's Affairs Secretariat, 1995); Zeenath Kausar, *Muslim Women at the Crossroads: The Rights of Women in Islam and General Muslim Practices* (Batu Caves, Selangor: Thinker's Library, 2006); Zeenath Kausar and Zaleha Kamaruddin, eds., *Women's Issues: Women's Perspectives* (Petaling Jaya, Selangor: Women's Affairs Secretariat, 1995); Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London: Zed Books, 1999); Reza Afshari, "Egalitarian Islam and Misogynist Islamic Tradition: A Critique of the Feminist Reinterpretation of Islamic History and Heritage," *Critique* 4 (1994): 13–33.

[11] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (Oxford, Oneworld, 2006); Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006); Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2002); Asma Barlas, "Keynote Address: Provincialising Feminism as a Master Narrative," in *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives* (Finland: Centre for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, 2007).

"taking Islam for granted" in the application of feminist analysis.[12] Works done by Kecia Ali, Fatima Mernissi and Leila Ahmed can be said to belong to this latter group.[13]

Theorizing about Islamic Feminism

Early theoretical scholarship on Islamic feminism includes Afsaneh Najmabadi and Ziba Mir-Hosseini. Later on Margot Badran, Valentine Moghadam, miriam cooke and Na'eem Jeenah also offered their assessments of the convergence. While these scholars are not necessarily Islamic feminists themselves, they are all supportive of a feminism conducted within the Islamic framework as a viable solution for women living in Muslim countries to achieve equality.

Afsaneh Najmabadi is one of the first scholars who started discussing the women's movement in Iran in terms of 'Islamic feminism'. In her famous essay "Feminism in an Islamic Republic: Years of Hardship, Years of Growth," she considers Islamic feminism as an opportunity for dialogue between religious and secular feminists.[14] Despite the fact that women are not equal to men in legal and social status, Najmabadi sees "an incredible flourishing of women's intellectual and cultural productions" in Iran in the past decades. She points to Iranian women's active presence in fields of artistic, educational, industrial, social and athletic activities. Although most secular feminists believe that Iranian women have gained these successes *despite* the

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[12] Fatima Seedat, "When Islam and Feminism Converge," *Muslim World* 103, no. 3 (July 2013): 404–420.

[13] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Kecia Ali. S*exual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: One world, 2006).

[14] Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Feminism in an Islamic Republic: 'Years of Hardship, Years of Growth'," in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, eds. Yvonne Y Haddad and John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 59-84.

Islamic republic and *against* Islam as the dominant discourse in the society, Najmabadi does not see that as a compelling explanation. She believes that the creative energy of Iranian women cannot be reduced to a merely oppositional and reactive force.[15]

Najmabadi argues that after the Revolution in Iran the task of confronting the apparent misogyny of Islam fell on the women who supported the Islamic Republic. No matter what position they took concerning this issue, whether to deny it, justify it, or oppose it, they could not simply ignore it. This gave rise to efforts to rethink gender and women's status in Islam. As a result, a number of women's organizations and institutions began to form and various journals concerned with women's issues emerged.[16] In her writings, Najmabadi focuses on the views presented in these journals, particularly the one called *Zanan* [Women]. After it was founded by Shahla Sherkat in 1992, *Zanan* quickly became a major voice for reform of the status of women in Iran.

Sherkat believes that gender equality is Islamic and that the religious literature had been misread and misappropriated by misogynists. This belief is mirrored in the articles of the magazine which present a reformist interpretation concerning women's status based on a selection of relatively woman-friendly sources among authoritative exegetical texts. This movement goes back to the nineteenth century and the Iranian poet and theologian, Fatimah Baraghani, also called Tahereh and Qurrat al-Ayn, who was the first modern woman to undertake Qur'anic exegesis. She denounced polygyny and other restraints put upon women. She discarded her veil and eventually her submission to Islam. Her actions and teachings were not tolerated by the male elite and she was arrested

[15] Ibid., 59-60.

[16] Ibid., 61-62.

and executed. Much like Qurrat al-Ayn, *Zanan* magazine challenges orthodox Islamic doctrines on differential rights and demands equality between men and women.[17]

Najmabadi is specifically optimistic about such projects because some of the writers of *Zanan* ground their arguments directly in the text of the *Qur'an* to support their claims. These feminists have even raised the issue of the right to *ijtehad* for women. This way, *Zanan* attempts to place woman in the position of interpreter and to see women's needs as grounds for the interpretation of Islamic texts.[18] As Najmabadi notes, these feminist writers are open to western feminism, as they have translated and published many of the writings of western feminists. Najmabadi is also very optimistic that Islamic feminists such as the writers of *Zanan* might open a dialogue between Islamic women activists and secular feminists. She sees that as an important opportunity for Muslim women and women of the religious minority to join forces for a common cause.[19]

Another prominent scholar who finds the Iranian women's press fascinating is Ziba Mir-Hosseini. She bases her support of Islamic feminism in three claims. First, gender roles and women's rights are not absolute or fixed. Rather, they are "cultural constructs" which arise from lived realities and practices. Thus, they can be changed through the voices of people calling for it. Gender roles and relations, she writes, "exist in and through the ways in which we talk about them, both publicly and privately, and as we study and write about what gender relations and women's rights in Islam are and can be." What is more, Mir-Hosseini's definition of feminism is broad; it involves "a general concern with women's issues" and working towards enhancing their status. Finally, she

[17] Ibid., 64.

[18] Ibid., 71.

[19] Ibid., 77.

asserts that feminism and Islam are not incompatible. In her view, novel and feminist interpretations of the *sharia*[20] "are not only possible today but even inevitable".[21]

One view that this group of scholars share is that Islamic feminism is a legitimate approach towards equality and women's rights. Valentine Moghadam argues that feminists are defined "by their praxis rather than by a strict ideology", and as far as feminist approaches are formed in part by their historical, cultural and political contexts, it is possible to count Islamic feminism as feminist.[22] She presents what she characterizes as a contestation between Islamic fundamentalism, the gender-based interests of the Iranian government, secular feminism and the international women's movement, concluding that Islamic feminism is a contested and contextually specific praxis, but it is also "one feminism among many."[23] The suggestion in her analysis is that feminism is likely to apply to Islam as it applies to other intellectual traditions.

miriam cooke formulates a concept of Islamic feminism more easily than the scholars discussed above. She uses Arab women's literature in an attempt to show that Islamic feminism exists, and then uses the literature to explain what it is and how it works. She proposes that Islamic feminism relies, firstly, on a direct approach to the Qur'an and *Sunna* that bypasses religious scholarship and authority and, secondly, on an appeal to religion as the origin of social-justice struggles in Muslim societies. These two points of

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[20] *Sharia* is the moral code and religious law of Islam. There are two primary sources of *sharia* law: the guidelines set forth in the *Qur'an*, and the example set by the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

[21] Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender*, 6-7.

[22] Valentine Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate," *Signs* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 1135-1171, 1165.

[23] Ibid.

analysis challenge the temporal nature of male centered readings and produce affirmative gender readings of the classical sources. For cooke, Islamic feminism is "not a coherent identity", rather it is a contingent and "contextually determined strategic self-positioning."[24] It is a strategy of multiple-critique that produces a framework where parallel commitments to multiple ideological frameworks are possible, even when they appear to be contradictory.[25] While her narrative is limited to Arab women, post-colonial resistance and the Arabic language, she does include Arab women of diverse gender-politics such as Fatima Mernissi and Zaynab al-Ghazali. Still, cooke's analysis identifies Islamic feminism with Arab Muslim women's discourses on modernity suggesting that Islamic feminism may apply in a general fashion to most aspects of modern Muslim women's gender work. As such, her summative approach contrasts the reflective approaches of Najmabadi and Mir-Hosseini.

In an essay published in 1994, Margot Badran identifies "a kind of feminism or public activist mode" that is represented by Muslim women who decide for themselves how to conduct their lives in society.[26] Since, according to Badran, the women who do this work resist the term feminism for pragmatic reasons— it has largely "Western associations", is confining and potentially misleading— she adopts the term "gender

[24] Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating lslamic Feminism through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 59.

[25] Ibid., 113.

[26] Margot Badran, "Gender Activism: Feminists and Islamists in Egypt," in *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Reminisms in International Perspective*, ed. V. M. Moghadam (Boulder: Westview Fress, 1994), 202-27. The article is reprinted in M. Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Religious and Secular Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

activism".[27] Badran argues that this gender activism is a new and "unencumbered, analytic construct," that represent a convergence that "transcends ideological boundaries of politically articulated feminism and Islamism."[28] Moreover, she speculates that this activism might "spawn an Islamic feminist activism in Egypt during the decade of the 1990's."[29] In another essay published in 1999, she maintains that "gender activism" will eventually result in Islamic feminism. She defends her view by arguing that as the boundaries between feminism and gender progressive Islam blur, "Muslim women face a conundrum of what to call their gender activism." She believes that Muslim women not only "want to embrace feminism" but also need an Islamic feminism."[30] She traces the history of this Islamic feminism to the nineteenth and twentieth century Egyptian women's movement.[31]

Later in 2002 Badran argues that Islamic feminism has emerged and that it is more radical than secular feminism, and as such the discussion on who may speak or analyze Islamic feminism is a mere distraction.[32] From this point onward her treatment of the subject also firmly embraces the term and as a result the somewhat cautious approach of her earlier writings is now less evident. Five years later, by 2007, Badran writes of

[27] Ibid., 142.

[28] Ibid., 162.

[29] Ibid., 145.

[30] Badran, "Toward Islamic Feminism," 165.

[31] Ibid., 159.

[32] Ibid., 250.

cyber networks where Islamic feminism is increasingly claimed and readily embraced as an identity. By now, Islamic feminism, she says, is 'two decades old."[33]

Another articulation of Islamic feminism occurs in Na'eem Jeenah's analysis of South African Muslim anti-apartheid struggles. Jeenah describes his project as redefining feminism beyond a "tool to achieve secular goals" so that Muslims may reclaim and use it on their own terms while adding the qualifier Islamic to it.[34] In Jeenah's narrative South African Muslim feminist struggles were part of the anti-apartheid struggles of the Islamic movement, viz. the Call of Islam (Call) and the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM).[35] Thus, Jeenah constructs Islamic feminism through a retrospective analysis of the gender imperatives of Muslim anti-apartheid activism. However, Islamic feminism in South Africa occurs through Jeenah's rereading of past practices and not as an expression of existing contemporaneous discussions on Islam and feminism in South Africa.[36]

Resisting a convergence

A radically different assessments of the convergence of Islam and feminism occurs in the work of scholars who resist such a convergence. Zeenath Kausar,[37] Haideh Moghissi,[38] and Hammed Shahidian are among scholars who adamantly deny the

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[33] Badran, *Religious and Secular Convergences*, 300 and 324.

[34] Jeenah, "The National Liberation Struggle," 29.

[35] For more on general South African feminist debates see Shireen Hassim, "Gender, Social Location and Feminist Politics in South Africa," *Transformation* 15(1991): 65-8.

[36] Seedat, "When Islam and Feminism Converge," 9.

[37] Kausar, *Women in Feminism and Politics*; Kausar, *Muslim Women at the Crossroads*, 52; Kausar and Kamaruddin, *Women's Issues* (Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia: Women's Affairs Secretariat, 1995).

[38] Moghissi, Haideh. *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

possibility of a convergence albeit for sharply opposing motivations. In stark contrast to Badran's ready association of Islam and feminism is Kausar's work, which refuses any convergence between the two intellectual paradigms. Her early work explains feminism as an ideological opposite to Islam[39] and in her later work feminism is an extreme counter point to Muslim ethnocultural traditionalism.[40] In Kausar's view, Islam and feminism are mutually exclusive as feminism is secular and also materialistic. She argues that the basis of Muslim women's empowerment should be accountability to God. As such, she advocates women's empowerment through the Islamization of knowledge.[41]

In opposition to Kausar, many scholars see Islam as inherently patriarchal and anti-pluralist in theory and practice. They believe that even though there can be more women-friendly interpretations of Islam, a truly liberating theory based on it is impossible. For this reason, they support a secular feminism even in Muslim societies. Many believe that in a theocratic country like Iran, there cannot be considerable improvements in women's status as long as the religious state is in place. These scholars are also worried that Islamic feminists delegitimize the activities of secular feminists by providing a less threatening "feminist" option that actually does not result in significant social change at all.

Iranian scholar Hammed Shahidian believes that the politics of Islamic feminism in Iran and other Muslim countries are questionable. And that Islamic feminism is not sufficient to combat the dominant Islamic discourse and practice of gender and sexuality.

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[39] Kausar, *Women in Feminism and Politics.*

[40] Kausar, *Muslim Women at the Crossroads.*

[41] Kaiser, *Women in Feminism and Politics.*

In his writings, Shahidian tries to show the limits of reinterpreting Islamic texts on gender relations. While some scholars, like Najmabadi, are very optimistic about the attempts of Islamic feminists to reinterpret Islamic sources and to root their discussions in the Qur'an, Shahidian is doubtful that this would solve any problem. He sees dismissals of historical narratives, reinterpretation of the Qur'an, or even independent reasoning (*ijtehad*), all working in the same direction, which is leaving women's rights contingent upon interpretations, and as a result, making women vulnerable.[42] Thus, Shahidian comes to the conclusion that the Islamic imperative limits the horizon of reformist theory and practice. He believes that the changes proposed by Islamic feminists may alter the form and content of patriarchal domination, but it will not create gender equality. He maintains that "the confinement of Islamic women's reformism in the hegemonic gender ideology leads to reinforcing ideas and priorities that will eventually contain, rather than enhance, women's struggle against the Islamic state."[43]

Haideh Moghissi is another scholar who warns us about the negative consequences of supporting the reformist activities of Muslim women who work within an Islamic framework. Unlike supporters of Islamic feminism who take feminism to be broad enough to include activities performed in an Islamic framework, Moghissi believes that Islamic feminism sometimes involves activities that are not feminist in the first place. She believes that the changes in Islamic societies, especially Iran, came about under the pressure of many contradictions and conflicts within the society, including secular women's resistance against Islamization policies. While many conclude that the transformations that have taken place in Muslim societies demonstrate that Islam is

[42] Ibid., 76.

[43] Ibid., 108.

compatible with gender equality, Moghissi believes that the more accurate conclusion is that given those conflicts and contradictions, Islamic fundamentalism has had no alternative but to compromise its utopia.[44]

Resisting the Label

As mentioned before, there are scholars working on the convergence of Islam and feminism who challenge how that convergence is represented. These scholars resist the easy application of the label feminist to their work or to themselves, as Amina Wadud[45] and Asma Barlas[46] have. The gendered critiques of the Qur'an that Wadud and Barlas offer have frequently been labelled feminist, suggesting both the derogatory and laudatory connotations with which feminism may be associated. The derogatory undertone emanates from mostly Muslim objection to feminist analysis which is associated with an uncritical embrace of Western values. The laudatory implication is characteristic of both Muslim and non-Muslim support for a feminist reading of religion. Both scholars have objected to being labelled "feminist," whether it is intended to commend or condemn their work. Barlas and Wadud argue that the motivation for their gender affirmative analyses is faith and not feminism.

Explaining her position about being labeled a feminist, Wadud writes:

> It is no longer possible to construct Third World and all other specified articulations and philosophical developments of feminism without due reference to the Western origins of feminism. That is why I still describe my position as pro-faith, pro-feminist. Despite how others may categorize me, my work is certainly feminist, but I still refuse to self designate as feminist, even with

[44] Ibid., 99.

[45] Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*.

[46] Barlas, *Believing Women*.

> "Muslim" put in front of it, because my emphasis on faith and the sacred prioritize my motivations in feminist methodologies.[47]

While accepting the inevitability of the alignment between feminism and "western origins", she maintains that her negotiation distances her from the political project of feminism, i.e. from feminist hegemonies, but not from feminist methodology. Her resistance presumes a distinction between feminist thought and "reading from the female experience" which is how she explains her earlier work.[48]

Wadud does not further clarify her motives for separating herself from feminism. Seedat, however explains that considering the heavy burdens of colonial and empire-based feminism borne by Muslim societies, many Muslim scholars, including Wadud, find it necessary to distance themselves from feminist discourse as a way of maintaining the primacy of a Muslim identity. Academic feminism is a historically Western frame of thought born from the intellectual traditions of Europe's Enlightenment and has come to share in the burden of colonialism, hegemony and imperialism.[49] Third world feminists such as Chandra Mohanty, Marnia Lazreg and others have shown how non-Western women have been subject to the hegemonic discourses of Western feminisms with the effect of devaluing, prejudicing or simply denying other women's experiences.[50] As such, Wadud's reluctance to be associated wholly with feminism may be a strategy to avoid the burdens and prejudices that some feminism may carry. On the other hand, she also

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[47] Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad*, 79-80.
[48] Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 3.
[49] Seedat, "When Feminism and Islam Converge," 416.

[50] Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse," *Feminist Review 39,* no. 1 (November 1988): 61-88; Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence o f Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

recognizes the multiplicity of feminisms and is willing to concede by calling her work pro-feminist.

Asma Barlas explains her resistance to being labeled a feminist by arguing that this label denies something very real and specific about her encounter with the Qur'an. Instead, she defines herself as "a seeker of God's grace, a supplicant for it."[51] She theorizes her opposition by "provincializing"feminism which, in her view, works as a meta-narrative that subsumes and assimilates "all conversations about equality."[52] Over a period of time Barlas and Badran have engaged in a series of discussions where she actively resists the label Badran attaches to her work. Barlas recounts that at the outset of the process she found herself outraged. "How can people call me a feminist when I'm calling myself a believing woman? How can other people tell me what I am and what I'm doing?"[53] Her next response was to clarify the differences between her work and that of feminists like Mernissi, who believes "Islam is a sexist and patriarchal religion that puts a sacred stamp onto female subservience."[54] In contrast, Barlas believes that Muslims read Islam as a patriarchy partly because of how they read the Qur'an, who reads it, and the contexts in which they read it. She maintains that texts are always read "from and within specific material and ideological sites and that we need to be aware of these sites when

[51] Barlas, *Believing Women*, 7.

[52] Barlas, "Keynote Address: Provincialising Feminism as a Master Narrative," in *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives* (Centre for the Study of Culture, Race and Ethnicity, Finland 2007), 21.

[53] Ibid., 16.

[54] Ibid., 17.

attempting to understand readings of scripture."[55] She concludes that as long as feminism "functions as a universalizing political theory" it cannot accommodate what Dipesh Chakrabarty explains as the "diverse ways of being human, the infinite incommensurabilities through which we struggle — perennially, precariously, but unavoidably — to world the earth in order to live within our different senses of ontic belonging."[56] While Barlas remains unconvinced that her work must be called feminist, she also remains committed to a dialogue with Badran premised upon understanding why it is that Badran has chosen to call her work Islamic feminism.

Working Toward a Convergence and Taking Islam for Granted

As mentioned before, Seedat identifies another category of scholars working on the convergence of Islam and feminism who may refer to themselves as feminists, but do not use the combination Islamic feminist or see a need to mark their feminism as distinct.[57] Seedat believes that feminism and the struggle for sex equality in Islam often share methods, analysis, and even strategies. The fact that these struggles and their theorizing also occur in the context of European languages and in Western academia makes the vocabulary, methods, and tools of feminism seem almost impossible to avoid. Furthermore, as feminism is the primary mode for theorizing female subjectivities, and for now at least, the only vocabulary, methods, and tools at our disposal are necessarily feminist, in so far as they have historically been part of what feminism deploys against patriarchy, it may mean that all struggles for sex equality in Islam will inevitably be

[55] Ibid., 17.

[56] Ibid., 22.

[57] Fatima Seedat, "Islam, Feminism, and Islamic Feminism: Between Inadequacy and Inevitability," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 25-45.

named feminist. However, this inevitability does not mean that the convergence of Islam and feminism must result in something called Islamic feminism. The convergence of Islam and feminism as an articulation of struggles for sex equality through a discourse that "takes Islam for granted" is one alternative and a "potentially more desirable construct."[58] The distinction between scholars who challenge this idea and those who work toward a convergence does not intend to deny that the two positions also intersect. As examples, Barlas and Wadud resist the label but not the methods of feminism, i.e. they challenge the representation of the convergence but not the convergence itself.

In contrast to Kausar, Moghissi, Wadud and Barlas — and conscious of the risk of reinforcing the impression that Muslim society is characteristically oppressive toward women — Kecia Ali represents a further development in critical gender based Islamic thought.[59] Ali presents herself as a Muslim feminist and criticizes gender paradigms of classical legal scholarship by arguing that historical gender paradigms and laws are unsuitable to contemporary Muslim lives, specially that of Muslim women. Without asking about the place of feminism in Islam or how the two paradigms converge, Ali explains that Muslim feminists are now part of the landscape of the Islamic intellectual tradition where they "push at its boundaries and reshape its contours."[60]

Ziba Mir-Hosseini's work may also be considered as part of this approach to feminism and Islam. Ali's *Sexual Ethics* and Mir-Hosseini's articles include feminism in their titles. Similarly, both pay less attention to the hegemonic politics of feminism and more attention to its critical discourse. Though not oblivious that their work may re-

[58] Ibid., 37.

[59] Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, xviii.

[60] Ibid., 153.

inscribe the victim narrative associated with Muslim women, they are also open to the utility of feminist discourse and offer an unapologetically feminist analysis of Islamic law. This is an "insider" feminist discourse emanating from Muslim women, through their lived experiences and in conscious engagement with the Islamic tradition. Here Islam is taken for granted as the substance of analysis and feminism as a method for analysis. As such, feminism and Islam come together without strong arguments either for convergence or differentiation of the two.

Arguments in support of Islamic Feminism

There are two main arguments in support of Islamic feminism as a viable theory to address women's issues in Muslim countries, that are reiterated in the works of many scholars writing on Islamic feminism. One of these arguments concerns the achievements of women towards gender equality working within Islamic frameworks, while the other centers on the claim that sexism and patriarchy are not part of Islam per se, but are rather social constructs.

Ziba Mir-Hosseini is among the scholars who rely on the achievements of women in Muslim countries in recent years to argue for the value of Islamic feminism. Her research focuses on developments concerning the status of Iranian women after the Revolution. Among these developments is the increase in women's participation and involvement in public life and politics, which according to Mir-Hosseini, is due to the enforcement of *hijab* that has made "public space morally correct" in the eyes of traditionalist families, thus, legitimizing women's public presence.[61] According to Mir-Hosseini, the Revolution in Iran has raised the nation's gender consciousness. Muslim

[61] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7.

women came to see that there is no essential opposition between having faith in Islam and believing in equality between the two sexes. Even though these activists have different and even contrasting positions— to the point that while some of them object to being called feminists others object to the label Islamist— they have something in common, namely, they all pursue justice and equality for women, even though they might not be unanimous about what constitutes justice and equality and what is the best way towards them.[62]

A similar emphasis on the realities of the Muslim world and negotiations of gender roles and codes is present in the work of Iranian scholar, Nayereh Tohidi. Although at first critical of the gender policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, she later came to support the possibilities for reform within the system. She believes that women in the Muslim world have been successful in negotiating gender relations and moderating restrictions in the past few decades. In the case of Iran, it can be seen in the ways women circumvent patriarchal rules like transforming compulsory *hijab* into fashionable styles.[63] The state approved dress code for women in Iran demands full coverage of the hair and body with the exception of the face, hands, and (debatably) feet with loose fitting clothes. The chador (a full-body-length semicircle of fabric that is tossed over the woman's head and covers the whole body) is the state's preferred kind of hijab, but not mandatory. In the years following the Khomeini's decree on making the hijab mandatory in Iran,[64]

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[62] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Quest for Gender Justice – Emerging Feminist Voices in Islam," in Islam 21, no. 36, May 2004, www.islam21.net, 3.

[63] Nayereh Tohidi, "The International Connections of the Iranian Women's Movement in Iran: 1979-2000," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, eds. Nikki Keddie and Rudi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 283.

[64] Khomeini was the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its first Supreme Leader.

women have pushed back—often at great personal costs— and have managed to acquire some leeway. Today, a lot of women in Iran cover only part of their hair, and wear colorful and close-fitting outfits.

Haleh Afshar is another scholar who became impressed by how much Iranian women have resisted restrictions during the re-Islamization of Iran after the Revolution. She argues that Iranian women have been able to reconstruct "an ideological framework that enables them to make political demands, framed in the language of Islam." By referring to the discourses of Islamist activists in Iran seeking full participation in the public domain, she notes that these discourses are not framed in notions frequently associated with western feminism such as liberty and equality: "what the Islamist women demand is entitlements that are balanced by duties. The demands are located firmly within the framework of responsibilities, mutual obligations and complementary roles."[65]

The second group of arguments focuses on the claim that gender discrimination has a social origin and that there is no ground for such discrimination in the Qur'an itself or in the teachings of the prophet. Thus, the argument continues, gender inequalities have arisen from the practices and traditions of Muslim societies, not from a natural or divine origin. Moreover, some scholars argue that Islam itself is not monolithic, which gives them more ground for arguing in support of compatibility of Islam and feminism. These scholars largely agree that reinterpretations of Qur'an can lead to non oppressive views of women. For instance, Tohidi supports her view on the possibility of doing feminist work within an Islamic framework, by pointing out to the nature of Islam as a "human or social construct" that is "neither ahistoric nor monolithic, reified, and static". Thus, it is feasible

[65] Haleh Afshar, "Women and Politics in Iran", *The European Journal of Development Research* 12, no. 1 (June 2000): 196.

to adjust religion to the new demands and realities of the modern world, just like the ongoing process of reconstructing religion in Christian contexts.[66] Mir-Hosseini also argues against claims of incompatibility of feminism and Islam. She believes that neither Islam nor feminism have a fixed meaning, and they are full of conflicts in themselves. Hence, it does not make much sense to conceive of the two as opposed when there can be multiple perspectives from which they can be addressed. Mir-Hosseini believes that arguments based on the incompatibility of Islam and feminism fail to take account of realities and "mask global and local power relations and structures, within which Muslim women have to struggle for justice and equality."[67]

Although drawing a very different conclusion in the end regarding the relation of Islam and feminism, Kausar also makes a distinction in approaches to women in Islam: one is the authentically Islamic approach and the other "Muslim ethnocultural, traditionalist" approach which relies on old ideas, customs and cultural traditions which are not necessarily Islamic.[68] Those who believe that in terms of family, women ought to be submissive and passive and in society women should be inactive follow the second approach.[69] For Kausar the true Islamic approach is opposed to both feminism and ethnocultural traditionalist view of Islam.

Assessing Arguments in Support of Islamic Feminism

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[66] Nayereh Tohidi, "'Islamic feminism': perils and promises." *The Middle East Women's Studies Review* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 13-14.

[67] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Feminist voices in Islam: promise and potential," *OpenDemocracy*, November 19, 2012.

[68] Kausar, *Muslim Women at the Crossroads*, 145.

[69] Ibid., 146-148.

As discussed above, supporters of Islamic feminism refer to the achievements of women towards equality working in an Islamic framework as a sign of success for Islamic feminism. Iranian scholars, in particular, have argued that women's participation in public spaces has increased after the revolution in Iran and attributed this change to Islamic feminism. Although it is clear that today Iranian women, like women from many other countries, are more represented in public spaces, we should be cautious in attributing this change to the revolution and the Islamic regime of Iran. One can argue that the revolution of Iran has slowed this process for Iranian women. After all, we do not know how active women would be in public spaces if the revolution had not happened. Especially if we consider that in his last days of ruling, the agenda of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Iran's last monarch, was modernization of Iran and that women had already started to become part of the public sphere well before the revolution. Thus, since its initiation the Islamic Republic has been grappling with women's issues in a society with a relatively advanced level of capitalist development. The achievements of Iranian women while living in a completely different regime under the *Shah* could not be undone by this revolution.

Focusing on the Iranian debate on Islamic Feminism, Moghissi rejects the argument presented by pro-Islamic feminists based on the improvements they claim to have happened in the status of women under Islam. She examines in detail the claim about the increase in women's employment and argues that Islamic fundamentalists try to direct women's activities towards "lesser value" occupations that are considered to be women's domain. She cites the examples of the concentration of female medical students and professionals in areas such as obstetrics/gynecology (which has been closed to male

students since the installment of the Islamic Republic in Iran), pediatrics, and family medicine, and women's virtual exclusion from medicine's technical frontiers such as neurology. Although one might notice that this is not an issue exclusive to Iran, or even Islamic societies, Moghissi goes on to attribute it to the "ideologization of female education and employment, and the unremitting commitment to segregation in the workforce" by the Islamic regime of Iran. Thus, she concludes that sexual apartheid is at the top of this project. [70]

According to Moghissi, when discussing fundamentalism in the Muslim world it is very important to consider the dynamics of the relationship between the fundamentalists and women, which can be understood through what she calls the relationship "between the 'text' and the 'context'", which is what fundamentalists wish and what they do in practice. She maintains that the difference between 'text' and 'context' is not as great as some feminists suggest. In other words, against the optimistic view that even though fundamentalists wish to impose severe restrictions on women, they have failed to a great degree, Moghisi believes that fundamentalists' success has not been that limited either. While women's achievements are remarkable, over-emphasizing them carries the risk of over-looking the restrictions they face as a result of the hostile legal practices associated with fundamentalism. Moghissi goes on to say that what fundamentalists 'do to women' in recent Islamic enactments is much more than 'what women do to fundamentalists'.[71]

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[70] Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London: Zed, 1999), 115-116.

[71] Ibid., 119-120.

Another example is the right to dress freely which was taken away from Iranian women by the Islamic Republic. Dress code is a very controversial topic among secular and Islamic feminists. As we recall, Mir-Hosseini argues that as a result of enforcing *hijab*, traditionalist families now consider the public sphere safer for women, leading to more participation from these families in public areas. Mir-Hosseini does not give any explanation as to why traditionalist families, who usually see the presence of men in public places as making it unsafe for women, should change their mind about it as a result of the new regulations that constrain women, and not men, who were the problem in the first place. I assume she believes that traditionalist families think men would leave women who hide themselves under *hijab* alone. I, however, do not see how any person who lives in Iran, traditionalist or not, can believe that. Firstly, if the way women dress can improve their safety in public, I am sure women from traditionalist families could dress modestly enough well before the revolution. Secondly, my own experience living in Iran indicates the more you cover women and separate them from men in public places, the more likely it is for men to make advances on them. I believe that Iran's government has made public space less safe for women, by imposing rules such as compulsory hijab, and policies that separate men and women in public places. The reason for men's advances on women or assaulting them in public places is that they consider public space *their* original domain, and believe that any woman who dares to enter their domain might as well be prepared for the "consequences." Here lies the main reason for the Iranian governments' insistence upon upholding Islamic dress codes despite the significant resistance they face from many of their citizens. Central to the Islamic ideology is its understanding of gender as given and inflexible. This duality ensures the hierarchy of the

sexes and dominance of men over women. Hijab is the most visible sign of this power men hold over women and a reminder to women that they are different. The invisibility of the body paves the way for the invisibility of the self. Controlling women's bodies, therefore, is a strategy for controlling their capacity for self-determination—in their bodies and beyond. As Marnia Lazreg explains in *Questioning the Veil*, "hijab induces a sense that biology is destiny" in the women who wears it. As there is no separation of the body from the self, in repressing their bodies, Muslim women are repressing themselves. In the case of Iran where hijab is mandatory, it suppresses women's desire for authenticity which requires a harmonizing of one's inner life and external life.[72]

Another point that supporters of Islamic feminism make concerning *hijab* is about various styles of dress used by Iranian women. Although these styles involve certain kinds of covering of body parts, they are far from what the Islamic Republic considers appropriate. Many people who live outside of Iran and know about the compulsory *hijab* seem to be taken by surprise when they visit Iran and see that women do not entirely dress according to the regulations in place. Tohidi argues that Islamic feminists have been able to undermine the clerical agenda in different ways including minimizing and diversifying the compulsory *hijab* and dress code into fashionable styles.[73] It is true that in Iran women have been able to change the compulsory *hijab* into fashionable styles, which the government does not approve of. This, however, should not distract us from the fact that Iranian women are still forced to observe some sort of *hijab*, be it

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[72] Marnia Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 63-64.

[73] Nayereh Tohidi, "The International Connections of the Iranian Women's Movement in Iran: 1979–2000," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, ed. Nikki Keddie and Rudi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 283–85.

fashionable or not, and that this issue has become a constant struggle especially for young women in their daily lives. At the entrance to many public buildings such as universities and courts there is a unit with people who make sure that no one who is not dressed according to the government's standards enters the building. There are even mobile vans in different parts of big cities, with people who check on the way women dress. They have the authority to seize the people with inappropriate dress, take them to their offices, and make them sign statements saying that they would observe proper *hijab* thereafter. Thus, those who do not observe proper *hijab* according to government standards are likely to be treated as someone who has committed a crime. Showing too much optimism about Iranian women's resistance toward Islamic *hijab* might obscure the everyday struggles of people with the government. For those of us who do not have to face this risk everyday of our life, it might seem easy to look at these fashionable young women and just think how much they have achieved despite living in an Islamic country, and to forget the internal terror and uneasiness that they feel every time they set foot outside their home, knowing that they might be recognized as a bad *hijab*, and therefore a criminal.

Improvements made in the status of women under the Islamic system, although significant, are not enough to make us believe that an Islamic feminism is all that is needed to bring liberation to women who live in Islamic societies. Scholars who support Islamic feminism emphasize the achievement of activists who work within the Islamic system. I think it might be useful to consider what they *have not* achieved regarding the status of women, or what they may never be able to achieve within an Islamic framework. We celebrate the fact that Iranian women have not conformed to the Islamic

dress code as approved by fundamentalists; but is being able to dress freely not something that every woman should have the right to? Nonetheless, this is something that seems impossible to achieve under an Islamic state. Yet we are still happy about the small achievements of these brave and defiant women, simply because we do not see them just as women, but as women in a Muslim society, and that, unfortunately, makes us lower our expectations.

As discussed above another important argument in support of Islamic feminism is based on the view that Islam is a historical phenomenon, constantly undergoing modification. As discussed, Tohidi maintains that Islam, like any other religion, is an evolving social theory, not a fixed religious dogma. Shahidan objects to this view by arguing that Tohidi takes the metaphysical teachings of Islam too lightly. He argues that the problem before Islamic feminists is that these metaphysical teachings cannot be altered. He believes that "Islam's authoritative discourse leaves little room for foundational changes." What is particular to Islam as a religion is that it teaches that the Prophet, namely Muhammad, is the seal of all prophets, and that his religion is the most complete, not just one religion among many. The Qur'an is considered to be the word of God. Shahidian, by repeating the words of Tibi, describes Islam as a "strict, uncompromising monotheism". With this description, Shahidian recognizes the limit of any interpretation of Islam on woman-centered or feminist bases.[74]

Another important point that Shahidian makes is that sexuality in Islam is a fixed identity into which women and men are born. He refers to the sura[75] *An-Nisa* (Women) in

[74] Hammed Shahidan, *Women in Iran: Emerging Voices in the Women's Movement* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 75.

[75] A *sura* is a division of the Qur'an.

which the proper relationship between men and women was defined by God. In the first verse of this *sura* we read: "men, have fear of your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From that soul He created its mate, and through them He bestrewed the earth with countless men and women".[76] Shahidian makes a strong point in arguing that the Islamic reformists do not question this fixed sexual identity. They seem to endorse the idea that people are born either male or female, and that society then assigns them a distinct gender identity in accordance with given biological sex. Shahidian writes: "The teleological assumption of the Islamic gender ideology and the fixity of sexuality in this predefined system are not questioned. That physiological differences lead to two, *and only two*, clearly distinguishable sexes is taken for granted in this reformist trend."[77]

There are some views in the text of the *Qur'an* that are most difficult to reconcile with feminism. One of these is about equality between women and men. There is a verse in the Qur'an that refers to men as *qawwamun* over women because God has given the one more (strength) than the other.[78] The word *qawwamun* has various meanings including superiority, protecting, maintaining, guiding, and advising. While recent interpretations of this verse emphasize the last two meanings, this verse nonetheless seems to assert inequality between women and men, especially because there is no verse in the *Qur'an* that introduces women as advisers of men. My understanding of Islam and the *Qur'an* is that women and men are equal before God. They are judged based on their piety. But, they have different duties and responsibilities toward each other.

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[76] Qur'an, 4:1.

[77] Shahidian, *Women in Iran,* 83.

[78] Qur'an, 4:34.

Consequently, they have different rights and social roles. For example, men are responsible for supporting their female relatives financially. This difference in responsibility leads to other disparities, including men being the head of the family, women inheriting half of the amount men inherit, and finally the financial dependence of women on men.[79] The Qur'an gives a view of men and women in families, which men are the head of, distinguished as two completely distinct sexes with different functions in the family and society. This fixed identity of women and men in Islam is in contrast to pluralism, which I take to be a requirement of feminism.

This point particularly becomes important when we consider the gender policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning homosexuality. Any type of sexual activity outside a heterosexual marriage is forbidden in Iran. Homosexuality is punishable by imprisonment, corporal punishment, or even execution of the accused under the laws of Iran's current government. This law is based on the *Qur'an* and *hadith.* The Qur'an contains references to homosexuality in telling the story of people of *Lut* who were destroyed by God as a result of their sexual practices.[80] Although some have suggested reinterpretations of the Qur'an that do not flatly forbid homosexuality,[81] reconciling Islam with homosexuality seems an even more tremendous and exhausting task than reconciling it with feminism. Islamist women reformists cannot adequately take on this issue, because fixed sexuality is in fact part of the Islamic feminist worldview. This is another point that proves Islam is anti-pluralist and thus does not have the potential to

[79] Qur'an, 2:180 and 240, 4:7–11 and 19–33, 5:106–8.

[80] Qur'an, 7:80–84, 11:77–83, 21:74, 22:43, 26:165–75, 27:56–59, and 29:27–33.

[81] Muhammad Jalal Kishk argues that there is no prescribed punishment for homosexuality in Islam, and Scott Kugle argues that people of Lut were not punished because of their sexual acts but because of their infidelity.

support a truly liberating theory or practice. It is essential for any feminist theory to work against keeping human beings in fixed identities. Feminism is centered on the idea of equality. Fixed identities as found in an Islamic worldview work in the opposite direction. To be a true Muslim, you need to have the identity of a true Muslim as described in the Qur'an. To deviate from that identity is to be a lesser Muslim. That is why it is detrimental to feminism to be bound to a worldview such as Islam's. Feminism should support a society where individuals can live their lives without being limited by such social, cultural, or religious constraints. After all, what is a feminist theory if it cannot include people with different sexual orientations and gender identities? How can a feminist theory be a true one when it cannot include lesbian women?

Anticipation of Objections

Finally, I will consider a few common responses to my position. One of the most common objection to my position is that it is not Islam itself that is patriarchal, misogynist, and incompatible with feminism, rather it is the policies of Muslim countries and their problematic interpretations of Islam. While I agree that there are interpretations of Islam and the Qur'an that are more compatible with feminism than say Iran's government's interpretation, I still believe there is a limit to reinterpreting the Qur'an and consequently Islam. To argue that Islam in itself is not patriarchal, we need to present an alternative interpretation of Islam, of its main sources, most of all, the Qur'an. While there have been valiant attempts at that, as discussed above, there are certain aspects of the Qur'an that are simply irreconcilable with feminist theory, including the idea of fixed identities of the two sexes.

A second objection—sometimes accusation— is that my position is an Imperialist position. I have been asked if I would support the US invading Iran to "rescue" Iranian women in light of what I argue. It is a false dichotomy to think that one can either be on board with Islamic feminism or support the US invasion of Iran. As I have discussed before, Iranian women neither need nor want to be "saved" by the West. They also don't accept any compromises on their rights in the name of Islam. Not everything in a Muslim's life has to be Islamic.

A more legitimate objection is that there is no fixed Islam—or feminism for that matter— so one cannot argue against their compatibility. I don't believe accepting the first part guarantees the second part. After all, if Islam and feminism were so fluid as to not have any necessary elements, any idea that would make them meaningless in its absence, then we would hardly know what we are talking about. Still, I would like to make a distinction here. Some scholars and activists seek to advance the situation of Muslim women not by opposing Islam, and with the belief that there is nothing contradictory with a Muslim woman wanting equal rights with men. This is more of an after-the-fact reconciliation. These people treat the religion of Muslims like any other aspect of their lives. They don't seek to produce a feminism framed by the religion of these people just like they don't see believing in Islam as posing any problems for Muslims who also believe in and work toward equality. I do not see anything wrong with that. But the kind of Islamic feminism that I have discussed here, the one that takes its tenants from Islam and the text of the Qur'an cannot provide us with this idea of equality. In other words, one cannot get the idea of equality from the text of the Qur'an itself, simply because it is not there. So grounding feminism in Islam is what I find problematic.

And if Islam is so fluid that anything can be reconciled with it, then there is no point in grounding anything in it. In fact, it would be meaningless and futile to bring the two paradigms, Islam and feminism, together.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN, ISLAM, AND EMBODIMENT

There have been extensive discussions in recent years about how the bodies of women in Muslim societies are seen and treated. A central subject in these discussions is the practice of veiling or *hijab*[82]. While my own analysis in this chapter is not limited to the issue of hijab, but concerns the larger matter of female embodiment in Muslim society, it nonetheless includes discussions of women's experiences of observing Islamic dress codes, as they are an integral part of how they experience their bodies. There are many approaches to the issue of Islamic dress codes and regulations. The orientalist and neo-orientalist views present the most reductive perspectives on the matter. There are liberal feminists who—in the name of multiculturalism—offer positive readings of veiling and are wary of criticizing any practices specific to other cultures. Finally, there is a non-reductive, critical feminist view, including Marnia Lazreg's work which will be discussed later. I include my own critical phenomenological view in this final category and aim to develop and expand Lazreg's work. As discussed in the first chapter, discussions of Islam and feminism do not centralize the lived experiences of women in Muslim countries. To fill in this gap I draw on testimonies from women living in Muslim societies. It is not easy to find such testimonies as many are hesitant to be critical of those practices that are endorsed by Islamic states. Many of the resources are written by people who have emigrated from Muslim countries and are not concerned with the consequences of their works anymore, or from sources that have been collected and published as anonymous interviews.

[82] The term *hijab* has been used to refer to head, face, and even body covering worn by Muslim women.

In recent years, and at least in part in response to the problematic treatment of Muslims and "Islamic icons" in the West (especially post-9/11 era), there has been a resurgence of works that give more positive interpretations of hijab and associate it with Muslim women's empowerment and agency. These accounts often present what is on the other side of orientalism: while orientalists ignore specificity, grouping all Muslims into one category (the "Other") to claim backwardness, this approach adopted by both committed Muslims and non-Muslims who see themselves as allies of Muslims, ignore specificity to claim progressiveness, referring to certain Islamic practices or passages in Islamic texts that appear woman-friendly. Such approaches, inevitably ignore the very real oppressions that Muslim women face. Against these efforts, there are accounts of the practice of veiling and its meaning by scholars— most often with roots in Muslim societies— who remain critical of the practice. I will discuss Katherine Bullock's *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil* which belongs to the first group, alongside Marnia Lazreg's *Questioning the Veil*, which belongs to the second. I have chosen these two accounts as examples of a large body of literature because they are excellent representations of the two approaches to veiling. Moreover, although not from a phenomenological perspective, they share with my own project the method of using testimonies of women who have had experiences with veiling.

Bullock's book is a detailed attempt at challenging the popular Western stereotype of the veil as oppressive and to provide positive views of veiling through a discussion of the re-veiling movement in the Muslim world. In contrast, Lazreg sees the re-veiling movement as socially conservative and intertwined with other discussions such as the celebration of the home-making vocation of women and an "intensified

involvement of men in matters pertaining to women's dress and deportment."[83] Her discussion of the veil, therefore, arises from her concern over a trend that "limits women's capacity for self-determination in their bodies as part of their human development."[84] While Bullock's focus is on the Western discourse of the veil, aiming at improving the lives of Muslims living in the West,[85] Lazreg's work draws on the experiences of women living in Muslim societies. While she does not include a phenomenological account of these experiences (as this project aims to), Lazreg provides a valuable window into how Muslim women experience their bodies under Islamic practices. In *Questioning the Veil*, Lazreg combines her own experiences growing up in a Muslim family in Algeria with interviews and the real-life stories of other Muslim women to examine and challenge the reasons given for the practice of veiling.

Bullock believes that the treatment of the veil as oppressive comes from liberal understandings of 'equality' and 'liberty' that preclude other ways of thinking about these notions that offer a more positive approach for contemplating the practice of veiling.[86] She lists three approaches to the veil. The first is the mainstream or pop culture view, according to which Muslim women are completely subjugated by men, and the veil is a symbol of this subjugation. Bullock sees the origins of this approach in "unconscious adherence to liberalism and modernization theory, compounded by an ignorance of any

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[83] Marnia Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

[84] Ibid., 11.

[85] Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007), XLVIII.

[86] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women*, XXV.

actual details about Muslim women's lives."[87] She rightly marks this as the view that is often found in the mainstream (Western) media and mass market books on women and Islam.

The second approach, which Bullock describes as more sophisticated than the first, is what she attributes to liberal feminists who believe that Islam, like any patriarchal religion, subordinates women. Bullock admits that these feminists are often very knowledgable about Islamic history and practice and while some of them fail to be attentive to the voices of covered women, others make an attempt to understand and present the voices of these women. Bullock, claims that it is due to the liberalist assumptions of this school of feminists that ultimately, they do not find Muslim women's arguments for the meaning of covering persuasive, remaining "convinced that a satisfying life in the veil is still an oppressed life."[88] The third and final approach, which Bullock calls the contextual approach, is mostly found in the works of anthropologists and historians who make an attempt to understand the meaning of a social practice from the inside. She argues that while these scholars may be grounded in liberalism to some extent, their methodological approach prevents them from "using mainstream Western liberal categories to judge the other's voice."[89] Many of them even raise the question of whether Western feminists' issues are universally applicable.

Including herself in this final category, Bullock challenges the first two. Challenging the first approach is an easy task. Bullock traces the origins of the idea of the veil as a symbol of oppression to the eighteenth century and its upsurge to the nineteenth

[87] Ibid., XXV.

[88] Ibid., XXVI.

[89] Ibid., XXVII.

century as the status of women was used to justify the invasion and colonization of the Middle East. This Orientalist view was internalized by some native elites who became convinced that they were backwards and ought to follow Western practices for improvement, leading to anti-veil discourses.[90] Bullock concludes, in a rather reductive and uncritical manner, "any argument that advances the notion that the veil is a symbol of Muslim women's oppression draws, wittingly or unwittingly, from Orientalist and colonial discourse about the veil",[91] which delegitimizes views of local women who have a different understanding of veiling, assuming they are "westernized" and incapable of being critical of the practice of veiling independent of what the West thinks about it.

What sets Lazreg's project apart from the bulk of literature on the topic of veiling, including that of Bullock, is her recognition that the academic investment in this subject has been locked in either a prejudicial mode or an apologetic one. Despite what Bullock claims, there has been a growing trend among academic feminists who seek to dissociate the practice of veiling from the concept of oppression, but in reality make oppression more intellectually acceptable. These scholars try to expose "the operative agency assumed to be lurking behind the veil," and turn it into a tool of empowerment.[92] In a passage that reads as if it were a direct response to works similar to Bullock's, Lazreg asserts that these scholars find "power in a woman's decision to veil herself, and the veil is hailed as securing a woman's ability to work outside her home, or protecting her

[90] Ibid., 2.

[91] Ibid., 3.

[92] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 12.

husband from experiencing jealousy."[93] Proponents of this approach often dismiss the reality of native women who object to veiling, labelling them as "elite," "upper-class," and "Westernized"— they implicitly seek to disempower local women who have a different understanding of veiling from theirs and to delegitimize these women's views".[94] While Bullock emphasized the veil in relation to its history with colonialism, Lazreg highlights its role in the history of women's exclusion from social life outside the home, concluding that "the veil is overlaid with meanings that cannot be simply brushed away because a woman says so. Whenever a woman wears a veil, her act involves other women".[95]

After discussing the first encounters of Europeans with veiled Muslims, Bullock relies on the work of Timothy Mitchell in *Colonising Egypt*, to argue that in the modern (European) experience of the world, the priority is given to looking, as a way of experiencing objectivity understood as the feeling that one is able to look down on and observe the world from a neutral place.[96] Bullock links this emphasis on the "gaze' in Western cultures to the European campaign against the veil, which prevented the visitors from seeing native women in the Middle East:

> How could one be superior or establish authority over creatures who could not be known (because they could not be seen, grasped as a picture)? What could not be seen, grasped as a spectacle, could not be controlled. Moreover, Europeans felt uneasy about the veiled women: the Europeans knew they were being watched by women who were themselves unseen. That gave the women some power over the Europeans. That was a reversal of the expected relationship between superior and inferior—to see without being seen. And so— and here is the crux of my

[93] Ibid., 12.

[94] Ibid., 12.

[95] Ibid., 14.

[96] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

> argument— the Europeans retaliated. They attacked the veil, they tried to rip it off; they tried everything they could to see the women.[97] [98]

Bullock challenges the second approach to veiling, the approach of liberal feminists, through an examination of the work of one specific scholar, Fatima Mernissi, claiming that she is the most widely cited authoritative source for scholars in the West on the meaning of the veil. In *Beyond the Veil* and *The Veil and the Male Elite*, Mernissi, a Moroccan feminist scholar and sociologist who grew up in Morocco during the French occupation and World War II, argues that the veil is a symbol of unjust male authority over women. Her overall goals in these books is to demonstrate that while certain *hadiths*[99] and Qur'anic *Suras*[100] make Muslim women at best second-class citizens, Islam in its true form invites political equality between the sexes. Mernissi begins *The Veil and the Male Elite*, by undermining the scholarly foundations of the interpretations of those parts of the sacred texts that are used as a religious validation of misogyny.[101] She points out that there was no stable text of the Qur'an for decades after the death of the Prophet, and that hadiths were regularly falsified and misremembered. Born out of the earliest

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[97] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 6.

[98] Bullock does not explain how her argument about Europeans not being able to establish authority is to be reconciled with her earlier argument that Muslim women were deemed inferior exactly because of their veiling. And her point about veiled women watching Europeans without being seen themselves seems to apply to only those societies where women cover their faces (not just their hair and bodies). Nor does Bullock provide further support for her claim about the link between superiority and the ability to see without being seen.

[99] Hadith (literary meaning news or story) is a record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, revered and received as a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qurʾan.

[100] Sura is a chapter or section of the Qur'an.

[101] Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (New York: Basic, 1991).

days of Islam in Medina, the hadith emerged as a "formidable political weapon" in times of crisis.[102] The elite, however, despite all the precautions of generations of scholars, used false hadiths to serve their political and economic ends.[103] This included the disenfranchisement of women and the embedding of pre-Islamic tribal misogyny within the fabric of Islamic tradition.

Mernissi continues by examining the emergence of the misogynist tradition that validated such hadiths and allowed their continued currency. Such a tradition, she claims, was not the original intent of the Prophet Muhammad but rather the result of forces, internal and external, acting upon Islam in the very earliest days of the community in Medina, when it was on the military defensive and Mohammad needed the fighting strength of the conservative tribal forces if Islam was to survive. Reaching the end of his life, Muhammad bowed to pressure from the conservative and misogynist factions to not only veil his wives for their protection but to allow the diminution of women's rights and the reassertion of male dominance as a means of ensuring the survival of Islam.[104] Mernissi asserts then that the descent of the hijab runs counter to the egalitarian ideals of Muhammad.

Mernissi argues that the social institutions that were put in place to regulate male-female interactions divided social space into two territories: "the universe of men […] and the universe of women, the domestic world of sexuality and the family".[105] These

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[102] Ibid., 33.

[103] Ibid., ix.

[104] Ibid., 169.

[105] Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 138.

two universes correspond to spatial locations: while the male universe includes everything outside the home, women's universe is confined to the domestic sphere. As such, women's presence outside the home, while sometimes necessary, is seen as a "transgression".[106] Veiling functions as a "symbolic form of seclusion," which ensures that the male and female universes are not transgressed.[107] It is "an expression of the invisibility of women on the street, a male space par excellence".[108]

Bullock criticizes Mernissi for equating her own experience of veiling with "the" experience of veiling and its true meaning. Bullock objects to Mernissi's ahistorical approach to the meaning of religious symbols and her "reductive approach" that fails to take the multiplicities of discourses around veiling into account.[109] Bullock, examines different reasons women have for wearing hijab through a discussion of what she calls "the contemporary 're-veiling' movement in the Muslim world."[110] The first reason is the use of hijab as a way of "revolutionary protest" as seen in the anti-colonial and revolutionary struggles in Algeria in the 1950s[111] as well as Iran in the 1970s[112], where

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[106] Ibid., 139.

[107] Ibid., 140.

[108] Ibid., 97.

[109] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 139.

[110] Ibid., XLIX.

[111] The Algerian War of Independence or the Algerian Revolution was fought between France and the Algerian National Liberation Front from 1954 to 1962, which led to Algeria gaining its independence from France. On the pretext of a slight to their consul, the French invaded Algeria in 1830.

[112] The Iranian Revolution or the Islamic Revolution was a series of events that involved the overthrow of the last monarch of Iran, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1979 and the replacement of his government with an Islamic republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah

hijab was used by the protesters as a symbol of resistance.[113] [114] The second reason for wearing hijab has to do with political protest "against elite Westernization programmes and Western neo-imperialism".[115] Bullock discusses the Egyptian Islamic movement as an event where these reasons lead many women to choose to wear hijab.

The third reason Bullock discusses for veiling is a religious one, and a way of conforming to the religious law of Islam.[116] Bullock notes that many of the "women who don hijab feel that they are being proactive about improving society" as they think hijab represents a leveling of the social classes and a "unifying symbol shared by Muslim women."[117] Lazreg, however, points out that the distinction that is made between women who cover and those who do not "paves the way for conflict between women by inducing some to feel more righteous than others." She makes a connection between the act of covering and "covering up," arguing that the aforementioned idealogical use of the veil *covers over* and deflects attention from various issues that women face. Lazreg does not see the way in which veiling flattens out the individual, family, social class and ethnic

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Khomeini, a leader of one of the factions in the revolt. The movement against the United States-backed monarchy was supported by various leftist and Islamist organizations and student movements.

[113] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 87.

[114] Bullock's account of the use of hijab in the Islamic Revolution of Iran includes some inaccuracies, such as her definition of *chador* (an outer garment or open cloak made of a full-body-length semicircle of fabric that is open down the front), and her assertion that the chador was used as a marker of dissent, whereas female dissidents mainly went from not wearing hijab to wearing only a scarf if they decided to use this method of protest.

[115] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 91.

[116] Ibid., 95.

[117] Ibid., 97-98.

differences between women as necessarily resulting in solidarity among women. Rather, she believes, "it makes women from diverse backgrounds *interchangeable*."[118]

A fourth reason for veiling, according to Bullock, is continued access to the public sphere, which in turn helps women with continued access to employment, gaining respect, and combating male harassment. She uses the testimony of a woman who was having trouble with her fiancé and his family who did not want her to work after marriage, and chose to wear hijab as a solution:

> If I have only two sets of clothes I can look smart at all times because nobody expects *muhaggabat* (the veiled ones) to wear new clothes every day. This will save me a lot of money. It will also prevent people from talking about me or questioning my honour or my husband's. In this way I have solved all the problems, and my husband's family are very happy that he is marrying a *muhaggaba*.[119]

Bullock explains that many traditional Muslim families believe "that women should not work because being so much in the public realm compromises their modesty and honor."[120] In these circumstances women have chosen to don hijab as a way of proving their honor while being in the public. Moreover, Bullock argues that women who wear hijab "are treated for their personality and their minds, not as sex objects, nor are they available to be judged by their physical appearance, dress, or jewelry. The hijab takes away that sexual ambiguity/tension that exists between the sexes."[121] [122] She includes another testimony from a Muslim woman about her decision to take up the veil:

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[118] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 28-29.

[119] Homa Hoodfar, "Return to the Veil," *Working Women: International Perspectives on Labour and Gender Ideology*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 114, quoted in Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women*, 100

[120] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 101.

[121] Ibid., 102.

> I did it because in the office men teased us women and expected no answering back. If we answered they would start to think we were after an affair or something. That was difficult. All my life I always returned any remark a man made to me without being accused of immorality. In the office, whenever I would do that, my husband would get upset because he would hear what other men said amongst themselves [he was her colleague too]. But my veiled colleagues were always outspoken and joked with our male colleagues, and they were never taken wrong or treated disrespectfully. So I took up the veil. It has made my life easier and I feel freer to answer back, express my opinion, argue or even chit-chat with them. My husband is also much happier.[123]

Bullock also draws on Fatemeh Givechian's work to support this claim:

> ... The unveiling of women ... imprisoned women in their look and clothing thus exaggerating their ascribed status as women,[124] [while] the veiling of women has given rise to expectation of achievement and work. It has freed women from fascination of men with their look and also has forced them to compete if they are to enjoy their rights as human beings.[125] The aggressiveness and professionalities of many of the new veiled women generation are a pleasant welcome to the passive and patronized unveiled women of modernised generation.[126]

Bullock notes that "Western women often bridle at the suggestion that in order to counteract male harassment, women have to cover up"[127],[128] and while she agrees that it

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[122] Bullock seems to believe that there is natural sexual tension between men and women and that hijab can be an effective way of removing the tension which in the end would benefit the women and more broadly the society. What is left unexplained is how hijab does this as it is a practice that marks one side of the "tension" as different from the other side. How are women to blend in, as it were, if they are present in a way that constantly reminds themselves and others of their "difference"? It is possible that Bullock is suggesting that the tension exacerbates when the women are dressed "immodestly," which still does not explain the hijab as solution as the women she refers to have been dressing modestly before taking up the veil.

[123] Hoodfar, "Return to the Veil," 117, quoted in Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women*, 103-104

[124] Givechian does not explain how wearing hijab solves this issue since this practice is only limited to women and as such marks women in public spaces as a distinct group. I cannot think of a clearer way to highlight the gender of one group in public.

[125] Bullock fails to comment on this rather offensive remark.

[126] Fatemeh Givechian, "Cultural Changes in Male-Female Relations," *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (1991): 528-530, 530, quoted in Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women*, 104

is unfair to have women cover, while not tackling the issue of male harassment, she suggests that since dealing with this issue takes a long time, covering is an acceptable strategy in the meantime for many Muslim women. Bullock does not further problematize this issue. But I believe an account of limited freedom from Beauvoir can help us understand the phenomenon described here.

As will be discussed in more detail later Beauvoir bases her idea of the Other on Hegel's account of the master-slave dialectic. Replacing the terms "master" and "slave," with "Subject" and "Other". While the Subject is the absolute, the Other is the inessential. While Hegel's discussion is a universalized one, Beauvoir singles out the exploitation that occurs when the Subject is Man and the Other is Woman, as distinct from the rest of historically constituted hierarchies of Subjects and Others (people of color, Jews, proletarians, etc.). The difference is that in these other cases, those who are constituted as the Other experience their oppression as a communal reality, seeing themselves as part of an oppressed group. This in turn enables them call on the resources of a common history and a shared abusive situation to assert their subjectivity and demand recognition and reciprocity. Beauvoir explains that as women are unable to identify the origin of their otherness, they cannot rely on the bond of a shared history to reclaim their status as Subjects. Women are dispersed among the world of men "tied by homes, work, economic interests, and social conditions to certain men—fathers or husbands—more closely than to other women." Thus, they identify themselves in terms of the differences of their oppressors (e.g., as white or black women, as working-class or middle-class women, as Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist or Hindu women) rather

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[127] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 104.

[128] It is unclear why Bullock only includes "Western women" in this objection.

than with each other.[129] This is what makes the situation of women "ambiguous": "The man who sets the woman up as an Other will thus find in her a deep complicity. Hence woman makes no claim for herself as subject because she lacks the concrete means, because she senses the necessary link connecting her to man without positing its reciprocity, and because she often derives satisfaction from her role as Other."[130]

To explain this satisfaction in woman, Beauvoir argues that through complicity with man "along with the economic risk, she eludes the metaphysical risk of a freedom that must invent its goals without help."[131] In this way, women experience happiness brought about by bad faith—a happiness of not being responsible for themselves, of not having to make consequential choices. She writes:

> … when an individual or a group of individuals is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he or they are inferior. But the scope of the verb to be must be understood; bad faith means giving it a substantive value, when in fact it has the sense of the Hegelian dynamic: to be is to have become, to have been made as one manifests oneself. Yes, women in general are today inferior to men; that is, their situation provides them with fewer possibilities: the question is whether this state of affairs must be perpetuated.[132]

Thus, according to Beauvoir, if women are happy as the other, it may be because this is the only avenue of happiness open to them given the material and ideological realities of their situation. Their bad faith must be understood within the social, economic and cultural structures that frame women's lives, and make it extremely difficult for them to exercise their freedom.

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[129] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 8-9.

[130] Ibid., 10.

[131] Ibid., 10.

[132] Ibid., 12.

The restricted agency that women speak of in testimonies reported by Bullock about choosing to wear the hijab to access the public space and counter harassment points to what Beauvoir calls the ambiguity of women's situation. Within such powerful constraints and with the overwhelming operation of the values of honor and modesty, These women's act of taking up the veil, may be understood as an act of freedom. But freedom cannot be understood apart from its situatedness. The complicity of these acts, while totally understandable and not reason for criticizing the individual woman, cannot be denied. In this way, these women's choice to wear hijab challenges but also maintains the system of values that constructs the world with men in power, and this is the aspect of these experiences that are ignored in Bullock's account. Lazreg, in contrast focuses on the negative consequences of the tight association of modesty with covering the body in Islam. She discusses how Muslim women who are told to veil by their families experience a loss of individuality and femininity and an interrupted childhood. She recalls "the countless prepubescent girls she had observed growing up: "They would be lively, joyful, but as soon as they reached an age when they were made to wear a hijab, they would lose the spark in their eyes and become more self-conscious and less spontaneous. I suspect that the veil makes them at once more aware of their changing body and of the social limitations that such change entails for them as girls."[133]

Lazreg discusses the experience of a young Algerian woman, Assia, who has taken up hijab out of necessity. Assia blames the "bearded ones," for this necessity, meaning "the men who in the last decade had grown beards to display their religiosity,

[133] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 18.

many of whom had also joined the Islamist movement."[134] Lazreg thinks the re-veiling trend blurred the distinction between the two spheres of existence, namely the religious one and the sphere of everyday life. Through the practice of veiling women are increasingly treated and looked at as not only inhabiting the sphere of religion but also embodying it.[135] She argues that concealing the body means not only concealing its existence and needs from one's mind, but also running the risk of concealing from oneself the reasons behind the requirement to don the veil: "Denial of a woman's physical body helps to sustain the fiction that veiling it, covering it up, causes no harm to the woman who inhabits the body. Paradoxically, denial feeds into the notion that a woman is afflicted with a condition, her body, which makes her a fundamentally flawed being. Her flaw must be concealed, and the veil is the best concealment."[136]

Moreover, Lazreg claims, there are serious problems with the concept of the veil as protection against sexual harassment. She recounts the experience of a young Algerian woman who took up the veil to fend off her boss's unwanted advances, which worked for a short while before the harassment continued.[137] Lazreg notes that regardless of the specifics of dress-cultures, a man's body is considered his private domain, whereas a woman's is not, and that is at the root of sexual harassment:

> There is a fine line for a man between involving himself deeply in the privacy of a woman's relation to her body and seeking to appropriate that body in one way or another, of which sexual harassment is one. […] knowing that quasi-religious texts dissect a woman's body into parts that can be made visible and others that

[134] Ibid., 19.

[135] Ibid., 22.

[136] Ibid., 23.

[137] Ibid., 30.

> should not, entitles a man to a woman, empowers him to take liberties with her whether she likes it or not. This outcome is the functional equivalent of the effect of sexualized advertising on conceptions of women in industrial societies. In both types of societies, women's bodies are objects of manipulation for the market, in one instance, and moralized codification, in the other. Either way, women lose control over themselves by being made imaginatively (in images and texts) *available* to men. [138]

A fifth reason for wearing hijab, especially for women in the West, Bullock informs us, is to make a statement of personal identity and another one is custom and "the normal process of socialization that exists in any society about proper dress."[139] While acknowledging the positive aspects of wearing hijab in terms of expressing one's identity and cultural integrity, Lazreg warns us that when cultural identity is grounded in quasi-religious notions, it thwarts a woman's will and agency.[140] She also questions whether the veil is the best response to anti-Muslim prejudice when donned in non-Muslim societies, as opposed to other practices that signal one's religious affiliation, writing: "There is no compelling reason why the essence of Islam should be reduced to a veil, and women singled out as its embodiment. The veil intrigues and beguiles; it shocks and repels. However, it also trivializes and objectifies religion."[141]

On the other side of the debate, Bullock lists six themes that she believes inform the differences in judgement over the issue of veiling. Those who criticize the veil, relying on secular liberal assumptions about society and human nature, see veiling as oppressive for the following reasons: They believe veiling covers up, hides and smothers femininity, and it is linked to essentialized male/female dualism that takes man as

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[138] Ibid., 33.

[139] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 109.

[140] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 40.

[141] Ibid., 41.

superior by nature. They believe that veiling is also linked to a particular view of the woman's place, which is the domestic, as well as to an oppressive and patriarchal notion of morality and female purity in terms of chastity. They see veiling as oppressive, also because it can be imposed and is linked to an intertwined system of oppressions women in Islam face, such as seclusion, polygyny, unequal inheritance rights and so forth.

In response to the claim that hijab smothers a woman's femininity and sexuality, Bullock makes four counterpoints:

> […] hijab is not a public/private dress, [but rather] is related to the presence or absence of unrelated or related men. So, when a woman is with all women, or men from her family, she does not cover […]. Second, women are encouraged to dress up and beautify themselves, to exult in their bodies, with and for their husbands. Third, because most socializing is done in a segregated fashion, women frequently congregate with no men present. For these occasions many women love to put on makeup, and wear fancy and fine clothes […] And fourth, [there are] similarities between hijab and other women's strategies for coping with the male gaze in public space.[142]

Bullock asserts that the claim that veiling cements the traditional male-female difference relies on liberal assumptions about human nature, as well as the meaning of sexuality, liberation, oppression and equality.[143] While admitting that the dress requirement is different for Muslim men and women, Bullock argues that the Islamic worldview "declares an essential sameness between male/female,"[144] as well as the creation of all things in pairs. In light of this, she claims that covering for women in Islam is more a strategy to combat sexual harassment in the public arena than a statement of

[142] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 192.

[143] Ibid., 200.

[144] Ibid., 201.

essentialized female/male identity.[145] Bullock also argues that the morality that veiling is connected to is oppressive, only if one considers the prohibition of sexual relations outside marriage wrong.[146] [147]

Bullock's project aims to set up hijab as a way of contesting capitalism and its emphasis on the body and on materiality that is "an empowering and liberating experience for women."[148] She relies on the experiences of women who have found wearing hijab liberating to do this. She examines two specific examples toward the end of her book from two Muslim women who have written newspaper articles about their experience of hijab in terms of liberation and resisting capitalism. In an article written for a national Canadian newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, in 1993, Naheed Mustapha, explains that her reason for veiling is that "her body is her own private concern" and that the original purpose of the hijab was "to give back to women ultimate control of their own bodies." She claims that wearing hijab has given her freedom because her appearance "is not subjected to public scrutiny."[149] Mustapha notes that women "in the

[145] Ibid., 205.

[146] Ibid., XLII.

[147] Bullock does not explore the social, political, economical, legal or heteronormative implications of this claim. Nor does she examine the relation between marriage and religions in general or with Islam in particular.

[148] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 183.

[149] I doubt that anyone wearing hijab in the West would not be subjected to public scrutiny any time soon, and although Bullock does not comment on this assertion, her own book is full of experiences of Veiled Muslim women in the West and this exact "public scrutiny". Nonetheless, it is true that this takes a different shape from the kind of scrutiny women experience when they do not cover.

West" are constantly evaluated based on their appearances.[150] She also argues that her choice to cover is a better way of achieving equality compared to the "feminist argument for exposing the body", as the latter makes women party to their own objectification. Mustapha also mentions that she was a borderline bulimic in her teens trying to achieve unrealistic "Western cultural beauty standards".[151]

While Mustapha's account is inspiring, Bullock fails to present any kind of analysis of it and as such it remains vulnerable to various objections. One can question, for instance, the legitimacy of Mustapha's claim that exposing the body results in our further objectification whereas covering does not. One can argue that covering our bodies is an act of giving up under the pressures of the beauty standards, an act of hiding so as not to be judged by those standards because they still hold power over us. In this light, embracing our bodies when they do not conform to those standards seems like a more positive response and less reactionary in comparison. I do not expect Mustapha to answer these questions. She is recounting her own experience, after all. But Bullock seems to be confusing "the feminist methods of using women's experience as a foundation of knowledge"[152] with an uncritical acceptance of whatever conclusion these women arrive at as a result of those experiences. Bullock relies not just on women's experiences but their beliefs about what those experiences mean to draw her conclusions without scrutinizing those beliefs in a satisfactory way.

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[150] Bullock seems to agree with this idea as she repeats it throughout her book. She, however, never acknowledges that this is not an issue limited to the West. This statement is as true for Muslim countries as it is for the Western ones.

[151] Naheed Mustapha, "My Body is my Own Business," *Globe and Mail* (Tuesday, June 29, 1993), Facts and Arguments. Quoted in Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women*, 184

[152] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* XLIX.

The second account comes from Sultana Yusufali in an article, "My Body is My Own Business," she wrote for *The Toronto Star* in 1998 when she was 17 years old. The contents of this article are similar to that of Mustapha's. Yusufali sees hijab as "one of the most fundamental aspects of female empowerment," claiming "when I cover myself, I make it virtually impossible for people to judge me according to the way that I look." She continues to assert that she does not feel oppressed: "I made this decision out of my own free will. I like the fact that I am taking control of the way other people perceive me."[153]

These two accounts for me, point to a very significant aspect of feeling empowered and liberated and that is the power of choice, especially when that choice signifies a resistance to the norms that confine and oppress us. They do not, however, prove any intrinsic quality of liberation for the practice of veiling. Here, the differences between women's experiences of veiling in Muslim societies and non-Muslim societies becomes more pronounced as the veil is the norm in one and not the other. While Bullock agrees that veiling may be experienced as oppressive for some women, unfortunately, none of her vigorous critical approach— that characterized her study of those who find hijab oppressive— is present in her discussion of hijab as a way of resisting the consumer capitalist culture. She misses countless opportunities to remark on the parallel problematic aspects of Muslim and non-Muslim societies. For instance, she discusses how the women in the West internalize the male gaze from an early age by following the cultural script on how to behave including "the right way to dress,"[154] ignoring that hijab itself is a very clear example of that. She continues to go back and forth between

[153] Sultana Yusufali, "My Body is My Own Business," Toronto Star (Tuesday, February 17, 1998), Quotes in Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women*, 185.

[154] Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women,* 187.

contradictory claims in her effort to dissociate hijab from oppression. For instance, she claims that hijab de-objectifies women,[155] while at the same time agreeing with a friend who claims "Hijab is a way of giving dignity to a woman's femininity by making her beauty unavailable for public consumption,"[156] in her attempt to cast a positive light on hijab— ignoring the obvious implication of women's bodies as objects underlying the quote.

Lazreg, on the other hand, concludes her book by discussing reasons for why women should not wear a veil, including historical considerations and negative physical, psychological and social effects. She points out that the "glorification of the veil overlooks the existential experience of women who have from generation to generation been socialized into concealing their bodies and made the veil part of their persona". Veiling cannot be understood in isolation from "a history in which men watched over women's dutiful discharge of their roles as guardians of their sexual domain."[157] Veiling in the workplace, Lazreg argues, perpetuates the culture of gender inequality, as hijab has the symbolic effect of diminishing the importance of formal equality in the workplace. Finally, Lazreg points to the problematic association of Muslim women's desire for equality and progress with a mimicry of the "West," and the act of taking up the hijab as a way of resistance against "Western values". Muslim women who call for improvement of their status are often accused of rejection of Islam and their own culture in favor of non-Muslim values. Lazreg argues that the act of presenting the West as a corruptor of

[155] Ibid., 189.

[156] Ibid., 196.

[157] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 61.

Muslim women masks "the far more threatening role that the West plays as an enabler and defender of conservative politics in the Middle East." Amidst the sociopolitical struggles of Muslim societies with Western ones, women are unfairly made to take up the burden of protecting the cultural identity of Muslim societies and are "made to atone for the West's imperial history".[158]

As mentioned before, while both Bullock and Lazreg use the method of examining testimonies of women and their experiences of veiling, neither utilize a phenomenological approach to analyze those experiences. Seeking to study the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view, phenomenology develops accounts of embodied action, temporal awareness, spatial awareness, awareness of one's own experience, self-awareness, the self in different roles, awareness of other persons, social interaction, and everyday activity in our surrounding world. The rest of this chapter is my attempt at providing such a phenomenological account of women's experiences of their bodies in Muslim societies. After an introduction to the concept of the body in phenomenology I present my own phenomenological study of women's experiences of embodiment based on testimonies from women living in Muslim societies, which provides cause for questioning some of the assumptions of Islamic feminism.

The "Living Body" in Phenomenology

Simone de Beauvoir's most famous work, *The Second Sex,* published in 1949 is considered by many to be the first philosophical work in feminist phenomenology for making the sexed/gendered body an object of phenomenological investigation. To see in what way her work is feminist, a brief discussion of the notion of the body in phenomenology is in order.

[158] Ibid., 71.

The philosophical tradition of phenomenology was launched in the first half of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others. As Sara Heinämaa shows, Beauvoir's analysis of sexuality takes its starting point from the existential-phenomenological understanding of the living body already prominent in phenomenology.[159] The notion of the "living body" has a central role in Husserl's philosophy specifically in setting his philosophy against the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. For Husserl, there are two kinds of experiences of material bodies: mere physical things [Körper] and living or lived bodies [Leib]. In the first, we take the attitude of natural scientists in that we abstract all meaning, value and purpose from the bodies that we study, while in the second, we approach the bodies as meaningful and purposeful agents or persons. The distinction is crucial in so far as the mind-body problem thrives on a concept of body that is not distinct among persons and non-persons. In *Ideas II*, Husserl writes, "what we have to set over against material nature as a second kind of reality is not the 'soul' but the *concrete unity* of body and soul, the human (or animal) subject".[160] Thus, as Heinämaa concludes, the living body is the meeting point of the physical and psychical for Husserl.[161]

But how are living bodies different from mere material things? Husserl identifies three distinctions. First, living bodies are given to us as "fields of sensations".[162] They are the locus of distinctive sorts of directly felt sensations such as the experience of tactile

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[159] Sara Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 25.

[160] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Springer, 1999, 146

[161] Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology,* 27.

[162] Husserl, *Ideas*, § 37

contact. Considering Husserl's well-known example of touching one hand by the other, we see that my own body can be given to me simultaneously as the means by which the activity of touching is carried out and as the object of touch, or the phenomenon I experience through this activity. The second difference is in motility: living bodies are the immediate starting point of spontaneous, free movement.[163] This is what Husserl refers to as the bodily "I can." Finally, the living body serves as the fixed point in perceptions of direction, distance and movement.[164] In other words, the living body functions as the central "here" from which spatial directions and distances are gauged.

Influenced by Husserl's discussion of the body, Merleau-Ponty discusses the limits of an objective account of the body in his *Phenomenology of Perception* and presents an alternative understanding of the body across a series of domains, including the experience of one's own body, lived space, sexuality, and language. We cannot see our own bodies as we see other 'objects' because "the perspectives presentation of objects itself must be understood through the resistance of my body to every perspectival variation".[165] As such, our body should be conceived of as our means of communication with the world, rather than merely as an object of the world which our transcendent mind orders to perform varying functions. Making use of Husserl's example of touching one hand with another, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates reflexivity or reversibility of the body as it occupies the position of perceiving and perceived simultaneously. What is more, while I move external objects with the help of my body, I myself, move directly and in union

[163] Husserl, § 38

[164] Husserl, § 41a

[165] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 94-95.

with my body. Thus, the kinesthetic sense of the body's own movements is given directly. This kinesthetic awareness is made possible by what Merleau-Ponty terms the "body schema," which he defines as "the global awareness of my posture in the inter-sensory world".[166] In contrast with the "positional spatiality" of things, the body has a "situational spatiality" that is oriented toward actual or possible tasks. In explaining the body's relationship with lived space, Merleau-Ponty introduces the notion of "intentional arc," which "projects around us our past, our future, our human milieu, our physical situation, our ideological situation, and our moral situation, or rather, that ensures that we are situated within all of these relationships".[167] Thus the body's relationship with space is intentional, as an "I can," and the body is not "in" space but inhabits it. As such, the experience of subjectivity for Merleau-Ponty is interconnected with the experience of the body and that of the world since "my existence as subjectivity is identical with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because, ultimately, the subject that I am, understood concretely, is inseparable from this particular body and from this particular world".[168]

Beauvoir's account of the body is similar to that of Merleau-Ponty in that she understands being present in the world implies that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world: "Presence in the world vigorously implies the positing of a body that is both a thing of the world and a point of

[166] Ibid., 102.

[167] Ibid., 137.

[168] Ibid., 431.

view of this world".[169] It is as embodied beings that we engage the world. Our access to, awareness of, and possibilities for world engagement cannot be considered without a consideration of the body. What is central to Beauvoir's account is that the bodily existence and the point of view it provides, is lived differently for men and women. In other words, for Beauvoir, corporeality is gendered. As Sarah Fishwick asserts, according to Beauvoir, persons should be understood "not as mere 'biological' matter but as a bodily entity that is subject to culturally specific norms and dictates".[170] Moreover, different significations that are associated with different bodies have material consequences for the self.

Beauvoir's work is unique not simply due to its topic, but due to "its way of posing the question."[171] Merleau-Ponty argues that we cannot understand certain experiences of sexuality without realizing that our being in the world is originally affective. He, however, does not problematize sexuality further than that and he does not distinguish between feminine and masculine sexualities or men's and women's way of experiencing the world. There are discussions of sexual relations in Emmanuel Levinas' work where he actually explores the difference between female and male sexualities. As a way of countering Hegel's model of the relation between self and the other as a conflict of wills, Levinas turns to erotic encounters. In *Time and Other* he claims that in erotic encounters the other is experienced not as a contrary will or another self, but as mystical

[169] Simone de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 24.

[170] Sarah Fishwick, *The Body in the Work of Simone de Beauvoir* (Oxford: P. Lang, 2002), 11.

[171] Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology,* 22.

and unattainable.[172] Heinämaa points out that the mystery and the "essentially other" here is the feminine.[173] Thus, while discussions of sexual relations were present in the phenomenological tradition preceding Beauvoir, they appeared merely as one research object among others. For Beauvoir, however, sexuality is the central theme of inquiry.

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir offers a descriptive phenomenology of female bodies as lived in specific situations, exploring the ways that cultural assumptions frame women's experience of their bodies and alienate them from their body's possibilities. Beauvoir alerts us to how patriarchal structures have oppressed women by using sexual difference to deprive women of their "I can" bodies. In chapter one of *The Second Sex* Beauvoir examines biological data available concerning female bodies, including the claim that "woman has much less muscular force," and that "women are less robust".[174] Beauvoir emphasizes the importance of the role these biological data play in woman's situation, writing: "the body is the instrument of our hold on the world, the world appears different to us depending on how it is grasped".[175] Yet, she claims that these facts have no significance in themselves because one can compare the female and the male "only within a human perspective," and it is from this human perspective that "the physiological given […] takes on meaning" which is "dependent on a whole context".[176] Beauvoir writes: "if the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world

[172] Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990), 78.

[173] Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology,* 22.

[174] Beauvoir, *Second Sex,* 43.

[175] Ibid., 44.

[176] Ibid., 45-46.

and the outline for our projects".[177] In later chapters, Beauvoir provides a phenomenology of the body as lived throughout different stages of a woman's life, offering her narrative as an account of lived experience. In childhood the young girl's body is experienced in a different way from that of the young boy. Passivity is imposed on woman as a destiny from her earliest days, in a sharp contrast to how boys experience their bodies: "Climbing trees, fighting with his companions, confronting them in violent games, he grasps his body as a means to dominate nature".[178] So, while man experiences himself as a "free movement toward the world," woman must live her body as an object for another's gaze, something which has its origin not in anatomy but in education and customs. Thus, freedom is denied to her, leading to a vicious circle for the less she exercises her freedom, "the less she will dare to affirm herself as subject".[179]

Beauvoir's examination of the lived experience of the body in order to give an account of embodiment has been taken up by later feminists such as Iris Marion Young who understands embodiment as our mode of being-in-the-world. Young identifies three contradictory modalities of feminine motility, namely ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality, and discontinuous unity. The source of these modalities is "the bodily self-reference of feminine comportment, which derives from the woman's experience of her body as a *thing* at the same time that she experiences it as a capacity."[180] Following Merleau-Ponty, Young argues that the body is the first locus of

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[177] Ibid., 46.

[178] Ibid., 294.

[179] Ibid., 295.

[180] Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing like a Girl" and Other Essays*" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35.

intentionality "as pure presence to the world and openness upon its possibilities".[181] The world exists for the subject insofar as the subject as the body has capacities by which to "approach, grasp, and appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions".[182] While Merleau-Ponty does not differentiate between the female and male embodiment in so far as they are the locus of subjectivity, Young argues that the feminine bodily existence is an ambiguous transcendence, "a transcendence that is at the same time laden with immanence".[183] While the transcendence of the lived body always starts from the immanence of the body as natural and material, and moves out "in an open and unbroken directedness upon the world in action", feminine bodily existence remains in immanence or as Young puts it is "*overlaid"* with immanence, even as it moves out toward the world.[184]

In "Throwing Like A Girl," Young discusses the studies which suggest that girls and boys throw in different ways and that women, when attempting physical tasks, frequently fail to use the physical possibilities of their bodies. She calls this characteristic of female motility "inhibited intentionality," which means that it "simultaneously reaches toward a projected end with an "I can" and withholds its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed "I cannot"."[185]

Once again drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Young contends that by projecting an aim toward which it moves, the body brings unity to, and unites itself with, its surroundings.

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[181] Ibid., 35.

[182] Ibid., 36.

[183] Ibid., 36.

[184] Ibid., 36.

[185] Ibid., 36.

Here again, she distinguishes the feminine bodily existence by claiming that it stands in "discontinuous unity*"* with both itself and its surroundings, writing: "The character of the inhibited intentionality whereby feminine motion severs the connection between aim and enactment, between possibility in the world and capacity in the body, itself produces this discontinuous unity."[186] Young argues that these three contradictory modalities of female embodiment are caused by the fact that women often experience their bodies as objects that are looked at and acted upon, writing: "To the extent that a woman lives her body as a thing, she remains rooted in immanence, is inhibited, and retains a distance from her body as transcending movement and from engagement in the world's possibilities."[187]

These experiences of embodiment are not a consequence of anatomy, but rather of the 'situation' of women in various contexts, which nevertheless constitute women's sense of their identity. Young defines 'situation' as "the way the facts of embodiment, social and physical environment, appear in the light of the projects a person has".[188] Young's other essays explore various aspects of female embodiment that—though clearly variable and multiple in their empirical manifestations— constitute women's sense of their identity as women and yield distinct ways of being in the world. Young's essays present an attempt to think subjectivity not only as individually embodied, but as spatialized and materialized through its habitual surroundings.

Sandra Bartky is another scholar who has written about various modes of disclosure of the self and situation of female embodiment. In "Shame and Gender," she emphasizes the role of emotions in the constitution of subjectivity and how emotions are

[186] Ibid., 38.

[187] Ibid., 39.

[188] Ibid., 16.

experienced differently based on one's gender. Bartky identifies shame as a mood or feeling that tends to characterize women more than men. For Sartre, the primary structure of shame requires an audience: "the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as *I appear* to the Other."[189] Thus, one must feel shame before some actual Other before learning to raise an internalized Other in imagination and become an object for oneself. Bartky expands Sartre's analysis to present an account of gendered shame. This kind of shame manifests "in a pervasive sense of personal inadequacy that is […] profoundly disempowering".[190] It involves the distressed apprehension of oneself as a lesser creature that is not a characteristic of femaleness per se, but one that is socially situated. Bartky distinguishes between guilt, which refers to the subject's actions, and shame, which refers to her "nature".[191] While for the male subject shame can be understood "as a specific episode in the agent's history," women often experience shame as a persistent phenomenon.[192] Moreover, it is not the kind of shame that provides an opportunity for moral reaffirmation and a return to equilibrium. Rather, in the case of gendered shame, there is not equilibrium to return to: "Felling inadequate may color a person's entire emotional life."[193]

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[189] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 222.

[190] Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 85.

[191] Ibid., 87.

[192] Ibid., 96.

[193] Ibid., 97.

Bonnie Mann names the kind of shame that Bartky describes as "ubiquitous shame" and distinguishes it from another form of gendered shame, namely, "unbounded shame" that is described through an analysis of the story of Amanda Todd[194]. Mann describes ubiquitous shame as the "shame-*status* that attaches to the very fact of existing as a girl or woman," and unbounded shame as a "thick, relentless, engulfing shame— often catalyzed by a shame-*event*— that snuffs out any hope for redemption, and has suicide as its logical endpoint."[195] In contrast to Bartky, Mann argues that the ubiquitous shame is marked by a promise of redemption and is not relentless, but is rather interrupted by experiences of pride and hope. Mann draws on Beauvoir's argument that young girls' consciousness of themselves is shaped by their realization that "it is not women but men who are the masters of the world". This realization is compensated for by the "promises inherent in the women's destiny":[196]

> A paradoxical promise is delivered: a place in adult existence is being prepared for her. . . she will be a prestigious object— she will be allowed perfect passivity, and through that passivity perfect power—in other words, she is promised that her present abjection will be converted into admiration, desire, adulation, the power of allure. […] There is no dichotomy here between subjectivity and objectification. Self-objectification is the willful preparation of the subject for objectification by others, and is thus constitutive of feminine subject-formation rather than distinct from or opposed to it.[197]

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[194] Amanda Todd was a fifteen-year-old Canadian student and victim of cyberbullying who committed suicide. Before her death, Todd posted a video on YouTube in which she used a series of flash cards to tell her experience of being blackmailed into exposing her breasts via webcam, and of being bullied and physically assaulted.

[195] Bonnie Mann, "Femininity, Shame and Redemption," *Hypatia* 33, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 403.

[196] Ibid., 412.

[197] Ibid., 412.

Ubiquitous shame, therefore, entails a promise of redemption in the future. The young girl's awareness of her own powerlessness is not completely pervasive, but is punctuated by an anticipation of power, over men's sexual desires, that she sees as "constitutive of her future." The ubiquitous shame is relieved through "the provocation of male desire; the marriage proposal; the wedding day" and power and dignity are restored to the woman.[198] Ubiquitous shame, Mann argues, becomes unbounded shame when girls/women undertake "prescribed project of freeing themselves from ubiquitous shame" in such a masculinist economy of desire.[199] She goes on to say: "For these girls, the process of value-depletion that ensues, the radical closing of the future that comes next, the social isolation and the suicides, disclose the contours of a world in which all of us still live."[200]

Mann concludes that the two form of shame work together to ensure women's vulnerability and men's power over them. She emphasizes the necessity of a feminist phenomenology of shame to understand "the continued vulnerability of women to masculinist projects of value-extortion and value-extraction" as well as enabling other kinds of self-justification for women and men that do not perpetuate the culture of gendered shame.[201]

Women's Experiences of Embodiment in Muslim Societies

In *The Wind in My Hair*, Masih Alinejad, an Iranian journalist living in the US, chronicles her journey from Iran to Britain and then to the United States. She writes

[198] Ibid., 413.

[199] Ibid., 415.

[200] Ibid., 415.

[201] Ibid., 415.

multiple passages describing her experiences with having to observe hijab including the following passage: "My hair was part of my identity, but you couldn't see it. When I was growing up, my hair was no longer part of my body. It had been hijacked and replaced with a head scarf."[202] Later, remembering her time at elementary school where she had to observe the Islamic dress code, she writes:

> At school, the teachers rewarded us with stickers of cartoon characters for good behavior, or for getting good grades on tests. The TV cartoon characters chosen [including Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*] were popular in Iran at the time. I looked at the pictures with great envy. The […] heroines were girls with […] hair loosely brushed or tied in a ponytail. Their hair was not captive inside a piece of cloth. These girls were full of energy—they ran around, met people, made friends, and were active and happy. And they didn't have a hijab. They had freedoms that I didn't.[203]

In these passages, Alinejad clearly connects her experience of having to wear a hijab with alienation from her body: "my hair was no longer part of my body". Moreover, with the use of the words "hijacked" and "captive" she gives us a clear image of how having to cover parts of her body, felt like the imprisonment of her identity; that she could not express or actualize who she was as a person. It is not just that she had been denied this part of her identity, but also that something else has replaced it. She has to live with hijab which she sees as a sign of her captivity. Every time she looks at a mirror, that is who she sees. She is forced to live a dual life, one in private and one in public. Her interactions with others are also affected by this experience. She knows others are also living this dual life, that they may not be who they appear to be.

Thinking about the cartoon characters, not only does she recognize their freedom in terms of clothes, but also in relation to acting in the world: "they ran around, met

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[202] Masih Alinejad, *The Wind in My Hair: My Fight for Freedom in Modern Iran* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2018), 30.

[203] Ibid., 31-32.

people, made friends, and were active and happy". These fictional depictions of what girls and women can do, only remind Alinejad of her own confinement. It is not a confinement she can leave easily. Her clothes that she has not chosen freely confine her, and are always there like a weight she carries to remind her that she is not free to do as she wishes. In a language that brings Iris Marion Young to mind, she connects her experience of her body as something that needs to be covered with her inability to freely act in, and interact with, the world. The captivity she felt with her experience of her own body now seeps into her world.

As mentioned earlier, Young identifies three contradictory modalities of feminine motility, namely ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality, and discontinuous unity. In Alinejad's testimony, we see how her sense of alienation from her own body, makes her unable to perceive her surrounding space as a continuous extension of her own body; something that she can nonetheless imagine for the fictional characters. So while she projects a vague "I can" in imagining these characters interacting with the world, by being active and happy, comparing herself to these characters, she does not understand that as a possibility for herself, projecting an "I cannot" instead.

In another passage, Alinejad recalls her amazement at seeing women in public without the hijab during her first trip oversees:

> I kept expecting the screech of brakes to signal the arrival of vans loaded with morality police[204] to arrest these women. I looked for signs of rough-looking men to berate and attack these women without hijab. […] It took me a day or two […] before I dared to remove my own head scarf. [...] I kept fidgeting with the knot, trying to decide whether to take the head scarf off or not. I even hoped that a

[204] Morality police or Guidance Patrol is a kind of vice squad in the Law Enforcement Force of Islamic Republic of Iran, established in 2005 with the task to arrest mostly women (but also some men) who they deem improperly dressed according to the Islamic dress code.

> strong wind might come and blow the head scarf away, taking the decision out of my hands.[205]

Having lived with forced veiling for most of her life, she is reluctant to take control of her body now that she actually has a chance to do so. Recognizing the intention in herself, the want to be without the head scarf, she nonetheless struggles to reach toward the projected end, holding herself back from acting freely in the direction of actualizing her intentions. According to Merleau-Ponty, for the body to exist as a transcendent presence to the world and the immediate enactment of intentions, it cannot exist as an *object*.[206] As subject, the body is referred not *onto itself*, but onto the world's possibilities. As Young demonstrates, however, the contradictory modalities of feminine bodily existence have their root in the reality that, for feminine existence , the body frequently is both subject and object for itself at the same time and in reference to the same act: "Feminine bodily existence is frequently not a pure presence to the world because it is referred onto *itself* as well as onto possibilities in the world".[207] That is why it is easier for Alinejad to take herself as an object, where a strong wind rids her of her head scarf, rather than as the one who instigates the action. She continues to live her body as a thing among other material things in the world, rather than a transcending subject.

Later, Alinejad describes how she felt about the changes in her body in her teenage years:

> I was becoming more feminine, and I was confused and embarrassed by these developments. Many girls felt the same way—we were taught to hide our bodies, to hide our feminine shape. At high schools. I named my breasts my "two orbs of sin." I felt guilty about my new body. I was taught that women's bodies

[205] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair,* 218-219.

[206] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 123.

[207] Young, *On Female Body Experience,* 38.

> encouraged men to commit sin, so it was up to us to hide our curves under the hijab. I'd stoop as I walked, and cross my arms to cover and hide my chest.[208]

While both Bartky and Mann focus on the role of shame in maintaining patriarchal domination and oppression in late-capitalist Western societies, their discussions are also useful in understanding the attitude towards female embodiment in Muslim societies. Bartky describes what she calls the "fashion-beauty complex," which seeks to glorify the female body, urging narcissistic indulgence in women. At the same time, they aim to depreciate woman's body, forcing her to invest her time, energy and money in improving her appearances.[209] There are countless products, exercises, diets, and surgeries to fix the female body's deficiencies. In this sense, there are many similarities in the experiences of women in Muslim societies and non-Muslim ones, perhaps with the exception that the beauty of the face is much more emphasized in Muslim societies as that is often the part that is most visible of a Muslim woman's body. But there is another attitude toward female bodies that originates from Islamic texts and practices. In the Islamic worldview, a woman's body should be covered as it may arouse men and result in them committing a sin. While there are parallels between what Alinejad feels and what young girls go through in Non-Muslim societies—The discomfort at being gazed at due to one's feminine body and the expectation for the girls to be dressed modestly— there is something about Alinjead's experience that I believe is unique to Muslim women. The feeling of shame and guilt that Alnejad describes is not simply due to her having a female body, but also what that means for the men around her; how she might cause them to stray from the righteous path by having such a body; how she might doom them to sin.

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[208] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair*, 33.

[209] Bartky, *Femininity and Domination,* 39-40.

Bartky argues that the "narcissistic assumption of the [female] body as a spectacle"[210] creates an alternating sense of shame and pride in women; shame, when one sees her body as deficient and pride when she sees it as beautiful. Muslim women, however, need to also negotiate another view of their bodies. In the following passage, Lazreg recalls the day her grandmother told her to start wearing hijab:

> […] one day my maternal grandmother noticed two small swellings on my chest that slightly raised my blue silk dress. Concluding that I was becoming a woman, she said that it was time for me to wear the veil […]. My grandmother's argument struck me at the time for its bluntness. "A woman should hide her ugliness or her beauty. That's the way it should be. You must protect yourself!" she said, to my dismay.[211]

Lazreg interprets her grandmother's statement as meaning that "whether a woman's body is attractive or not is less important than the fact that it is a female body, and as such there is something about it that calls for its concealment."[212] This sense of shame installed in young girls in Muslim societies affects their embodiment in a unique way. As a Muslim woman, it does not matter whether you are meeting the requirements of the beauty standards of the society or not, having a feminine body is enough reason for you to constantly hide it. As Lazreg explains in another passage, her grandmother does not pay attention to the beauty of the dress, but is rather interested in whether or not the dress covers Lazreg's body sufficiently:

> I can recall the color and the style of the dress I was wearing at the time, as well as the texture of the fabric out of which my mother had cut it. I had felt so good in that dress, but my grandmother had noticed only the slight swellings on my chest, not how nice I looked. A sense of unease mixed with bewilderment seized me; I did not feel well, and I left the room in silence. I was still interested in dollhouses and collecting stamps and had not given a thought to veils and womanhood.

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[210] Ibid., 84.

[211] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 17.

[212] Ibid., 23.

> Somehow, my grandmother's comment put a different cast on the world in which I lived, which had not seemed threatening or ominous until she spoke those words.[213]

This sense of shame does not give way to a sense of pride or hope. A Muslim woman is supposed to cover even if she gets married. In fact, as seen in Bullock's and Lazreg's discussions above, the woman's observance of hijab is tightly associated with her husband's "honor". This shame is not a result of deficiency as the woman understands her inferiority compared to man, neither is it simply the result of objectification of the body. It is due to a supposed power the woman is said she has, but is not allowed to ever wield. This power needs to be controlled as it is evil. Veiling, sex segregation, and confinement of women to the private sphere are parts of a structure that is designed to check and control this power.

[213] Ibid., 25.

CHAPTER IV

THE SELF, SPACE, AND WORLD-TRAVELLING

In her book, *The Wind in My Hair*, Alinejad explains how driving her car to work provided her with a sense of safety she was not permitted otherwise:

> […] my car was more than just my mode of transport; it was as if I were putting on a suit of armor every time I entered it. I felt safe and protected. Every day I'd park the car, hoist my bag strap over one shoulder, and fix my […] head scarf to make sure that not even one strand of hair had fallen loose to cause me trouble with the morality police. Only then would I walk briskly [toward] the […] building."[214]

Here, we see a unique experience of the world by the author: an experience of the world, outside the safety of her home, as a hostile space, such that she needs armor to help her face it. This passage points to three different spaces Alinejad occupies. Although not discussed here, the space of her home is in the background of this testimony, the car is experienced as a transitional space and the public as the furthest from the safety of the home.

An important part of this public space is the presence of the "morality police". Iran's judiciary and police, in 2005, established a special police force, called the *Gasht-e-Ershad*—literally "Guidance Patrol," but more often translated as morality police—in order to enforce the dress code and the Islamic code of conduct.[215] They almost exclusively target women and are positioned in places close to shopping centers, main squares and subway stations where they intercept those they deem improperly dressed, put them on minivans and drive them to a correctional facility. The arrestees are almost always released on the same day after a family member brings modest clothes for them to

[214] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair*, 161-162.

[215] Police forces tasked with implementing strict state interpretations of Islamic morality exist in several other states, including Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Malaysia.

change into. The women are often forced to sign a statement agreeing to observe proper dress code in the future. The morality police force is believed to draw a lot of its personnel from the Basij, a hard-line paramilitary unit. Many of the members are women, as according to "Islamic laws" the men are not allowed to touch the young women and as such are limited in what they can do in case they resist arrest. In recent years, an Android app has been developed that helps people avoid the morality police mobile checkpoints.[216] More units are positioned across large cities in the Summers as the warmer weather means looser clothes for many Iranian women. While the focus of the morality police in Iran is on ensuring observance of hijab, they also intervene in other occasions, including what they see as the improper association of people of the opposite sex, or to warn owners of clothing stores displaying clothes that do not meet the Islamic dress code requirements. The religious justification forthe Morality Police comes from the text of Qur'an where Muslims are encouraged to urge others to do what is good and forbid them from evil doing.[217] In Shi'a Islam[218], specifically, commanding what is just and forbidding what is evil are two Ancillaries of the Faith.[219] The existence of the morality police— and its religious justification— has resulted in conservative citizens (both men and women) admonishing young women wearing what they believe is improper attire in public. In recent years, many of the women who have been on the

[216] Amir Azimi, "Iranian youth get app to dodge morality police," *BBC*, February 9, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35533287.

[217] See Qur'an 3.104, 3.110, 9.71, 9.112, 31.17.

[218] One of the two main branches of Islam.

[219] The Ancillaries of the Faith are the ten practices that Shi'a Muslims have to carry out in Twelver Shi'a Islam, which is the state religion of Iran.

receiving end of these admonitions record and post videos of these interactions on social media.[220]

As discussed in the first chapter, the veil as the most visible common denominator of Muslim societies, has a fraught history in which men watched over women's dutiful observance of their roles as guardians of their sexual domain. Many proponents of hijab in contemporary Muslim societies, especially those who take it upon themselves to impose it on others, desire a very specific order in society where every member has a predefined role, place and function. This order included women's quiet assent to their status. Many men, specifically, feel that their own identity is threatened when women question their (inferior) status. Controlling women's bodies is an attempt at limiting women's capacity for self-determination in their bodies which is the basis for curtailing further freedoms. As discussed in Chapter one with Lazreg, hijab induces a sense that biology is destiny in the women who wears it. As there is no separation of the body from the self, in repressing their bodies, Muslim women are repressing themselves. The desired outcome in a Muslim theocratic society is curbing a woman's aspirations to authenticity, which is necessary for a society that not only relies on preexisting roles for its members, but also validating its own religion and cultural heritage against the "West."

Alinejad experiences public space as a threatening place she occupies with a sense of unease. She feels unwelcome in this space and tries to remain in it for as little time as possible "walking briskly" to her destination, hoping she will not be noticed. This feeling does not come from her guilt or shame over wrongdoings, but from an understanding that she does not have a say in which practices are acceptable in this space. She conforms to practices she believes would prevent her from "getting into trouble" with the morality

[220] See Stealthy Freedom (https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/).

police. She becomes self-conscious of herself and her body, making sure to cover her hair completely as she enters public space. The metaphor of the car as armor has a double meaning. It protects Alinejad from the threatening outside world, but it also covers her body, preventing it from being scrutinized by the morality police. The threatening nature of the outside world comes from the norms and practices of this space as well as the others occupying it at the same time as Alinejad, some of whom enforce those norms and practices. The space of the car provides a semi-private space for Alinjead she does not have to share with others. In the space she can get by with following the norms and practices of the public space in a looser manner: she is still wearing hijab, but she is not concerned with covering every strand of hair.

A study of the concept of space or world, understood phenomenologically, can help illuminate Alinejad's lived experience of these different spaces. In the tradition of phenomenology, the central structure of an experience is its intentionality, the way it is directed through its content or meaning toward a certain object in the "world". In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger presents an extensive study of our relationship with the world. According to Heidegger our existence occurs as being-in-the-world. This "being-in" is not to be understood, however, as a characteristic of objects spatially located with respect to other objects. Heidegger points out that the original meaning of "in" is not inclusion, but it rather means "to reside" or "to dwell". This meaning is reflected in phrases such as "being in love" or "being in business," which express "involvement".[221] Heidegger writes:

> Being-in is not a 'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could be with it. It is not the

[221] Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 41.

> case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world'—a world with which he provides himself occasionally. Dasein is never 'proximally' an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' towards the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only *because* Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some entity is present-at-hand outside of Dasein and meets up with it. Such an entity can 'meet up with' Dasein only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a *world*.[222]

Still, Heidegger acknowledges that there are two ways in which Dasein itself can be treated like an object. The first is when one completely disregards or does not see the existential state of "being-in," while the second has to do with Dasein's facticity. Heidegger explains that "The concept of "facticity" implies that an entity 'within-the world' has Being-in-the-world so that it can understand itself and its Being-in. That is, it understands itself as if it is bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within the world."[223] Thus, Dasein's activity is conditioned by cultural interpretations of facts about its body. As Dreyfus argues, Dasein must define itself in terms of social roles that require certain activities and equipments, and as such is at the mercy of factual events and objects in its environment.[224] In this way, we interpret our activities and the meaning things have for us by looking to our contextual relations to things in the world: "we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities

[222] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 2008), 84.

[223] Ibid., 82.

[224] Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 44.

we pursue and the things we take care of".[225] The world, itself, is understood as a space of limited possibilities.

How does this theory help us understand Alinejad's experience? Alinejad undergoes a rupture of her experience of the world as she exits her car and faces the world without it. This rupture is marked by her awareness of a new set of norms she has to conform to and the presence of others (including the morality police) she might have to interact with. She becomes hyper-conscious of her surroundings in preparing to protect herself in this unwelcoming and hostile space. She has been navigating the same spatial space while driving her car without concern a moment ago. Her way of being in the public without the car, however, is very different.

In describing our "'dealings' in the world," Heidegger looks at the way we "manipulate" things and put them to use.[226] He notes that we do not usually encounter mere things, but rather we use the things at hand, or as he calls them equipment, to get something done. Equipment refers to anything that is used for something: "We shall call those entities which we encounter in concern "equipment." In our dealings we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement. […] Equipment is essentially 'something-in-order-to'".[227] Dasein's way of encountering equipment is marked not only by manipulation, but also by the transparency of equipment, or the fact that we are not aware of its characteristics:

> The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw in order to be ready-to-hand quite

[225] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 159.

[226] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 95.

[227] Ibid., 97.

> authentically. That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work— that which is to be produced at the time; and this is accordingly ready-to-hand too. The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered.[228]

So when a blind person starts manipulating their cane,[229] they lose their awareness of the cane itself and are instead only aware of the curb; or, if their movement is uninterrupted, not even aware of that. This example also illuminates Heidegger's next point about our encounter with equipment, namely the transparency of Dasein. The user's grasp of their environment in their everyday way of getting around, does not involve deliberate, thematic awareness. However, Heidegger also accounts for moments of disturbance in "the mode of everydayness,"[230] which causes us to pay attention and switch to deliberate subject/object intentionality. In explaining this phenomenon, Dreyfus writes: "Temporary Breakdown, where something blocks ongoing activity, necessitates a shift into a mode in which what was previously transparent becomes explicitly manifest. Deprived of access to what we normally count on, we act *deliberately*, paying attention to what we are doing."[231]

Thus, when Dasein is forced into deliberation, by a serious disturbance in its activity, it stops and considers what is going on and plans what to do. This is as close as Heidegger gets to providing a framework for understanding what Alinejad experiences, which admittedly, is not sufficient. Heidegger's interest in exploring general ontological characteristics of Dasein, as opposed to specific material conditions, prevents him from

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[228] Ibid., 99.

[229] An example used by Wittgenstein, Polanyi, and Merleau-Ponty, as well as Dreyfus in explaining Heidegger's characterization of equipment in case of the latter.

[230] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 86.

[231] Ibid., 72.

any discussion of how distinctive aspects of gendered embodiment may yield distinct ways of being in the world. There is something about how women engage with places designed to keep and limit them that connects their experiences. When women actively participate and interact with their environments, they perceive in accordance with certain limitations that can be traced to their situations, which in one way or another have to do with their mode of being in the world as an embodiment that is objectified. As such, an analysis of experiences shared by women has to consider women's emplacement and limitation, insofar as those experiences emerge from delimited and disadvantageous situations and socio-political conditionings that compromise one's ability to experience the world in its givenness. Mariana Ortega's work takes up this task.

Influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa and María Lugones, among others, Ortega expands Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world to develop an account of multiplicitous selfhood, which she characterizes as a "being-between-worlds," and a "being-in-worlds." In her book, *In Between*, Ortega develops the notion of the 'multiplicitous self' through a pairing of Latina feminist phenomenology and Heideggerian existential phenomenology. Drawing on the fundamental Heideggerian insight that the self is "always *in process*, *in the making*,"[232] Ortega offers a framework for understanding how being-in-the-world is experienced by the multiplicitous self as in flux, or as lacking stability. She examines Anzaldúa's account of the new *mestiza* as an account of self which "experiences a lived struggle because she is split between cultures, races, languages, and genders, all tugging at her, pulling her to one side or the other, demanding alliances or setting down rules,

[232] Mariana Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 52.

continually pushing her to choose one or the other"[233]. Inhabiting such a tense space in between, the new *mestiza* rejects binaries and comes to occupy a space of liminality and instability. This space in between can lead to fear and paralysis, but also to creativity and transformation which accompanies a "consciousness of the Borderlands"[234] which is a plural consciousness that requires the negotiation of multiple ideas and knowledges. Borderlands, according to Anzaldúa, represent theoretical spaces as well as states of mind: "I associate *nepantla* [Borderlands] with states of mind that question old ideas and beliefs, acquire new perspectives, change worldviews, and shift from one world to another."[235]

Ortega brings Anzaldúa into conversation with Lugones and Heidegger. While acknowledging that Heidegger's view of Dasein offers an important explanation of selfhood, Ortega nonetheless points to the shortcomings of this view when it comes to capturing the experience of marginalized, in-between selves. Heidegger's description of Dasein, however, shares some elements with Anzaldúa's mestiza. Neither of them, for instance, are substantial entities, but are existential selves that make themselves through their choices. They also share the view of the self as "thrown": the self is always already in the world, engaging with its objects. But while Heidegger's focus is on finding general ontological characteristics of human beings, Anzaldúa and other Latina feminists are

[233] Ibid., 26.

[234] Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Fransisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 77.

[235] Gloria Anzaldúa, *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, ed. Ana Louise Keating (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 248.

more interested in the specific material characteristics and conditions of human beings.[236] Another shared characteristic is the mood of anxiety, which for Heidegger, marks the self's possibility for authentic existence as opposed to being under the mode of the "they" or the everyday being of the self. For Anzaldúa, the possibility of choice for the new mestiza and the crossing of worlds, borders and ways of life is associated with a sense of anxiety. But while for Heidegger, "anxiety discloses a self not at home in the world"[237], for Anzaldúa, anxiety can turn into moments of paralysis and an inability to make choices. What is more, both Heidegger and Anzaldúa reject the subject/object dichotomy—albeit for different reasons— emphasizing instead the interrelatedness of the self and the world as well as the self's relation with other selves.[238] Finally, as Ortega demonstrates, both accounts are attentive to the interpretive or the hermeneutic dimension of the self. In Heidegger, this dimension can be seen in his assertion that Dasein already has a sense of what the meaning of being is, which guides its investigation of the question of the meaning of being, constituting a hermeneutic circle. For Anzaldúa, as well as Lugones, this hermeneutic dimension manifests in the new mestiza's interpretation and re-interpretation of herself, as well as those "spaces that have helped her become who she is".[239] In Lugones, this hermeneutic dimension also extends to the world-traveler self as constantly interpreting and re-interpreting those worlds. This analysis helps to bridge the more traditional phenomenological accounts such as Heidegger's, with Latina feminist

[236] Ortega, *In-Between*, 53.

[237] Ibid., 54.

[238] Ibid., 54-56.

[239] Ibid., 58.

phenomenologies of Anzaldúa and Lugones. It also justifies Ortega's endeavor in bringing the two into one conversation.

Despite the significant similarities between the accounts of self in Heidegger and Anzaldúa, among others, there are key differences that are formative of Latina feminist phenomenologies in particular and Feminist phenomenology in general—and which make these philosophies more suited to my investigation here. The greatest difference, as Ortega points out, is the political stance of the writers: Heidegger's support of an unforgivable political position is at great odds with Latina feminists' writings in defense of the marginalized. In addition, as we have seen, while Heidegger's aim is to provide a general account of the self's existential structures, Latina feminists engage with concrete and particular aspects of the self's existence. This difference is what Heidegger explains in terms of the distinction between the ontic and ontological characteristics of Dasein, the latter receiving priority over the former in Heidegger's analysis.

As a result, Ortega argues, "the selves described by Latina feminist phenomenologists do not find themselves "in-the-world" with the ease that traditional existential phenomenologists describe".[240] Here, Ortega draws on Anzaldúa's description of *la facultad*, the unconscious sense of what is helpful or hurtful in the environment. This ability is refined by marginalized selves due to "the continuous experience of fear, danger and what [Anzaldúa] calls tears in the fabric of the everyday mode of consciousness that threaten one's freedom and resistance".[241]

Alinjead's experience of the outside world is one of discomfort, distress and pain; what Ortega calls "a life of not being-at-ease," arguing "while all selves may experience

[240] Ibid., 59.

[241] Ibid., 59.

not being-at-ease occasionally, multiplicitous selves at the margins experience it continuously."[242]"Ease" is the term that Lugones uses to explain the sense of familiarity the self has when fluent in the language, norms and practices of her culture. This ease is the result of a shared history with others.[243] Ortega describes being-at-ease as "a function of one's ability to be non-reflective about everyday norms in the sense that Heidegger indicates".[244]

Using the term "multiplicity" (as opposed to plurality), to describe the self, Ortega attempts to capture the complexity associated with one self: "a singular self occupying multiple social locations and a condition of in-betweenness."[245] By arguing that being-between-worlds is the existential description of experiencing a life of "constant ruptures,"[246] Ortega links the ontic facts of marginalization and oppression to an ontological manner of being-in-the-world. Ortega argues that norms and practices might be altered as one moves from one environment to another which prompts one to become more reflective of her activities. For her, the experience of not being-at-ease constitutes a deep "sense of not being familiar with norms, practices, and the resulting contradictory feelings about who we are given our experience in the different worlds we inhabit".[247] I,

[242] Ibid., 60.

[243] María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 90.

[244] Ortega, *In-Between*, 60.

[245] Ibid., 65.

[246] Ibid., 60.

[247] Ibid., 61.

however, believe that the non-familiarity with the norms and practices of a world is not a requirement for an experience of not being-at-ease.

While Alinejad's experience shows a rupture of the norms and practices, her discomfort is not a result of not knowing the new set of norms and practices she has to conform to as she travels into a different world, but rather a result of the *anticipation of having to conform* to the norms she finds in conflict with the sense of self she has in the comfort of the semi-private space of her car. She has to check herself, to prepare herself for entering this new world. She becomes self-conscious, checking her head scarf. But more than that she anticipates entering an unwelcome space she will inhabit as a marginalized self, a self that is aware of the norms and practices of this space without having power over the ones that dictate her comportment in this world. She undergoes an intensified and exacerbated experience of not being-at-ease.

Perhaps it is due to this difference that it is hard to see the "creative potential of a life of not being-at-ease"[248] as Ortega puts it, when considering Alinejad's experience and other similar experiences. Ortega describes this creative potential as self-consciousness and self-understanding, or an authentic existence in Heidegger's terms that opens up possibilities for resistance. When creativity and resistance have emerged from a life of not being-at-ease in Muslim societies it has often been in a context of terror and disempowerment. Some activities of members of RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan[249], for instance, can be seen as having developed from this

[248] Ibid., 62.

[249] In their own words, RAWA "was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977 as an independent political/social organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and for social justice in Afghanistan. RAWA's objective was to involve an increasing number of Afghan women in social and political activities aimed at acquiring women's human rights and

creative potential of not being-at-ease. RAWA's early activities involved creating secret schools, orphanages, and craft centers for women and girls in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. During the time that Taliban[250] had control of most of Afghanistan, RAWA members took advantage of the invisibility that veiling provides by hiding cameras beneath their burqas, taking pictures and recording videos of beatings, torture, and executions committed by Taliban and sharing them with the world. Both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance[251] condemned RAWA activities (with varying degrees of violence), but they persisted. After the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the defeat of the Taliban government by American and Afghan Northern Alliance forces, RAWA made their criticism of the war known, especially in relation to the high rates of casualties among the civilian population. They also maintained that the Northern Alliance was fundamentalist and dangerous like the Taliban. Their recent activities include fund-raising for hospitals, schools and orphanages, continuing their social activities in areas of education and health care, as well political activities by organizing demonstrations, holding press conferences about the situation of women in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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contributing to the struggle for the establishment of a government based on democratic and secular values in Afghanistan. Despite the suffocating political atmosphere, RAWA very soon became involved in widespread activities in different socio-political arenas including education, health and income generation as well as political agitation." (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, "About RAWA," http://www.rawa.org/rawa.html.)

[250] The Taliban (or Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) are a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist political movement and military organization in Afghanistan. The Taliban held power over roughly three quarters of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and enforced a strict interpretation of the Islamic law. After their defeat in 2001 they regrouped as an insurgency movement to fight the American-backed Karzai administration.

[251] The Afghan Northern Alliance (or the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) was a military front that came to formation in late 1996 after the Taliban took over Kabul. The Northern Alliance fought a defensive war against the Taliban government. In 2001 the US invaded Afghanistan, providing support to Northern Alliance leading to the defeat of the Taliban. Afterwards, the Northern Alliance was dissolved as members and parties joined the new establishment of the Karzai administration.

Many of these activities, however, involve high levels of risk and danger. In *Veiled Courage*, Cheryl Benard, presents an account of RAWA's work by way of personal testimonies from its members and supporters she has acquired through interviews with them. Many of the interviewees describe the daily mortal danger that is the result of their clandestine work. Heli, a RAWA activist talks to Benard about her fear: "one naturally gets scared. Especially when I hear the noise of the cars belonging to the Department of Vice and Virtue[252], I start to tremble, because they are very heartless and without culture, and brutal and ruthless."[253]

As this testimony shows, the kind of creativity and resistance we see here is not the everyday kind that Ortega talks about. It involves a risk that Ortega does not explore. Still, there are certain aspects of these experiences that correspond to what Latina feminists describe. Lugones describes the place in between as a place from which one can stand critically toward different worlds one inhabits: "Other worlds provide one with syllogisms that one can attempt to make actual in the worlds in which one is oppressed, given one's critical understanding of each world. The critical understanding is made possible, in part, by the going into the limen when one "travels" to the other worlds. The limen is the place where one becomes most fully aware of one's multiplicity."[254]

Lugones explains that a factor that makes oppression inescapable is "the inability to form liberatory syllogisms in the world of the oppressor, given the logic of

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[252] The Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice of Afghanistan was in charge of implementing Islamic rules as defined by the Taliban. It was first instituted by the1992 Rabbani regime, and adopted by the Taliban when they took power in 1996.

[253] Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer, *Veiled Courage: Inside the Afghan Women's Resistance* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 73.

[254] Lugones, *Pilgrimages/*Peregrinajes, 59.

oppression."[255] It is in the limen, this place of liminality, that the self can stand aside from their social position and form what Lugones calls liberatory syllogisms. While many of these liberatory syllogisms cannot be completed, due to the limits of the world selves inhabit as the oppressed, they nonetheless point to what blocks these possibilities and in this way provide possibilities for action in order to remove those blocks. Tameena, a member of RAWA, tells Benard "I don't think you can imagine how deeply it has been implanted in us to believe that we are only half as valuable and half as smart as our brothers, only half as brave as a man".[256] For many women, including Tameena, RAWA has provided a world where they have a different status and occupy a different place. Benard points out that women of RAWA not only contemplate discovery and accept the possibility of death on a daily basis, they also have the horrifying details of such an end in their minds, as they have seen it happening to their comrades. Fariha, another RAWA member explains how she feels when she has an assignment inside Afghanistan:

> When I have an assignment inside Afghanistan, I get frightened every now and then, especially when I see one of the Datsun automobiles used by the Taliban. I'm not so much afraid of them killing me and my blood being spilled on the ground. What I am more frightened of is that I might be arrested first and taken away by them. Unfortunately, we have had several such cases, maybe a dozen. And the Taliban committed lots of crimes against these women before killing them.[257]

It should be obvious that no one should have to be creative under such circumstances and that the focus here should be on eliminating these circumstances whether or not they provide potentials for creativity and resistance. Ortega connects the concept of being-in-worlds to resistance and "new possibilities of understanding oneself

[255] Lugones, *Pilgrimages/*Peregrinajes, 59

[256] Benard and Schlaffer, *Veiled Courage*, 43.

[257] Ibid., 73.

as having different attributes, of seeing oneself as capable of overcoming fear and domination, and as being creative and skillful *in spite* of the perception from the dominant group that considers that self as unworthy, inferior, and expendable."[258] While the women of RAWA have been able to resist the oppression in creative ways, no one should have to live under such extreme levels of fear and threat that accompanies their act of resistance. Some argue that there have been other instances of resistance that are creative without being as dangerous. As discussed in chapter one, some proponents of Islamic feminism point to the way Iranian women have turned the initial strict Islamic hijab and state-mandated dress code into more relaxed, colorful, and diverse forms of fashion statements, as an example of creative resistance and one that demonstrates the potential of Islamic feminism for bypassing the patriarchal interpretations of Islam in favor of equality within an Islamic context. This example, to me, points to another instance where women should not have to be creative. It is a reactionary response to oppression which falls short of being transformative in a meaningful way.

Lugones' account of resisting acts is useful here. She distinguishes between resistance in term of reaction and resistance as a response. I would argue that the acts of resisting supporters of Islamic feminism refer to, are often reactionary. Lugones explains that reaction "does not add anything creative to the meaning contained in that which is resisted, except some form of "no.""[259] Reaction only captures the physical aspect of resistance and is contained in action. Responses, however, are more "complex," "devious," and "insightful" to the ways in which power structures operate. In this light, young Iranian women's defiance of the expected dress-codes, while extremely brave—

[258] Oretga, *In-Between*, 100.

[259] Lugones, *Pilgrimages/*Peregrinajes, 29.

given the dangers one faces if caught by the morality police—is a reaction, a "no", to a world where their choice has been taken away from them. I do not believe that any of these women dress in these ways to give hijab a new meaning, but are pushing the boundaries that are forced on them. For Lugones, the worlds in which the self is not at ease needs to be changed, as in such a world the self will remain a contradictory being with a possibility of resistance that is merely reactive and not transformative. I argue that many women in Muslim societies experience public space in this way, characterized by an intensified feeling of not being-at-ease and not feeling at home. The public is a space ruled by power relations women they cannot control.

In an interview with Marnia Lazreg, Mina, an Algerian woman, recounts how she was told by her mother that it was time for her to veil "now that she was menstruating and her breasts were budding." Mina tells Lazreg that she can "still recall feeling disoriented on the street when she took her first steps under the veil".[260] This testimony points to another important aspect of female embodiment in Muslim societies. The requirement for Muslim women to dress in certain ways not only affects how they experience their body, but also how they experience and interact with the world. In *Questioning the Veil*, Lazreg herself recalls an incident that happened at the age of seven when she was playing with friends outside her home:

> A boy, the son of neighbors, had pulled my braids from the back while making lewd movements with his body. Alerted by my cries for help, my mother opened the door of our house and took in the scene. Since time was of the essence, she could not go back inside and put on her white veil. Instead, she pulled one of her clogs off her foot and threw it at the boy, missing him. The clog landed on my forehead, making a bloody gash. I had a half-inch scar for many years to remember the incident by. Had my mother not been thoroughly socialized in the culture of the veil, she would have simply walked the twenty feet or so that separated her from my attacker. Thirty years later, she discarded her veil. In

[260] Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil*, 18.

> retrospect, I wonder whether that incident had somehow worked through her unconscious mind and prepared her psychologically for the removal of her veil, The street we lived on was in a residential area, and there were few men around during working hours. My mother could have crossed it with no one noticing her. But she could not and did not.[261]

Lazreg's mother's inability to disentangle her sense of self from the veil, limits her ability to act in the world, to reach out and to cross from the sphere of the private into the public. Lazreg explains that her mother "had felt utterly paralyzed before throwing her clog at the boy."[262] This example brings out a dimension of the self in-between that is connected to the crossings of spatial as well as non-spatial borders and boundaries. Muslim women often experience the crossing from a private space to a public one in highly self-conscious and sometimes threatening ways. The relation between spatial locations and how women experience the world around them comes out in many testimonies from women living in Muslim societies. Alinejad describes her first days at school in the following way:

> School was all wrong. For the first three years, the classes were set up so that boys sat on one side of the room, girls on the other. After fourth grade, boys and girls were taught in different classrooms. Before going to school, I had the freedom to run around and play with other boys and girls, but that stopped when I turned seven. When the recess bell rang, we'd race out of the classroom to the school yard, screaming with pent-up energy and happiness at being let loose. We were as one, boy and girls together. Our freedom lasted for a few fleeting minutes before the supervisor caught up with us with a ruler in his hand and shouted his daily instruction: "Girls… girls… run to the back of the yard now." I, too, would retreat, along with the other girls, and could only envy the boys their freedom to run, wrestle, fight, kick a football.[263]

As discussed in the previous chapter, Iris Marion Young develops Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to account for particular modalities of feminine bodily

[261] Ibid., 11.

[262] Ibid., 11.

[263] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair*, 31-32.

comportment and motility. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between lived space and objective space where all positions are external to one another and interchangeable. In phenomenal space, the capacities of the body's motions and the intentional relations that those motions constitute give rise to lived relations of space. He writes: "If bodily space and external space form a practical system, the former being the background against which the object can stand out or the void in front of which the object can appear as the goal of our action, then it is clearly in action that the spatiality of the body is brought about, and the analysis of movement itself should allow is to understand spatiality better." [264] While Merleau-Ponty does not take gender into account, Young argues that if there are particular modalities of feminine bodily compartment and motility, it must follow that there are also particular modalities of feminine spatiality. She writes: "Feminine existence lives space as *enclosed* or confining, as having a *dual* structure, and the woman experiences herself as *positioned* in space."[265]

To explain the first modality, Young refers to a study performed by Erik Erikson in which he asked several male and female preadolescents to construct a scene for an imagined movie out of a set of toys—figures of people, animals, furniture, cars and building blocks. He found out that girls often created indoor settings, with high wall and enclosures, while boys typically depicted outdoor scenes. The study concluded that while males tend to emphasize "outer space" or a spatial orientation that is open and outwardly directed, females tend to emphasize the "inner space" or enclosed space.[266] Young does not agree with Erikson's psychoanalytical interpretation of these results which connects

[264] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 105.

[265] Young, *On Female Body Experience,* 39.

[266] Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).

the inner space to the enclosed space of wombs and vaginas and outer space with the phallus. Rather, she sees the results of this study as reflecting how girls and boys live and move their bodies in space.[267] Young explains how women tend not to use the full potential of their physical capacities, arguing that women frequently use and inhabit a much smaller space than what is physically available to them. She tells us:

> Feminine existence appears to posit an existential enclosure between herself and the space surrounding her, in such a way that the space that belongs to her and is available to her grasp and manipulation is constricted and the space beyond is not available to her movement. […] The timidity, immobility, and uncertainty that frequently characterize feminine movement project a limited space for the feminine "I can."[268]

Merleau-Ponty explains how the body unity of transcending performance creates an immediate link between the body and the outlying space: "Each moment of the movement embraces its entire expanse and, in particular, its first moment of kinetic initiation inaugurates the link between a here and a there [yonder]".[269] Young argues that the projection of an enclosed space by women, severs the continuity between a "here" and a "yonder". This severance of the continuity is what experienced by what I have been calling a rupture in woman's experience as she crosses over to another space, in case of the above examples, the public, from a private or semi-private space. This discontinuity leads to the second modality of feminine spatiality, namely a "double spatiality," where the space that is "yonder" as distinct and disconnected from the enclosed space that is

[267] Young, *On Female Body Experience,* 40.

[268] Ibid., 40.

[269] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 141.

"here" and their bodies' possibilities. Young concludes that while the space of the "yonder" exists for feminine existence, it is understood as a space "where "someone" could move within it, but not I".[270]

The third modality of feminine spatiality, Young tells us, is that feminine existence experiences itself as "positioned" in space. She draws from Merleau-Ponty's account of the body as the original subject that constitutes space: "far from my body being for me merely a fragment of space, there would be for me no such thing as space if I did not have a body."[271] As such, the body does not occupy a position interchangeable with the positions of other things: "When the word here is applied to my body, it does not designate a determinate position in relation to other positions or in relation to external coordinates. It designates the installation of the first coordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, and the situation of the body confronted with its tasks."[272] Young argues that insofar as feminine existence lives the body as transcendence it is a constituting spatial subject, and to the extent that it is laden with immanence and lived as an object, the body is spatially constituted. In this sense, feminine spatiality is contradictory. While Young is addressing the experiences of women and girls in a particular historical time and geographic location, I find the conceptual framework that she provides useful in explaining the experiences I am investigating here.

The testimonies from Alinejad and Lazreg, in particular, are better understood when we bring in the modalities of feminine spatiality described by Young into conversation with Ortega's concept of being-between-worlds. Alinejad realizes at school

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[270] Young, *On Female Body Experience,* 41.

[271] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 104.

[272] Ibid., 102-103.

that different spatial locations are reserved for girls and boys: At first boys sat on one side of the classroom and girls on the other; later they are taught in different classrooms. These two spaces are to be kept separate. One's gender determines what spaces they can inhabit. Girls and boys are discouraged from playing or associating with one another. During the recess the girls are sent to the back of the yard. Only the boys are allowed to freely roam the yard. Not only girls and boys are kept in separate spaces they cannot easily crossover, the spaces designated for them are fundamentally different. If they do try to crossover, they undergo a rupture in their experience as they become conscious of the new space they occupy, where they are not welcome. The enclosed space that Young describes line up with the private space that is assigned to girls as their proper place. Alinejad is told off when she wants to play around in the yard. She does not have the same access to this space that the boys have.

Lazreg's mother moves to stop her daughter's assailant, while simultaneously experiencing her body as an object. Her body is her way of reaching out to act in the world, but it is also some "thing" that needs to be covered. Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is never positioned in space, but is rather the original subject that constitutes space.[273] But as Young argues, if experienced as an object, the body is no longer "constituting spatial subject" but it is "spatially constituted".[274] Lazreg's mother is positioned in the private space of her house and that is her spatial location. She does not see the space outside her home as a continuation of this one. The distinction between the private and the public space in Muslim societies can be explained through the distinction between "here" and "yonder" in Young's account. Women in Muslim societies often

[273] Ibid., 104.

[274] Young, *On Female Body Experience,* 41.

experience the difference between the two spaces as an intensified "dual spatiality". Lazreg's mother is aware of the space outside her home, but she experiences it as a space that is not connected to the space of her home and as such she is reluctant to cross over to, which in turn prevents her from actualizing the possibilities of her body in that space. This hesitation and sometimes failure to crossover from the private space to the public in a moment's notice is characteristic of experiences of many women in Muslim societies.

This experience of crossing over from one space to another has been explored by Latina feminists including Lugones. Ortega adopts Lugones' notion of 'world-traveling' to expand on the multiplicitous self's sense of being-in-the-world. Rather than the Heideggerian conception of *Dasein,* wherein the description of being is one of "already having a sense of the meaning of being," the multiplicitous self that must travel between worlds "does not have a nonreflective, nonthematic sense of all the norms and practices of the spaces or worlds she inhabits".[275] "World," for Lugones is a "community of meaning," where meanings are a result of "ongoing transculturation, interworld influencing and interworld relations of control and resistance to control."[276] Following Lugones, Ortega explains that worlds are places inhabited by people (real or imaginary), conditioned by culture, power, varying constructions of life that produce gender, race, sexuality, class, ability, and so on. Worlds do not encompass the totality of being, but rather are incomplete constructions of life with shared meanings and languages, and are always open to interpretation and reinterpretation. Worlds are multiple and we traverse worlds on a daily basis, many worlds in fact. The concepts of being-in-world and being-between-worlds are not static or exclusionary. One can be in various worlds and at the

[275] Ortega, *In-Between*, 57-59.

[276] Lugones, *Pilgrimages*/Peregrinajes, 26.

same time be in-between-worlds. How we fare in the worlds we traverse varies based on our social locations, our comfort within worlds, and our ability to navigate them comfortably. Alinejad describes her's and her peer's return home after school in the following way:

> For the return journey, all the children, boys and girls, would gather in two separate groups at a square near our school and wait together for the buses home. […] the boys […] talked and laughed loudly and sometimes staged mock fights. The girls all turned their backs on the road and the boys, and instead faced a wall […] so as not to have any contact with the boys.[277]

This experience demonstrates the ways in which different people have different kinds of access to different worlds and can navigate them with varying degrees of comfort. In the public space outside the school, boys are projecting their "I can" bodies, which links with the outlying space as an extension of bodies. They do not question this access nor do they hesitate to reach for it. The girls on the other hand, both literary and figuratively, face a wall. While occupying the same spatial location, they do not have access to the same world. Actualizing the potentials of their "I can" bodies presents itself as an even slighter possibility while in the public sphere. The girls are constantly told not to take up space, to stay in the back of the yard, gather close to a wall and not move around, and so they fail to take up the space that is available to them, and their bodies, confining their bodies to the "here," perceiving the "yonder" as any space unavailable to them.

Although worlds, according to Ortega, are not defined as spatial locations, those locations often do have an impact on how we experience the world. Persons in the same spatial location have different ways of being in that location due to having access to different worlds. In the testimony above, we clearly see girls and boys occupying the

[277] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair,* 35.

same spatial location in two very different manners. Ortega, however, clarifies that while "occupying certain spatial locations connects the multiplicitous self to different worlds," spatial location is not "the main element involved in being-in-worlds."[278] For instance, as a female international graduate student I am in many worlds, including the academic world, and while my experience of this world is not limited to the spatial aspects, my being present at specific locations— the campus, classrooms, libraries, my office, …— throughout my career is intertwined with it. Ortega writes:

> Being-in-worlds is meant to convey the condition of the multiplicitous self as being able to inhabit as well as access various worlds. It is also intimately connected to being-between-worlds, given that this self is not always in one world or another and, instead, can be in-between worlds to different degrees, sometimes ready to cross over—but even while crossing, remaining in in-betweenness and liminality.[279]

It is this act of 'crossing' that has coincided with the physical crossing of the spatial location in experiences reported by both Alinejad and Lazreg. While Ortega's analysis is focused on the ontological aspects of world-traveling as a way of bridging the Heideggerian notion of world with that of Latina feminists, the correlation of the spatial locations and world-traveling is better highlighted in Lugones's original account. Lugones speaks of a map drawn by power to explain the spatiality of the self:

> All the roads and places are marked as places you may, must, or cannot occupy. Your life is spatial mapped by power. Your spot lies at the intersection of all the spatial venues where you may, must, or cannot live or move. Those intersections also spatialize your relations and your condition with respect to the asymmetries of power that constitute those relations. […] And if "you" […] are one of the dominated, your movements are highly restricted and contained. And there may not be any you there under certain descriptions, such as "lesbian" or any other description that captures transgression.[280]

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[278] Ortega, *In-Between*, 67.

[279] Ibid., 68.

[280] Lugones, *Pilgimages*/Peregrinajes, 21-22.

Lugones explains that the "you" that occupies a spot in this abstract map is only a person spatially and relationally conceived and thoroughly socially construed through your functionality in terms of power. She concludes that while you are concrete, "Your spatiality, constructed as an intersection following the designs of power, isn't. This discrepancy already tells you that you are more than one."[281] Lugones's aim is to explore the ways in which beings that are multiple and fragmented are oppressed as well as the ways they resist oppression. In this sense, her project is a form of "trespassing" insofar as it violates the "spatiality and logic of oppression".[282] "Traveling" and "world-traveling" are part of this project. Lugones uses these notions to make sense of a multiple self that is located in space, a space which itself is "multiple, intersecting, [and] co-temporaneous".[283] Although much of our world-traveling happens unwillingly and to hostile worlds, Lugones believes in the creativity and richness, even—under certain circumstances— "loving way of being and living" of this practice.[284]

Lugones's account becomes useful in understanding some of the experiences of the women living in Muslim societies. She writes:

> In a "world," some of the inhabitants may not understand or hold the particular construction of them that constructs them in that "world." So, there may be "worlds" that construct me in ways that I do not even understand. Or, it may be that I understand the construction, but do not hold it of myself. I may not accept it as an account of myself, a construction of myself. And yet, I may be *animating* such a construction.[285]

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[281] Ibid., 22.

[282] Ibid., 24.

[283] Ibid., 26.

[284] Ibid., 71.

[285] Ibid., 78.

This insight sheds light on Alinejad's experience of herself as she enters the public. She is a different self in this world, but her discomfort comes from her not holding the construction that is forced onto her as of herself. She recognizes herself as being different in public than in private. This traveling between worlds is a matter of necessity for Alinejad. She tries to stay in this world for as little time as possible, "walking briskly" to her destination. In those moments she is animating a sense of herself that is at odds with the self she experienced in the privacy of her car. Lugones explains that "world-travelers" are different in different worlds and remember other worlds as well as themselves in them."

The shift from being one person to being a different person is what I call traveling. This shift may not be willful or even conscious, and one may be completely unaware of being different in a different "world," and may not recognize that one is in a different "world." Even though the shift can be done willfully, it is not a matter of acting. One does not pose as someone else; one does not pretend to be, for example, someone of a different personality or character or someone who uses space or language differently from the other person. Rather, one is someone who has that personality or character or uses space and language in that particular way. The "one" here does not refer to some underlying "I." One does not *experience* any underlying I.[286]

Lugones explains that one may favor one or more worlds for a variety of reasons, calling one world "*my* world"—if, for instance, one is at ease in it— or disown a world—if, for instance, one has memories of being so completely dominated in it as to have no sense of exercising her own will. One might also experience oneself as an agent more

[286] Ibid., 89-90.

thoroughly in a certain world compared to another world.[287] The distinction between the private and public spaces is reinforced in Muslim societies by phenomena such as public dress codes, morality police and sex segregation, in a way that perpetuates objectification and oppression of women. Women in Muslim societies often do not feel at ease in the public space, because they have to conform to norms they do not agree with, norms that confines them and restricts their motility. Moreover, they experience it as a hostile space where there are concrete threats— being admonished, arrested or worse— if they slip up in following the norms or defy them. If these women do not wish to risk their safety, they will have to conform to norms they resent to gain limited access to the public space—to which men have undisputed and total access— and remain in the private spaces where they can exercise their agency more fully. This in turn sustains and fortifies the distinction between the public and space and the notion that one is the primary feminine space and the other the primary masculine one.

Writing on Young's work, Bonnie Mann explains: "Being positioned in space disrupts and disorganizes the "I can" that lays down the coordinates of spatiality in a way that has deep consequences for the body-subject's relation to the lived world *in general*."[288] For women in Muslim societies the constant experience of a rupture in their lived experience of world as they crossover from one space to another—especially from private to public ones— is a reminder of their place and status in the society. The public space is the domain of the men, and there are rules to be followed if women are to occupy that space, and there will be concrete consequences if they do not. The sex segregation of

[287] Ibid., 91.

[288] Bonnie Mann, "Iris Marion Young: Between Phenomenology and Structural Injustice," in *Dancing with Iris: The Philosophy of Iris Marion Young*, eds. Ann Ferguson and Mecke Nagel (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2009), 85.

spaces is not only designed to keep men and woman apart, but to keep the former in dominance over the latter. Women who crossover to male-dominated spaces, have to give in to what is imposed on them as a condition of the crossing over. She is giving consent —even if begrudgingly— to respect and follow the requirements set for her and in doing so consents to their assessment that she is inferior and should not be given self-determination over her own body and movements.

Once, as I was walking the streets of Tehran with an ex-partner, I spotted a morality police van. Immediately my hands went to my headscarf covering the part of my hair that was visible before. One of the morality police members saw this and said out loud: “Good, you know what’s good for you,” with a sneer. It was obvious that he was immensely enjoying his power over me. I felt humiliated and angry. But most of all, I hated myself for giving in to someone’s demand on how to comport myself as we were both occupying a space both of us should have equal access to. What was an extremely painful experience for me was a source of joy for someone else.

CHAPTER V

TIME, CHANGE, AND FREEDOM

This chapter examines two issues: women's lived experience of time in Muslim societies; and the attitudes of these societies toward time. The first part focuses on the relation between time and freedom (through a discussion of Arendt's work), as well as some of the attitudes of Muslim societies toward time, which ignore the temporality of human life and as a result impede the experience of freedom. The second part provides an account of temporality from a phenomenological perspective (through accounts by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir) and explores the relation between time and gender before analyzing experiences of women in Muslim societies in this light. I argue that there is a doubled closing of future time for some women living in Muslim societies. The past is evoked as a way of justifying the present both by the regime and its resisters on the one hand, and female existence is subjected to a rupture in time that closes the future on the other.

Time and Freedom

Hannah Arendt considers the relationship between the concept of lived experience and the temporal conditions of human life. Criticizing the dominant philosophical models of time and temporality, she presents a conception of temporality as natality or the fact that each birth represents a new beginning and the introduction of novelty in the world. Arendt's most extensive discussion of time and freedom appears in her last major philosophical work, *The Life of the Mind*, which was meant to examine the three fundamental faculties of the *vita contemplativa, namely,* thinking, willing, and judging. At the time of her death in 1975, however, she had completed only the first two volumes.

This unfinished work builds on Arendt's theory of action developed in *The Human Condition,* and provides an account of our mental activities that, according to Arendt herself, was missing from her previous work on the *vita activa*.[289]

In the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt describes temporality as an infrastructure that only comes to manifest itself through an examination of the very limits of the human condition, namely, our beginning and our end. According to her, thinking puts us into a *nunc stans* that is experienced as both timeless and spaceless. Arendt makes clear that this timelessness is not eternity; rather it springs from the clash of past and future. Though the past and future "have no known beginning, they have a terminal ending, the point at which they meet and clash, which is the present".[290] Arendt describes 'memory' as the organ of the past and 'will' as the organ of the future, which also introduces the possibility of choice. She argues that while both thinking and willing "make present to our mind what is actually absent, […] thinking draws into its enduring present what either is or at least has been, whereas willing, stretching out into the future, moves in a region where no such certainties exist."[291]

In *The Veil and the Male Elite*, Mernissi criticizes the relationship of Muslim and Arab societies to the past and their disconnect to the present. She draws on Muhammad al-Jabiri's work; who argues that Muslims turn to the past for everything they lack in the present. Mernissi agrees with al-Jabiri that Muslim forbearers have bestowed onto their followers "a system of censorship" in which politics and religion are intertwined with one another. Muslim politicians have consistently used the past as a "sacred standard" to

[289] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind,* Vol. I (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 6

[290] Arendt, *Life of the Mind,* Vol. I, 209

[291] Arendt, *Life of the Mind,* Vol. II, 35

authoritatively manage the present[292]: "It is not just the present that the *imams*[293] and politicians want to manage to assure our well-being as Muslims, but above all the past that is being strictly supervised and completely managed for all of us, men and women."[294] al-Jabiri traces the institutionalization of censorship in Islam to the eighth century BCE when Muslim scholars were ordered and supervised by the Abbasid caliphate to make a catalog of Hadith,[295] *fiqh*[296] and *tafsir.*[297]

Mernissi describes our era as one where the control of time has replaced the control of space as the basis of political and economic power. This means being concerned with the future, and as a result death, since everyone faces death in the future. While non-Muslim societies have typically managed to cover this concern with death with a fascination with the future which leads to creative energy, Mernissi argues, modern Muslims react to this change by sliding back to a past where they were "protected":[298]

> Muslims suffer from a *mal du présent* just as the youth of Romantic Europe suffered from a *mal du siécle*[299]. The only difference is that the Romantic youth of Europe experienced their difficulty in living in the present as a disgust with

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[292] Mernissi, *Veil and the Male Elite*, 16.

[293] This term is often used to refer to religious leaders of Muslim societies.

[294] Mernissi, *Veil and the Male Elite*, 10.

[295] The recorded deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

[296] Interpretation of Shari'a (Islamic laws) as it appears in sacred texts.

[297] Explication of the Qur'an.

[298] Mernissi, *Veil and the Male Elite*, 19-20.

[299] *Mal du siècle* (sickness of the century) is a term used to refer to the ennui, disillusionment, and melancholy experienced by primarily young adults of Europe's early 19th century, when speaking in terms of the rising Romantic movement. Alfred de Musset attributes the malady to the loss of Napoleon Bonaparte, the French nation's "modern father figure".

> living, while we Muslims experience it as a desire for death, a desire to be elsewhere, to be absent, and to flee to the past as a way of being absent. A suicidal absent.[300]

Mernissi does not criticize the narrative of modernity in the West and its view of time, including the association of the movement of history with progress.[301] While I think such criticism is as important and necessary as what I am doing here, my focus here is not on a criticism of modernity and its understanding of time and progress. Rather, I am interested in Muslim societies' relation to temporality and their fascination with the past without claiming that they are the only societies where this fascination with an (imaginary) past can be found. The origin of the problem Mernissi identifies here, I argue, is the status that is given to religious doctrines in Muslim societies even today. Like any monotheism, Islam has a set of fixed metaphysical principles at its core, that do not leave much room for change. This becomes particularly important when we consider how in Islam it is taught that Muhammed is the final prophet God has sent us and that his religion is the most complete and sufficient to guide humanity until the end of time. These metaphysical teachings ignore the temporality of human life and hinder the experience of freedom by conceiving necessary truths as superior to contingencies, leading to deterministic approaches to human reality. The Islamic imperative, thus, limits the horizon of possibilities for women (and men) by presenting timeless ideals for how they should behave that do not take the temporality of human life into account. Very similar attitudes toward temporality exists in fundamentalist Christianity and Judaism.

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[300] Mernissi, *Veil and the Male Elite*, 15.

[301] For criticisms of modernity in relation to time and progress see: Theodore Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Verso, 1986); Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

Arendt connects the activity of thinking to that of judging. She argues that humans are thinking beings, in the sense that we are inclined to "think beyond the limitations of knowledge, to do more with this ability than use it as an instrument for knowing and doing".[302] By dissolving our fixed habits of thought and the accepted rules of conduct, the activity of thinking provides an opportunity for judging particulars independent of pre-established universals. Arendt believes that it is in times of historical crisis—such as the time she is writing in—that the significance of thinking is revealed, because by undermining established values, it prepares the individual to judge for herself instead of being carried away by the actions and opinions of the majority. As such, the value of thinking is that it constantly returns to question again and again the meaning that we give to experiences, actions and circumstances, which, for Arendt, is intrinsic to the exercise of political responsibility.

This insight contrasts with the traditional metaphorical hierarchy of necessary truths over contingent ones. Arendt calls the Platonic two-worlds doctrine, which pits the timeless world of ideas against the temporal world of phenomena, the most fundamental metaphysical fallacy. She explains that while ideas refer to abiding and eternal being, phenomena refer to changing, that is, appearing and disappearing, being. The hierarchy of timelessness and time (or eternity and change), has mainly been played out through the related hierarchy of necessity and contingency. Arendt claims that both natural and human life are marked by change, but in very distinct ways. The time sequence of natural life is cyclical with the same repetitive sequences of birth, procreation, and death, and within life, the same repetitive sequences of physical survival. In contrast, the temporality of human life is linear. Arendt departs from classical accounts of time by claiming that

[302] Arendt, *Life of the Mind,* Vol. II, 12

the linear temporality of human life is dis-continuous because the linear sequence of human life is interrupted by new beginnings and new events. While the repetitive time sequences of natural life are experienced as necessity, the interruptions of the linear time sequence of human life may be experienced as freedom. This distinction sheds light on a passage in *The Life of the Mind* where she writes: "The opposite of necessity is not contingency or accident but freedom. Everything that appears to human eyes, everything that occurs to the human mind, everything that happens to mortals for better or worse is 'contingent,' including their own existence"[303]. Here, Arendt is seeking to distinguish between human reality as a specific ontological realm and the realm of nature. Though both human reality and natural reality are contingent, only human reality allows for freedom. Moreover, insofar as humans are also an animal species, they live a natural life according to the necessities of nature. Thus, from the viewpoint of human experience, the natural conditions of survival are necessary and the contrast between necessity and freedom may be experienced under such a viewpoint.

As contingency is the temporal condition of the phenomenon of the new and the possibility of freedom, Arendt argues that the experience of freedom has not received enough attention due to the influential metaphysical fallacy that has elevated necessity to the highest form of being, which in turn has obstructed the phenomenon of the new and the related experience of freedom. She considers freedom as the specifically human quality of existence, that can be realized only as a worldly reality through political action. The basic feature of human reality is its worldliness, that is, its inherent dimension of meaning resulting from human speech and action.

[303] Ibid., 60.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt explains that upon birth, human beings enter the world not only as new creatures, but also as beginners. Throughout our life we retain the capacity for new beginnings, which is the capacity for action. She writes: "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity . . . its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative."[304]

Arendt's notion of political interaction relates freedom to contingency and newness. Public, pluralist interaction qualifies as political only if it is undertaken not out of moral obligation, or societal norms or laws, but as one's own initiative, that is, if it is undertaken freely. This aspect of initiative is important as it clarifies the distinction between mere change and a new beginning. A new beginning is more than simply a change. Only those courses of interaction that are started spontaneously, from our own initiative, qualify as new beginnings, and may lead to new events and states of affairs. Arendt's conception of freedom should not be understood in terms of "free will". Freedom, for her, is a worldly reality realized through pluralistic interaction in word and deed. The free will is a mental phenomenon that, if understood as the initiative to act, is only one ingredient of freedom. In the second volume of *The Life of the Mind*, dedicated to the topic of willing, Arendt opposes the traditional reduction of freedom to free will, which is incompatible with the pluralistic open-endedness of political action and freedom in Arendt's sense. In this way, against the background of a global civilization that in religion, philosophy, science, and politics tends to replace the risk of freedom with the

[304] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176-78.

certainty of control and predictability, and the belief in historical, social, and natural inevitabilities, Arendt foregrounds freedom as human beings' capacity to make the improbable happen.

Thus, Arendt understands the temporality of human life as linear but dis-continuous which allows for the experience of freedom. This freedom is understood in relation to political action— in our interactions with others. The situated character of freedom means its actualization depends on the context in which one can exercise one's freedom. Consider Alinejad's description of Iranian politics:

> There is a predictable cycle in Iranian politics, as predictable as the weather. Every year, for a few months, the government relaxes its grip and some actions are tolerated—women can show a few inches of hair under their head scarves, or men and women can actually walk together without being married or the newspapers can publish mildly critical articles. Then, just like the dark clouds that gather in late autumn, the freedoms are taken away and transgressors are punished.[305]

This testimony tells us how Alinejad is experiencing the politics of her time: a cycle that is not breakable. It frustrates her as it prevents real change. Everything is predetermined. This means that the temporality of her actions are experienced as necessity, always within the same cycle of meaning, leaving no room for contingencies independent of pre-established universal values. The frustration Alinejad feels is typical of many Iranians today and has resulted in a complicated relation to the past for them. In *Becoming Visible in Iran,* Mehri Honarbin-Holliday writes about her interviews of women in Tehran in 2007 about their lives. It includes parts of an interview with a former gallery and bookshop owner who had to give up both after the Iranian Revolution

[305] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair*, 128.

because she had published Shahrnush Parsipur's novel *Women without Men*.[306] At the time of the interview she worked as a translator and editor of art and academic books. She tells Honarbin-Holliday:

> I don't believe the rest of the world has any idea about secular and intellectual life in this country. As if they have forgotten this ancient mother culture. The heritage of painting, poetry, music, and ancient architecture in this land have survived for hundred of years, and I have no doubt they will continue to do so despite the aggression we experience from governments here and in the West.[307]

As discussed above, the traditional sect of the Iranian government and people constantly refer to a— sometimes imaginary or at least obscure— Islamic past as a basis for laws and regulations as well as evidence for the righteousness of their actions. This has created a reactionary response in the rest of the population who constantly refer to a more distant past, before the Muslim conquest of Persia, to counteract the focus on the Islamic values of the first group. Alinejad explains that when she was in high school— frustrated with the Islamic regime's distortion of the pre-Revolution history— she and her friends started a book club which turned into a rather innocent secret revolutionary group that produced political leaflets that were secretly distributed throughout the city. She writes about how they chose a name for their group:

> All revolutionary groups need a name, and we chose Faryad-e Kaveh (Call of Kaveh). We had created a special logo—in the shape of a man's mouth open wide as if he's shouting—with the words "Faryad-e Kaveh" coming out of his mouth. It was not a random choice. Kaveh, a legendary blacksmith and one of the most famous figures in Iranian mythology, became the rebel who led a national uprising […] against the despotic and ruthless foreign tyrant Zahak, then ruling Iran. Zahak was of Arab origin and had a snake growing out of each shoulder.

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[306] Shortly after the 1989 publication of *Women Without Men* in Iran, Shahrnush Parsipur was arrested and jailed for her portrayal of women's sexuality and the book became banned.

[307] Mehri Honarbin-Holliday, *Becoming Visible in Iran: Women in Contemporary Iranian Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 169.

> Kaveh is always invoked by Iranian nationalists, since the Islamic Republic promotes Arabic words and traditions.[308]

Alinejad repeats the sentiment about her own name. She was given the name "Masoumeh" (meaning innocent) at birth, after Fatemeh Masoumeh, who was the daughter of the seventh Twelver Shi'a Imam, and sister of the eighth one. She writes: "All my friends called me Massy rather than Masoumeh. It sounded modern and new."[309] Later she adopts the nickname Masih (meaning Messiah) after her fiancé tells her that should be her name, writing "I had never felt comfortable with Masoumeh. Somehow, Masih was more my style."[310]

In Iran, it is common for traditional and religious families to name their children after Imams and holy figures of Islam. There are limitations on what you can name your children that were more strictly followed right after the Revolution than now. Examples of what names are forbidden are those that are deemed to be pagan. My mother had to choose another name for my sister when her first choice—which meant Goddess of Tranquility in the Zoroastrian tradition— was denied by the Registry. She insisted on giving me and my sisters Persian names, rather than Arabic ones, going as far as choosing names that start with "P" for all three of us.[311] I remember that when I was in elementary school on special days students with certain names would get rewards. For example for the Iranian women's day which marks the birthday anniversary of Fatemeh, the prophet's daughter, all the female students who were named after her or one of her

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[308] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair,* 55-56.

[309] Ibid., 53.

[310] Ibid., 58.

[311] The letter P does not exist in the Arabic alphabet.

titles would receive a gift. Many of my friends had two names: A religious one on their birth certificate and a non-religious, often Persian nickname that their family and friends called them by. This is only a minuscule representation of the Iranian society's duality. By denying the national and cultural heritage of the Pre-Islamic Iran, the ruling class and traditionalists have created a divided culture where their opponents resort to the non-Islamic culture of Iran as a counteraction. It is fashionable among young people to replace Arabic loanwords with Persian ones that naturally sound outdated. There are translations of books into "pure" Persian language that any educated speaker of Persian would need a second translation of, to be able to understand. Thus, the Iranian regime's efforts to promote the Islamic culture and downplay pre-Islamic or pre-Revolution traditions has created a false dichotomy.

Alinejad writes of her visit to Medina in Saudi Arabia. She was modestly dressed and her hair was covered but she was not donning a chador[312]. An Iranian man admonishes her for bringing "shame on the Iranian delegation," telling her "Chador is our culture and you should put it on proudly." Alinejad responds that "Before the revolution, our culture was a lot more flexible," to which the man says "You are a secret royalist[313]—I should've known".[314] Unfortunately, this ideology that one can only obey the Islamic regime without any question or criticism, or one is a royalist and an enemy of the regime and the people has led to many horrors and tragedies, including imprisonment and execution of opponents of the regime. Alinejad herself was imprisoned for her

[312] A large piece of cloth that is wrapped around the head and upper body leaving only the face exposed.

[313] Those who advocate for the restoration of the constitutional monarchy in Iran, many of whom endorse Reza Pahlavi II, the son of Iran's last monarch.

[314] Alinejad, 175-176

political activities in high school when she was eighteen. She was released a few months later. Others have not been as lucky. The next section provides a discussion of time in classical phenomenology to establish a framework for understanding how the experience of time is linked with gender.

Time in Phenomenology

Time and temporality are essential features of experience and as such are central issues in phenomenological studies. Edmund Husserl distinguishes between an objective or physical time and the internal or lived experience of time he refers to as time-consciousness.[315] The latter is what a phenomenology of time is concerned with. Husserl argues that we experience time primarily as the present "now," which is different from the objective view of time as an empty container of discrete, atomistic "nows". He considers the now as conscious life's absolute point of orientation from which things appearing as past and future alter.[316] Time-consciousness consists, at a given time, of both *retentions* (acts of immediate memory of what has been perceived "just a moment ago"), *original impressions* (acts of awareness of what is perceived "right now"), and *protentions* (immediate anticipations of what will be perceived "in a moment"). Moments of time are continuously constituted (and reconstituted) as past, present and future, through the structures of retentions, original impressions and protentions.[317] Husserl's primary interest in time is to give an account of the perception of temporal objects. He writes:

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[315] Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1983-1917),* trans. John Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

[316] Husserl, *On the Phenomenology,* §§ 7, 14, 31, 33

[317] Ibid.

> Temporal objects — and this pertains to their essence— spread their matter over an extent of time, and such objects can become constituted only in acts that constitute the very differences belonging to time. But time-constituting acts are— essentially— acts that constitute the present and the past; they have the character of those "perceptions of temporal objects" that we have fully described with respect to their remarkable apprehension constitution. Temporal acts must be constituted in this way. That implies: an act claiming to give a temporal object itself must contain in itself "apprehensions of the now," "apprehensions of the past," and so on; specifically, as originally constituting apprehensions.[318]

Thus, Husserl argues, in the perception of a temporal object, consciousness must preserve the moments of the object in their appropriate temporal position. Heidegger develops Husserl's account and modifies what he sees as Husserl's overly cognitive assessment of the subject. He criticizes Husserl for limiting his theory of consciousness to the essential structures of consciousness that make the unified perception of an object occurring in successive moments possible, resulting in a subject divorced and isolated from the world. Heidegger shifts the focus from the retentional aspect of time-consciousness in Husserl to the protentional or futural side of the subject. For Heidegger, Dasein is being in the world, a being with goals and projects toward which it comports itself or toward which it stretches out. This stretching toward projects make Dasein "futural" in its intentional directedness toward the world. Dasein finds itself thrown into a world and a time and culture not of one's choosing, and projects itself in that world. William Blattner explains that there are three temporal dimensions characterizing Dasein: The past for Dasein is understood in terms of its thrownness into a world; the fact that it projects itself implies a "futurity" to its being; and, finally, Dasein's engagement with the world in order to project itself to fulfill the present tasks (which are

[318] Ibid., 41.

required by the goal that is its project) implies a presentness to its being.[319] Heidegger distinguishes between originary or authentic time understood as Dasein's way of being in the world from world-time and ordinary time.[320] World-time denotes the manner in which the world appears as significant to Dasein in its everyday reckoning with the world at a practical level through its projects, i.e., the time one's class starts, one's shift ends, etc. Heidegger writes:

> Time which has been interpreted has by its very nature the character of 'the time for something' or 'the wrong time for something'. (1) When concern makes present by awaiting and retaining, time is understood in relation to a "for-which"; (2) and this in turn is ultimately tied up with a "for-the-sake-of-which" of Dasein's potentiality-for-Being. With this "in-order-to" relation, the time which has been made public makes manifest that structure with which we have earlier (iii) become acquainted as *significance*, and which constitutes the worldhood of the world. As 'the time for something', the time which has been made public has essentially a world-character. Hence the time which makes itself public in the temporalizing of temporality is what we designate as "world-time".[321]

Ordinary-time is understood as a measurable succession of nows, seconds, minutes, etc. Ordinary-time lacks the significance associated with world-time in light of Dasein's projects as it is conceptualized as independent of human interests. In ordinary-time, time appears to Dasein as the mere succession of punctual, atomistic nows. This is the view that is often found in the mathematical and scientific perspectives on time. In contrast to the two kinds of time discussed above, originary temporality is a basic structure of Dasein's being: "The formally existential totality of Dasein's ontological structural whole must therefore be grasped in the following structure: the Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities

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[319] William Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[320] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 80.

[321] Ibid., 462.

encountered within-the-world). This Being fills in the signification of the term "care"…."[322] Heidegger describes the care structure as "Dasein's primordial totality of Being."[323] Heidegger's care structure exposes what is of interest or importance to Dasein; what Dasein is concerned with or cares about. Care is interpreted in terms of the three temporal dimensions: past (thrownness), future (projection), and present (fallenness). The "ahead-of-itself" expresses Dasein's comportment towards possibilities, or projection. The "being-already-in-the-world" points to the factual situation of Dasein as it is always thrown into a situation that is, is some sense, already there. Finally, "being-alongside-entities" is what Heidegger refers to as fallenness. He writes:

> In Being-ahead-of-oneself as Being towards one's own most potentiality-for-Being, lies the existential-ontological condition for the portability of Being-free for authentic existentiell possibilities. For the sake of its potentiality-for-Being, any Dasein is as it factically is. But to the extent that this Being towards its potentiality-for-Being is itself characterized by freedom, Dasein *can* comport itself towards its possibilities, even *unwillingly*; it *can* be inauthentically; and factically it is inauthentically, proximally and for the most part.[324]

This union of past, present and future as modes of originary-time in *Dasein's* being-in-the-world renders *Dasein* authentic—one with itself or its own—because the projection into the future makes the present and the past part of *Dasein's* project—its essence is its existence. However, insofar as I assume a project or life-orientation passively and without realizing myself as responsible for that project, argues Heidegger, I live inauthentically. And this is because I am engaged in the world without a full understanding of myself within the world. Put differently, rather than consciously make myself who I am through my choices, I passively assume a role within

[322] Ibid., 237.

[323] Ibid., 227.

[324] Ibid., 237.

society—hence the temptation to label Heidegger an existentialist, a label that he himself rejected.

Merleau-Ponty's account of time is an innovative synthesis of Husserl and Heidegger's understandings of time. He rejects classic approaches to time that treat it either as an objective property of things, as a psychological content, or as the product of transcendental consciousness. Instead he claims the "field of presence" to be our foundational experience of time: "Perception gives me a "field of presence" in the broad sense that it spreads out according to two dimensions: the dimension of here-there and the dimension of past-present-future. The second dimension clarifies the first. I "hold" or I "have" the distant object without explicitly positing the spatial perspective (apparent size and form), just as I "still hold in memory"."[325] The field of presence is a network of intentional relations, of "protentions" and "retentions" which anchor me in an environment thus making the present real. The three dimensions of time are not given through discreet acts. Rather, Merleau-Ponty explains the unity of time as follows:

> … each present reaffirms the presence of the entire past that it drives away, and anticipates the presence of the entire future or the "to-come", and […] by definition, the present is not locked within itself but transcends itself toward a future and toward a past. Thus, there is not one present and then another one that takes its place in being, nor is there even a present with some perspectives upon the past and upon the future followed by another present in which these perspectives would be overthrown, such that an identical spectator would be necessary to effect the synthesis of successive perspectives. Rather, there is a single time that confirms itself, that can bring nothing into existence without having already established it as present and as a past to come, and that establishes itself all at once.[326]

Time in this sense is "ultimate subjectivity", understood not as an eternal consciousness, but rather as the very act of temporalization: "We are not temporal

[325] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 277.

[326] Ibid., 444.

because we are spontaneous and because as consciousness, we tear ourselves away from ourselves; rather, we are temporal because time is the foundation and the measure of our spontaneity; and the power of passing beyond and of "nihilating," which inhabits us and that we in fact are, is itself given to us along with temporality and life."[327] As Françoise Dastur explains, the object of analysis of time for Merleau-Ponty is the embodied subject's simultaneous self-presence and presence to the world.[328]

As the above discussion shows, while temporality is a central theme in the works of classical phenomenologists, the relation between gender and temporality is not explored in these accounts. Moreover, the question of time has found less attention than the questions of body and space in the works of feminist phenomenologists. In what follows, I present further developments on the phenomenological foundations discussed above, that explore temporality as experienced by situated, and more specifically, gendered beings.

Gendered Experience of Lived Time

In "Sharing Time across Unshared Horizons," Gail Weiss examines the notion of time and its relation to the social, arguing against a harmonious understanding of "common time," and draws a different picture of the question of finding one's identity in time.[329] Weiss argues that real social, temporal, and spatial "barriers" exist between individuals and groups of different races, bodily capacities, and genders. For instance, she

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[327] Ibid., 451-452.

[328] Françoise Dastur, *Questions of Phenomenology: Language, Alterity, Temporality, Finitude*, trans.Robert Vallier (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 106.

[329] Gail Weiss, "Sharing Time across Unshared Horizons," in *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, eds. Christina Schües, Dorothea Olkowski and Helen Fielding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 171-188.

explains that since the presuppositions that govern the "world of working" for the able-bodied individuals are often inoperative or inapplicable in the world of disabled persons, the latter group is frequently excluded from the "common world" and their identities are stigmatized accordingly. Often society regards marginalized individuals, as Weiss points out with Rosemarie Garland Thomson, as "misfits" because they are born into the "wrong" race, gender, or body. These people who are socially and politically disenfranchised and oppressed, often find that the horizons of significance that structure the meaning of daily life for their oppressors are not salient for them.

With this diagnosis in mind, Weiss offers a critical analysis of different theoretical approaches for understanding identity. She argues that, depending on the philosophical position, different features of identity are emphasized, and accordingly different consequences for the individual ensue. For instance, identity can be seen as unified, multiple, or hybrid. It can also be understood as chosen by oneself, imposed by others, referred by a social class, and so on. Weiss claims that we must attend more carefully to the "invisible identities" that help to constitute an individual's self-understanding as well as other people's views of that individual because they are actually "just as salient for a given individual and her community" as her more visible attributes such as her race and gender.[330] Following Linda Alcoff, Weiss understands identities as interpretive horizons, which help us understand obstacles that often keep individuals from entering into "we-relationships" with one another: If an individual refuses the possibility of establishing a "we-relationship" with another person, this means not only that she is precluding the possibility of expanding her own interpretive horizons but also that she is depriving herself of the potential to establish new ways of experiencing time. By

[330] Gail Weiss, "Sharing Time," 180.

highlighting the temporal implications of forming or even refusing to form "we-relationships," Weiss seeks to deepen Alcoff's account of how identities are formed by shifting the focus to one of the most important yet less visible aspects of identity construction, namely, that identities are themselves products of time and can in turn transform how time is embodied and expressed.

Feminist theoretical reflections on time have a history including Simone de Beauvoir's work which provides one of the earliest accounts. Beauvoir sees the differential relation of the sexes to a 'temporal economy,' as the key to the constitution of woman as Other. In the chapter on history, she explores how women were originally constituted as the Other in contrast to men's ontological status as Subject. She emphasizes the reproductive aspects of feminine biology that is above all "dedicated to the sheer repetition of life,"[331] which locks woman within a continuous and cyclical time:

> On a biological level, a species maintains itself only by re-creating itself; but this creation is nothing but a repetition of the same Life in different forms. By transcending Life through Existence, man guarantees the repetition of Life: by this surpassing, he creates values that deny any value to pure repetition. […] in serving the species, the human male shapes the face of the earth, creates new instruments, invents and forges the future. Positing himself as sovereign, he encounters the complicity of woman herself: because she herself is also an existent, because transcendence also inhabits her and her project is not repetition but surpassing herself toward another future; she finds the confirmation of masculine claims in the core of her being. She participates with men in festivals that celebrate the success and victories of males. Her misfortune is to have been biologically destined to repeat Life, while in her own eyes Life in itself does not provide her reasons for being, and these reasons are more important than life itself.[332]

While immanence is defined as passive, internal, and centered on the maintenance of the species, transcendence is active, creative, projecting forward into the future. Every

[331] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 31.

[332] Ibid., 74.

human being is both immanent—insofar as they are a body— and transcendent—insofar as they go beyond themselves: "In truth, all human existence is transcendence and immanence at the same time; to go beyond itself, it must maintain itself; to thrust itself toward the future, it must integrate the past into itself".[333] Social norms, however, grant men transcendence and place women in positions of constant immanence. So, woman "is condemned to domestic labor, which locks her into repetition and immanence; day after day it repeats itself in identical form from century to century; it produces nothing new."[334] Women themselves recognize the values concretely attained by men and aspire to them. Men, however, "wanting to maintain masculine prerogatives" which enable them to subjugate both nature and women have created a feminine domain to "lock woman in it."[335]

Megan Burke explains that while immanence and transcendence, for Beauvoir, structure human temporality in general, this structure is divided by sexual difference in a way that "men and women are denied unmediated access to the whole structure of human temporality." Which means that according to Beauvoir, there is a critical difference in how women and men live these temporalities. Thus, while Beauvoir's account of temporality is similar to classical phenomenologists insofar as she understands temporality to "constitute the horizon of subjective experience and to structure one's being-in-the-world," her account makes a novel contribution to a phenomenology of time

[333] Ibid., 443.

[334] Ibid., 73.

[335] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 74.

by arguing that temporality is constitutive of "the particularity of becoming a woman."[336] Book II of *The Second Sex* provides an investigation of the education and development of woman from her childhood, through her adolescence and finally to sexual initiation and marriage. Using these analyses, Beauvoir demonstrates how women are forced to relinquish their claims to transcendence and authentic subjectivity in exchange for the "passive" and "alienated" role to man's "active" and "subjective" one.[337] Woman's passivity and alienation are then explored more in the sections titled "Situation" and "Justifications." Beauvoir studies the roles of wife, mother, and prostitute to show how women, instead of transcending through work and creativity, are forced into monotonous existences of having children, tending house and being the sexual receptacles of the male libido.

Beauvoir argues that there are three significant developmental events in the lives of women that constitute a rupture with the past: girlhood, (hetero)sexual initiation, and marriage. Burke explains that these ruptures in time "annex a woman into the universe of men," where she exists as a "relative existence."[338] Throughout her childhood, the future which is marked by her passivity is something the girl only imagines as she sees herself in the present as transcendence. But the future passivity moves closer once she enters puberty, as it "settles into her body".[339]

> … while the adolescent boy is actively routed toward adulthood, the girl looks forward to the opening of this new and unforeseeable period where the plot is

[336] Megan M. Burke, "Gender as Lived Time: Reading *The Second Sex* for a Feminist Phenomenology of Temporality," Hypatia 33, no. 1 (2018): 117.

[337] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 284-437.

[338] Burke, "Gender as Lived Time," 118.

[339] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 341.

> already hatched and toward which time is drawing her. As she is already detached from her childhood past, the present is for her only a transition; she sees no valid ends in it, only occupations. In a more or less disguised way, her youth is consumed by waiting. She is waiting for Man.[340]

Here, Beauvoir describes a "temporality of waiting" which is marked by a detachment from the past. The present is only a transitory state between the past—where she lived as a transcendence— and the future where she will live as immanence. This is a break from the traditional phenomenological understanding of temporality where the past, present and future exist in union.

Beauvoir refutes the claim that the adolescent girl resigns herself to a future of passivity because "physically and morally she has become inferior to boys and incapable of competing with them", which pushes her to hand over "the assurance of her happiness to a member of the superior caste."[341] Demonstrating that it is the society that forces the girl to surrender to the man, Beauvoir writes: "the adolescent girl does not consider herself responsible for her future; she judges it useless to demand much of herself since her lot in the end will not depend on her. Far from destining herself to man because she thinks she is inferior to him, it is because she is destined for him that, in accepting the idea of her inferiority, she constitutes it."[342] So while vocations of human being and male are not contradictory, for the young woman, "there is a divorce between her properly human condition and her feminine vocation". No longer an autonomous individual, the adolescent girl has to "renounce her sovereignty," which not only makes her torn between past and future, it causes a conflict "between her originary claim to be subject, activity,

[340] Ibid., 341.

[341] Ibid., 342.

[342] Ibid., 347.

and freedom, on the one hand and, on the other, her erotic tendencies and the social pressure to assume herself as a passive object."[343] The resolution to this conflict comes from the second developmental event, the (hetero)sexual initiation, that creates a rupture with the past.

Noting that any "passage" is distressing due to its "definitive and irreversible character," Beauvoir argues that sexual initiation amounts to a "breaking with the past without recourse," that creates "a hiatus between yesterday and tomorrow".[344] In this stage of the woman's life, Burke explains, the present is experienced as "a temporal isolation insofar as it is not a present that is bound to the past or future but is, instead, an interruption in the triadic structure of time. Consequently, she is hurled into the present as sexual prey. The temporal hiatus anchors a girl to the present, which is the experience of time that comes to characterize the temporal horizon of a woman."[345] Marriage, according to Beauvoir, is the final developmental event that turns the woman into absolute passivity, finalizing the conversion of lived time as an open structure to a closed one for her. The breaking with the past in marriage is done "more or less brutally" as the woman is "annexed to her husband's universe."[346]

> …for *man*, marriage provides the perfect synthesis of [transcendence and immanence]; in his work and political life, he finds change and progress, he experiences his dispersion through time and the universe; and when he tires of this wandering, he establishes a home, he settles down, he anchors himself in the world; in the evening he restores himself in the house, where his wife cares for the furniture and children and safeguards the past she keeps in store. But the wife has no other task save the one of maintaining and caring for life in its pure and

[343] Ibid., 348.

[344] Ibid., 391.

[345] Burke, "Gender as Lived Time," 118.

[346] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 442.

> identical generality; she perpetuates the immutable species, she ensures the even rhythm of the days and the permanence of the home she guards with locked doors; she is given no direct grasp on the future, nor on the universe; she goes beyond herself toward the group only through her husband as mouthpiece.[347]

As Burke points out this rupture is different from the previous ones as here "a woman exists in a very concrete way for a particular man" and "is incorporated into his time," which enforces her estrangement from her past and future as well as her "suspension in the present as a temporal limbo."[348]

It should be noted that Beauvoir has been criticized for her treatment of femininity in relation to immanence and transcendence and consequently freedom. These criticisms focus on a reading of Beauvoir that suggests the pattern of feminine dependence and confinement to the domestic sphere must end for women to express their freedom. As discussed before, freedom is understood through projecting oneself into the future through action or projecting oneself from the realm of immanence to transcendence. As Fredrika Scarth explains, the problem emerges when we consider that the categories of immanence and transcendence align with historical patterns of association of maleness with mind and femaleness with body. Scarth writes: "These patterns suggest that freedom is threatened by a feminine in-itself that is associated with the body."[349] This has caused many of Beauvoir's critics to charge her with asking women to be just like men, and even to accuse her of being masculinist or misogynist.[350]

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[347] Ibid., 443.

[348] Burke, "Gender as Lived Time," 118.

[349] Fredrika Scarth, *The Other Within: Ethics, Politics, and the Body in Simone de Beauvoir* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 5.

[350] See, for example, Margery Collins and Christine Pierce, "Holes and Slime: Sexism in Sartre's Psychoanalysis," in *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation*, eds. C Gould and

What these criticisms miss, however, is the fact that Beauvoir's description of female embodiment is inseparable from the patriarchal context, and as such, her descriptions should be read in the broader context of her rebuke of the social oppression of women. Beauvoir's concept of freedom is a concrete one that requires certain material conditions for its realization, which means that it can be denied by our social situation. Scarth explains that "there are social and economic situations that are so restrictive that they are experienced as natural, as given. Individuals in these situations are not only denied concrete opportunities to express their freedom, but in a sense their ontological freedom has also been denied."[351] Beauvoir's crucial argument in *The Second Sex* is that the experience of embodiment is intertwined with social and material conditions, such that it is not the same experience for men and women: "in patriarchal culture men are very easily able to identify their bodies with freedom and transcendence and that women are led, almost inevitably, to identify their own bodies with immanence."[352]

Women's Experience of Time in Muslim Societies

Despite the difference in context, there are commonalities between the experiences Beauvoir analyzes and those of women living in Muslim societies. Alinejad writes about contemplating a marriage proposal:

> All around me I had seen how my female relatives who had gotten married were confined to a life of cooking and cleaning and rearing children. I hated the idea of

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M. Warofsky (New York: Putnam, 1976); Karen Green, "Femininity and Transcendence," *Australian Feminist Studies* 10 (June 1989): 85-96; Susan Heckman, "Reconstituting the Subject: Feminism, Modernism and Postmodernism," *Hypatia* 6, no. 2 (1991): 44-63; Lisa Appignanesi, *Simone de Beauvoir* (London: Penguin, 1988); Kathy Ferguson, *Self, Society, and Womankind* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); and *Tina Chanter, Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[351] Scarth, *Other Within,* 7-8.

[352] Ibid., 8.

> being a traditional woman, submerging my identity into that of my husband. […] Reza was my only suitor, even if I refused to consider marriage. But I also realized that my alternative was a future of sitting at home […] waiting for someone to knock on [the] door. I hated to be so powerless.[353]

Alinejad points to a temporality that characterizes female existence. She associates the married life of a woman with chores she does not see as innovative, but confining, and as such is hesitant to accept the marriage offer of her suitor. At the same time, she realizes that as a woman her options are limited. She does not have the social power to forge her own future. Instead, she must live her life in "waiting" that can only end by marrying a man, even if that means the waiting will only be replaced by a confinement "to a life of cooking and cleaning and rearing children". She does not see these activities as creative ones that are informed by her own project, but rather functions that dissolve her identity into that of her husband, preventing her from living an autonomous and authentic existence. Alinejad does not see the keeping of house and raising of children as an authentic activity of her own, but one that means she will be only an addendum to her husband's identity. She realizes that whether she accepts the marriage proposal or not, her existence will remain a passivity. Alinejad's testimony points to an entanglement of gender, passivity, temporality and authentic existence that also emerges in Beauvoir's account. She argues that woman is confined in immanence, experiencing time as a cycle of repetitions: "She must ensure the monotonous repetition of life in its contingence and facticity: it is natural for her to repeat herself, to begin again, without ever inventing, to feel that time seems to be going around in circles without going anywhere; she is busy without ever doing anything"[354] Burke argues that

[353] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair,* 58-59.

[354] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 644.

in living the present over and over again, woman loses any autonomous claims to transcendence or freedom where the past and present tend toward one's future. She concludes that Beauvoir's account demonstrates that time "appears as and through gendered subjectivity" which means that "becoming a woman is not just a style realized in time, but is the realization of a certain temporal style."[355]

Alinejad recalls with bitterness how her father was relieved at passing her on to her husband as they approached her wedding ceremony: "My father and I often clashed over politics and my lifestyle, but that day over lunch we were both very happy. As a rebellious teenager, I was no different from thousands of other teenagers, but my father kept saying that after the wedding I wasn't going to be his problem anymore. And each time he laughed heartily at his own joke."[356] Beauvoir argues that the roles of husband and father are maintained through a masculine society, where women who are integrated into family groups— dominated by fathers and brothers— as slaves or vassals, are given in marriage to males by other males.[357]

Alinejad writes about the first time she got her period: "I was almost fourteen. I was hanging out with friends and had to run home to tell Mother. I was frightened and kept apologizing to her and wishing the bleeding would stop. She kept smiling, as if this was something to be happy about. Maybe she thought I was ready to be married off."[358] Here, Alinejad connects the experience of her first period, which marks her passage from childhood to adolescence, with the future she imagines for herself as a wife. She realizes

[355] Burke, "Gender as Lived Time," 119.

[356] Alinejad, 69.

[357] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 440.

[358] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair,* 34.

that she is getting closer to that fate. It is as if her own body is confirming that she is going to be ready to assume the role of a married woman, maintaining the house and giving birth to children, soon. There is a sense of bitterness in Alinejad's words when she realizes that her mother is not concerned, maybe even happy about the situation. It is as if she is feeling betrayed: her own mother being happy about the prospect of Alinejad being ready to assume the passive role of a wife soon.

Beauvoir's notion of passivity "settling into one's body," is an apt description for how Alinejad experiences reaching adolescence. She is rebelling against this fate, not wanting to live her present only as a "transitory state," but realizes, after the proposal, that the alternative would also lock her in a temporality of waiting. She sees around herself others who have already surrendered to their fate. She recalls a friend, Ayda, "who had a pretty smile and big brown eyes, [and] didn't study and rarely spoke in class. Ayda planned to get married soon after graduation and have lots of children".[359] These sentences are not a non-sequitur. Alinejad associates Ayda's indifference to her studies as a submission to her future fate. There is no point in taking the present seriously if one's future is already planned and is not going to change. One has to just wait out this transitory state. Later in her book, Alinejad writes about how once she accepts the marriage proposal, she herself surrenders to her future: "although at first I had started out loathing the idea of getting married, now I wanted to have my wedding reception so that I could be officially married and start a new phase of my life."[360] She talks about it with the detachment of wanting to get something over with, rather than being enthusiastic about future possibilities.

[359] Ibid., 53.

[360] Ibid., 68.

Alinejad writes about the kind of life she wanted to lead before starting her married life: "I didn't want to end up like [mother]. My life was just beginning […]. I wanted to experience it to the fullest, unbowed, unafraid, because I only had one life to live and wanted everyday to be a new adventure. […] Her days were predictable, while I wanted mine to be full of surprises."[361] After getting married and giving birth to her son, Pouyan, she realizes how far her life is from what she wanted: "I had become what I feared most—trapped in a vicious cycle of breast-feeding Pouyan and hand-washing his soiled diapers on top of cooking and cleaning and all the other household chores."[362] In this testimony another aspect of temporality as lived experience emerges. Alinejad describes her mother's life as "predictable" and wants her own to be "a new adventure" everyday. In seeking to avoid the kind of temporality that characterizes her mother's life— an endless repetition— she points to new adventures and surprises as her ideal way of living. In the discussion of Arendt's notion of time and its relation to freedom, we saw that she associates cyclical time with necessity and lived time, which is linear but discontinuous, with contingency and as a result the possibility of the new and freedom. Although Alinejad's testimonies align with what Beauvoir describes of the experience of lived time for women, they also point to a possibility that lies beyond those descriptions. Realizing her mother's experience as one that is representative of lives of many women, and at times herself, she nonetheless does not see this temporal structure as inevitable. In this way she goes beyond the testimonies discussed in Beauvoir's work by recognizing the way to break the cycle.

[361] Ibid., 78.

[362] Ibid., 127-128.

But what is it that enables Alinejad to see this way out and prevents her from simply surrendering to the pre-destined future of a woman? I believe the answer can be found in the way the past is invoked in contemporary Iran primarily as a political device to justify the present by the government and a reactionary response in the dissidents in denying Islamic history and calling upon a pre-Islamic or a pre-Revolution time. As discussed in chapter one, women's status was improving in the years prior to the revolution and women's participation in the revolution was extremely consequential. Many Iranian women now see the theocratic regime of Iran as not only an obstacle to their freedom and self-realization, but as a source of the enforcement of traditional gender roles which are justified by appealing to Islamic texts. A doubled closing of future time emerges in the experiences of some women: the political closing of the future time by constantly referring to a past on the one hand and the closing of the future time for feminine existence on the other. A more intense form of the phenomenon that Beauvoir describes, therefore, can be found in the experiences of some women living in Muslim theocratic societies such as Iran. There is a greater emphasis on the separation of private and public space, as well as the concept that the private is the primary domain of women, while the public is the primary domain of men, in these societies. As argued previously, freedom is the extent to which we can establish real, concrete actions and projects. It should be clear that occupying lower social and economic statuses, one of the causes of which for women is limited access to the public, hinders the actualization of one's freedom.

The coinciding of the political closing of the future time with the gendered closing of future time, however, also provides a way out of the repetitiveness of the

temporality of female existence. Consider the following testimony from Alinejad describing how she felt after her husband informed her that he wanted a divorce:

> I […] was confident I could look after myself. But that night I felt terribly weak and defenseless. I dreaded explaining the divorce to my parents, to my brothers and everyone else. Once again, I had notched another family first: The first woman in our family to be arrested, the first to be jailed, and the first to be pregnant before her wedding, I would now be the first in all of Ghomikola[363] to be divorced.[364]

Women are not supposed to be initiators. Alinejad is frightened that her family and the society will not look kindly on her transgressing the path that was set for her since childhood. A woman's life is supposed to be predictable: a cycle of repetitive work. Men are pioneers. They start traditions. Women are to follow traditions. But, even as these experiences are unpleasant and frightening for Alinejad, in breaking the cycle, they open up possibilities for actualizing her freedom. As Arendt argues new beginnings lead to the experience of freedom. Beauvoir describes the married woman, who has fully embodied the temporality characteristic of feminine existence as "lost in the middle of a world to which no aim calls her, abandoned in an icy present, [where] she discovers the boredom and blandness of pure facticity."[365] As discussed above, Beauvoir traces the source of this specific kind of lived time to three significant events in a woman's life (girlhood, sexual initiation, and marriage) that constitute ruptures with the past.

But the political invocation of the past in Iran has provided women with opportunities to exercise their freedom and go beyond the simple repetition of lived time. Alinejad is the first woman in her family to be jailed, and she is jailed due to her political

[363] A small village in northern Iran and Alinejad's hometown.

[364] Alinejad, *Wind in My Hair*, 134.

[365] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 487.

activities. Women were active participants in the Revolution: not just followers of men, but leaders, initiators. Many Iranian women exercise their political freedom on a daily basis through act such as defying the government by what they choose to wear and the places they occupy. A significant number of Iranian people, including a significant number of women, hope for a change in the government. Women voters are said to have played a crucial role in the election of Mohammad Khatami, Iran's first reformist president in 1997. As such, Iranian women are active participants in the political arena which shows a reaching out to the future despite the structures in place that tend to close off that future to women. Thus, while Beauvoir describes the temporality of female existence as a hiatus and an "icy present," without a future to aspire to, I argue that the specific political circumstances of Iran, beyond seeking to close the future, and perhaps even due to that, offer opportunities for breaking through this hiatus. Women are, according to Beauvoir, disconnected from their past. Through recourse to a "historical" past—although an abstracted and sometimes an imaginary one— many Iranians, however, have been able to reach out to a future that is denied to them otherwise. This possibility in the political sphere, I argue, has inspired different relations to time among Iranian women. A theme that appears in many of the interviews conducted by Honarbin-Holliday is an understanding of education as something that opens the future as opposed to marriage which closes it. An interviewee says:

> I was enjoying being a student when the Revolution happened, we had such a good time as students […] But the universities closed down in the name of a cultural revolution.[366] Luckily I had a fiancé and I got married. There was no serious work to speak of if you did not wear the chador, and with the economic

[366] In what is often called "the cultural revolution," in 1980-1983 Iranian universities were initially shut down and then went under extreme changes in order to be "purged of Western and non-Islamic influences." As a result, many books were banned and thousands of students and lecturers were forbidden from going back to the schools.

> situation the way it was, and the war, the best thing for me was to marry. It was a sad time for many young women who either lost their intended in the war, or never found someone. I was pregnant in the latter part of the war, 1985 […]. I always remind my daughter how lucky we are to have survived; I have told her I don't want anything from her other than being serious about education and not getting into trouble at university. […] In a way she is living the future I wanted for myself.[367]

The interviewee here sees the prospect of marriage as a welcome one in the absence of having access to education or employment. She talks about her decision to get married in a purely rational way, as the best option given the circumstances. Moreover, she recognizes that in wanting her child to continue her education— something that was taken away from her— she is living her ideal life vicariously through her child, which also indicates not giving up on the future. Another interviewee shares a similar sentiment with Honarbin-Holliday:

> My brother was killed in the war. After a year, to make some happiness in the family I married a distant relative before finishing secondary school. This has been the biggest mistake of my life. I am still happily married but I never had the chance to think about further education. A ninth grade certificate is nothing these days, not even to work in a nursery school. I will not make the same mistake with my children, whatever we have we will give for their schooling, as far as they can take themselves. [368]

This woman, too, laments not continuing her education, especially as it prevents her from having an occupation beyond her household and child-rearing duties. While there is no causal relation between getting married and discontinuing one's education (my own mother went back to school after the universities reopened), both of the above testimonies point to a connection between the two. The second interviewee says that she

[367] Mehri Honarbin-Holliday, *Becoming Visible in Iran: Women in Contemporary Iranian Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 169-170.

[368] Honarbin-Holliday, *Becoming Visible in Iran*, 170.

is “still happily married,” but never “had the chance to think about further education,” calling her early marriage “the biggest mistake of her life.”

In the chapter titled “The Mother,” Beauvoir argues that many mothers are “unfulfilled” women who have “no hold on the world or the future” and will try to compensate for their frustrations “through the child”.[369] She further explores the relationship of mothers with their sons and their daughters in turn. A son is a way for the mother to reach a world she does not have direct access to: “his mother will share in his immortality; the houses she did not build, the countries she did not explore, the books she did not read, he will give to her. Through him she will possess the world….” Some women, Beauvoir claims, are satisfied enough with their lives to want to “reincarnate themselves in a daughter” and to give her “the same chances they had, as well as those they did not have.” She further argues:

> Most women both claim and detest their feminine condition; they experience it in resentment. The disgust they feel for their sex could incite them to give their daughters a virile education: they are rarely generous enough to do so. Irritated at having given birth to a female, the mother accepts her with this ambiguous curse: “You will be a woman.” She hopes to redeem her inferiority by turning this person she considers a double into a superior being; and she also has a tendency to inflict on her the defect she has had to bear. At times she tries to impose exactly her own destiny on her child: “What was good enough for me is good enough for you; this is the way I was brought up, so you will share my lot.” And at times, by contrast, she fiercely forbids her to resemble her: she wants her own experience to be useful, it is a way to get even.[370]

In the testimonies above, the women obviously fall on the side of mothers who use their own experience to provide their daughters with conditions that would grant them an independent status they themselves were denied. It is perhaps the obsession with historical pasts in Iran that leads to Iranian women conceiving of freedom as something

[369] Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 556.

[370] Ibid., 560-562.

that can be achieved through generations, in the broader sense of political freedom as well as sexual equality.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the majority of the literature on the relation between women's rights and Islam in not responsive to the lived experiences of many women living in Muslim societies. I have undertaken a phenomenological study of Muslim women's lived experience of embodiment, space, and time to offer new insights regarding how specific aspects and practices of Islam and Muslim societies constitute these experiences. I chose phenomenology as the main framework of this project for its potential to describe concrete, lived human experience in its richness and complexity. As Islamic feminism seeks to provide concrete solutions to the problems faced by women in Muslim societies today, I argue it needs to show attentiveness to the experiences of these women. Following the works of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir, phenomenology operates on both the ontological and epistemological level to insist that all contact with the world occurs through a layer of living experience. Phenomenology attends to both what is being observed, the givenness of what is being observed, and the intentions of the one doing the observing while conditioned as being-in-the-world. I have specifically relied on the works of feminist and critical phenomenologists who maintain that being-in-the-world is not an abstract condition. Feminist phenomenology, for instance examines how sex and gender impact one's experiences and understandings of the world, and its social and political consequences.

Chapter two showed how some Islamic practices including veiling lead to experiences of alienation and inhibited intentionality in some women. I argued that the

attitudes toward female embodiment imply that a woman's body is an affliction, which means that she is a fundamentally deficient being, and it is this deficiency that must be concealed and covered through the practice of veiling.

By having to conform to oppressive treatments of their bodies, by having to live in a world that limits their actions and access and by having to associate with a past and ideals they feel disconnected from, many women (and men) living in Muslim countries are alienated from themselves. This has created a crisis of identity for many women living in Muslim countries. By confining itself to the framework of Islam, Islamic feminism fails to offer a liberating alternative to the dominant Islamic discourse and practices of gender and sexuality.

In chapter three, I discussed Muslim women's constant experience of ruptures in their lived experience of the world as they crossover from one space to another, specifically from private to public spaces, the latter often being accompanied by a feeling of not being-at-ease. Finally, chapter four presented an argument for a doubled closing of future time for some women living in Muslim societies through an examination of the past being invoked by Islamic theocratic societies as a way of justifying the present even as a different past is invoked by their dissidents, on the one hand, and the imposition of a rupture in time on female existence that closes the future on the other hand. These experiences point to fundamental power structures that perpetuate oppression in Muslim societies, and by not challenging these structures, Islamic feminism provides a merely reactionary response to the problem.

One of the biggest challenges of this project was to find testimonies from women living in Muslim societies. Many of these women are, for various reasons, hesitant to

appear critical of the practices that are endorsed by their communities and thus, rarely discuss their everyday experiences of such practices. It is also the case that the testimonies that exist, point to other aspects of experiences of women in Muslim societies that could be explored in future projects. An example of this would be the notions of honor, modesty, obligation and responsibility that appear in some of the testimonies reported in chapter two. Women have stated that they cover to prove their "modesty" and "honor" or to defend their husband's honor. They are also charged with "responsibility" over men's desires and consequently an "obligation" is imposed on them to cover themselves. These are among the structures of experience emerging in these testimonies that could be explored phenomenologically to further develop the account that is given in my project.

In the end, I can only hope that my work has started on the much important project of filling the gap in the discussions on women and Islam in relation to the experiences of women living in Muslim societies—in other words, the experiences of those who are the only ones in a position to provide insights about the what they undergo on a daily basis as they negotiate different aspects of their situation, including their gender, culture, religious beliefs, social norms, political and ethical values and so on.

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