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FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

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The Centrality of Veiling and Invisibility:
The Construction of the Muslim Woman Identity in
Contemporary Discourses and Media

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The Centrality of Veiling and Invisibility:

The Construction of the Muslim Woman Identity in Contemporary Discourses and Media

by Rubina Ramji

Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies of the University of Ottawa in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies

University of Ottawa
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The architecture of this work is rooted in the temporal. Every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time.

(Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*)

Look, a Negro...Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened...I could no longer laugh, because I already know where there were legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*...Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema...It was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person...I was responsible for my body, for my race, for my ancestors.

(Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*)

Abstract

This thesis investigates the "Muslim woman" as an ideological construct and what it has come to mean in both Eastern and Western thought. It examines the discourses within the historical, social and political context of Islamism, Orientalism and Feminism. This thesis explores the foundations and influences of Islamic images constructed by the West. It analyzes contemporary feminist thought in order to offer a survey of Islamic feminist approaches to the Islamic woman. There is a consistent, truncated, stereotypical image of Islam in general, and Muslim women specifically, which are overwhelmingly evidenced in popular films in America. In order to contextualize these images, this thesis offers suggestive evidence that these stereotypes are not just in films, but are perpetuated within Islamist discourse, substantiated by Orientalism and repeated by Feminist discourse.

Chapter One provides an overview of current relations between the West and the East to show how the image of Islam has come to be understood today. Although the role of Muslim women is generally ignored, it is important to understand how historical and current events have used religious rhetoric to demonize Islam as a religion, and Muslim men as terrorists and oppressors. The chapter examines how popular media produce and convey religious ideology, as they function as public sites for the articulation and discussion of meaning. I review the way recent events in North America have pervasively reinforced a stereotypical image of Muslim men and women. This investigation lays a foundation for understanding the persistence of Islamic stereotypes in American culture, media and film.

Chapter Two investigates how the veil has become the "unifying" symbol: a signifier that distinguishes Islam from the outside. It is unique as a symbol because it constantly tells the West to stay out of Islamic issues. My presentation of the rise of Islamist movements demonstrates how fundamentalism has created a universal Islamic code, which includes the female dress code. This code has created the concept of a universal Muslim woman, eliminating regional and cultural distinctions. I show how diverse geographic regions such as Morocco, Afghanistan and Egypt have evolved over time to produce this construct of the universally veiled Muslim woman: a totalizing image of absence, invisibility and silence.

Chapter Three provides an overview of Colonialism as a framework for the historical inclusion of the image of Islamic women and of the veil in Western thought. I demonstrate, by examining contemporary theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, how colonial discourse has created a socially constructed colonial subject of the Muslim male and female which is based on "difference." This chapter offers concrete representations of the colonial perception of Muslim women as commodities, objectified and stereotyped; it presents evidence, through the writings of Westerners about the Orient, about the "otherness" of Muslim women as well as their oppression at the hands of Muslim men. This notion is extended further through the analysis of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, who examines narratives of the West beginning in the nineteenth century, and shows how this broad, all-purpose narrative of colonial domination regards "other" cultures as being inferior in relation to European culture. Through these explorations, I show how the images and narratives produced by Westerners of the Muslim woman have played an integral role in Orientalizing the East.

This investigation also illustrates how the symbol of the veil has become for the West a sign of the continuing inferiority and barbarism of Islam. The veil has become "the" image of Islam, constantly arising, even when the discourse does not include the issue of women. Although many cultural markers could be utilized in order to understand Islam, the veil has risen in status to become the "sign" of "othering". Therefore "veiled" Islam is considered "other" because it remains separate from Westernization. At the end of this chapter, I demonstrate how the North American newspaper industry perpetuates the image of the Muslim woman as "veiled" and therefore oppressed by providing an examination of sample advertisements, articles and an extensive overview of articles written about Muslim women from 1993 to 1997 in major Canadian newspapers.

Chapter Four draws on current scholarship in the areas of religion, film and gender to demonstrate the importance of cinematic representations of the constructed Islamic woman and how they have been perpetuated within the discourses of Orientalism, Feminism and Islamism. No analysis of Hollywood cinema in regard to the portrayal of Muslim women has been conducted to date. By examining films and numerous movie guides, this chapter demonstrates the thorough research sampling done to illustrate how the Muslim woman is constantly depicted in American cinema as veiled, silent and invisible. My survey of American films affirms the assertion that Islamic women are made absent through the veil: they remain truncated stereotypes of invisibility.

The concluding chapter explores the voices of women writing from within the Islamic tradition who are interrogating the assumptions of the nationalist framework, and its compatibility with women's rights. It explores various eminent Islamic feminist scholars' approaches to the Muslim woman. Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, and Nawal El Saadawi

all claim that the veil is a major element of stereotyping, and that it is among the most visible signs of Islam women's oppression. By continuing this discourse about veiling/unveiling, these authors strengthen the colonial discourse, thus trapping Muslim women within these two reductionistic polarities. Chapter Five includes a section where Muslim women's voices are heard as a necessary aspect of the project because it seeks to speak for a community, and therefore there is a need to hear from a diverse group of Muslim women on their own views about their portrayal and its impact.

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Introduction

The catalyst that drove me to undertake this study came from, dare I say it, popular visual culture. I have been an avid reader of local and national newspapers, a television junkie and a Hollywood movie groupie. Access to such a plethora of media has led me to question where I, as a Muslim woman living in the West,[1] am positioned within this onslaught of dominant Western discourse. Searching through movie review guides and newspapers, I found that there were few images of Islamic women to be found: on one side was the erotic veiled dancer, and on the other side was the veiled silent woman in the background.

Caught between the Western definition of "Muslim woman" and the Islamic writers' definition, I find myself confronted by contradicting polarities from which to choose. Unable to relate to these ideologically constructed depictions or identities, I find myself searching for an alternative space within which to exist. This thesis demonstrates that in American cinema and popular media, Muslim women have little or no place whatsoever. They remain invisible, victims of their religion. They are portrayed as oppressed, suffering, objects for the male gaze at times, yet always silent.

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[1]I use the term *West* in a generalized manner, in order to represent the dominant values and culture which exists in a multiplicity of cultures considered *Western* ideologically. I realize that there is no homogenous culture of which to speak.

Structure of Argument

This thesis investigates the "Muslim woman" as an ideological construct and what it has come to mean in both Western and Eastern thought. There is a consistent, truncated, stereotypical image of Islam in general, and Muslim women specifically, which are overwhelmingly evidenced in popular films in America. In order to contextualize these images, this thesis offers suggestive evidence that these stereotypes are not just in films, but are perpetuated within Islamist discourse, substantiated by Orientalism and repeated by Feminist discourse.

An investigation of Islamist writings demonstrates why this truncated image of Islamic women exists. Islamists become the collaborators of the Islamic image that we find in media description and in popular films. Contemporary Islamic feminist thought argues, on the one hand, that Islamist movements have improved the condition of women while on the other hand, that Islam has, as a male dominated religion, oppressed its women. To place these contradictions into context, one has to examine the relationship between national identity and religious history, and the processes by which national and ethnic conflicts have led to a recovering and a rewriting of history. Islam's political assertion of its identity is often authenticated by the reclaiming of its history.[2] Many Islamists argue that by returning to the roots of Islam, they are able to capture the purity and vitality of Islam as it was in the beginning. But this pursuit of the past in search of identity is subject to interpretation, and puritanical interpretations have led to a revivalism in some Islamic

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[2]See L Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) for a history of Islamist politics. See also William Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) to understand the spread of Islamist ideology.

countries that has had very negative effects on their Muslim populations. Investigating the various discourses about change in the Islamic women's movements[3] allows us to further perceive the differing cultural implications and identities that are emerging within Islam today. These historical processes are not taking place in a socio-cultural vacuum. The Western world is very much involved. The assumption that identity formation for Muslim women worldwide is not only influenced by religion and socio-cultural context, but also by social, political and cultural institutions that are informed by colonialism and (mis)formed by Western ideology, finds its confirmation in such works as those of Edward Said.

A concrete window into the current "Western" ideological perspective on Muslim women is offered by the popular literature, visual art and visual media of the West, and more particularly, by American film. I explore the foundations and influences of Islamic images constructed by American film and popular media on women's Islamic identity in Middle Eastern societies. My preliminary research has confirmed the fact that often in the West, the construction of Islamic identity is gendered: male identities are linked to militaristic notions of masculinity while women are positioned in relation to men. I examine

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[3]It must be noted that many women in Middle Eastern countries have been active participants in nationalist movements and struggles for national independence. For example, in Egypt during the 1900s, "feminist discourse first emerged in the writings of women of privilege and education who lived in the secluded world of the urban harem. Some urban middle- and upper-class women began to contest the Islamic justification for their seclusion, hijab, and related controls over their lives. In 1892, Zainab Al Fawwaz protested in Al Nil magazine, 'We have not seen any of the divinely ordered systems of law, or any law from among the corpus of (Islamic) religious law ruling that woman is to be prohibited from involvement in the occupations of men'." See Margot Badran, "Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Egypt," in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed., Deniz Kandiyoti (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 203-204.

how North American popular media often portray the men as terrorist barbarians, and the women as victims of this barbarity.

Feminist writers are aware of the historical context of the lives of Muslim women; they recognized the weight of colonization, and the ambiguous position of Muslim women in national and international politics. Yet they seem to adopt some of the very stereotypes they denounce. For instance, while they know that Western discourse has influenced many of the derogatory meanings of the veil, they all continue the Western narrative by arguing the need for its removal.

My hypothesis is that Islamism, Orientalism and Feminism continue to sustain voyeuristic contexts in which the idea of Muslim women is constructed and debated. Because these spaces continue to alienate one another, they enforce distancing through contradictions, such that Muslim women, if unable to resolve these contradictions, are left with no space for self affirmation. These constructions, at their most fundamental and absolute, essentialize and reduce the Muslim woman to symbols, leaving her silenced and unknowable. She is in "occultation,"[4] hidden and absent. What emerges from this construction is the stereotypical image of the Muslim woman, veiled and silenced, found consistently in North American news media and American film.

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[4]Occultation conceals: Muslim women, by being in occultation, never acquire identity or even gender. She bears witness, but is beyond reality. The phenomenon of occultation exists in Islam, where the Mahdi is concealed because it is a divine affair, therefore it is a divine concealment. It is based on wisdom. A true believer does not question wisdom with reason. The Mahdi isolates himself from the people, suffering hardship, in order to help the people return to the right path of Allah. Just as the Mahdi suffers in isolation for the good of Islam, so does the invisible, veiled Muslim woman isolate herself for Islam.

By examining the available discourses within the historical, social, and political contexts of Islamism, Orientalism and Feminism, I intend to demonstrate how similar images are utilized by these polarized discourses to construct the meaning of "Muslim woman." This current investigation illustrates that these discourses have perpetuated a construction of the Muslim woman which has then been transferred to American cinema. Thus, by comparing the ways in which Muslim societies have been portrayed by the West in the past and in the present , and by some modern Islamic discourses about women, this thesis explores key premises of the discourses used in building an Islamic identity for Muslim women living in the West.

Chapter One provides an overview of current relations between the West and the East to show how the image of Islam has come to be understood today. Although the role of Muslim women is generally ignored, it is important to understand how historical and current events have used religious rhetoric to demonize Islam as a religion, and Muslim men as terrorists and oppressors. The chapter examines how popular media produce and convey religious ideology, as they function as public sites for the articulation and discussion of meaning.[5] I review the way recent events in North America have pervasively reinforced a stereotypical image of Muslim men and women. This investigation lays a foundation for understanding the persistence of Islamic stereotypes in American culture, media and film.

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[5]Kelton Cobb, "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Culture in Tillich's Theology of Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXIII, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 53-84.

Within this narrative, women come to play a central role: they become the visible markers of difference between the East and the West. As the West has come to focus on women as markers of difference, so has Islam. With the reorthodoxification of Islam, Chapter Two investigates how the veil has become the "unifying" symbol: a signifier that distinguishes Islam from the outside. The veil can also be seen as a panopticon[6]: a way for Islam to see out, while keeping outsiders from looking within. It is unique as a symbol because it constantly tells the West to stay out of Islamic issues. My presentation of the rise of Islamist movements demonstrates how fundamentalism has created a universal Islamic code, which includes the female dress code. This code has created the concept of a universal Muslim woman, eliminating regional and cultural distinctions. I show how diverse geographic regions such as Morocco, Afghanistan and Egypt have evolved over time to produce this construct of the universally veiled Muslim woman: a totalizing image of absence, invisibility and silence.

Chapter Three provides an overview of Colonialism as a framework for the historical inclusion of the image of Islamic women and of the veil in Western thought. I demonstrate, by examining contemporary theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, how colonial discourse has created a socially constructed colonial subject of the Muslim male and female which is based on "difference." For instance, focusing on the work of Malek Alloula, this investigation establishes the Western preoccupation with the veiled female body of

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[6]As cited in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Foucault focused on a prison model called the Panopticon, literally meaning 'that which sees all'. The Penopticon prison was popular in the nineteenth century. It was designed to let guards see their prisoners, but never allowed prisoners to see the guards.

Muslim women in Algeria. This chapter offers concrete representations of the colonial perception of Muslim women as commodities, objectified and stereotyped; it presents evidence, through the writings of Westerners about the Orient, about the "otherness" of Muslim women as well as their oppression at the hands of Muslim men. This notion is extended further through the analysis of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, who examines narratives of the West beginning in the nineteenth century, and shows how this broad, all-purpose narrative of colonial domination regards "other" cultures as being inferior in relation to European culture. Through these explorations, I show how the images and narratives produced by Westerners of the Muslim woman have played an integral role in Orientalizing the East.

This investigation also illustrates how the symbol of the veil has become for the West a sign of the continuing inferiority and barbarism of Islam. Although this discourse began with written narratives in the 1800s, it has since continued in force through images: especially images seen in newspapers, television and mainstream film. The veil has become "the" image of Islam, constantly arising, even when the discourse does not include the issue of women. Thus, the image of the veil has become the "poster child" in continuing the negative image of Islam by the West. Although many cultural markers could be utilized in order to understand Islam, the veil has risen in status to become the "sign" of "othering". Therefore "veiled" Islam is considered "other" because it remains separate from Westernization. At the end of this chapter, I demonstrate how North American newspaper industry perpetuates the image of the Muslim woman as "veiled" and therefore oppressed by providing an examination of sample advertisements, articles and an

extensive overview of articles written about Muslim women from 1993 to 1997 in major Canadian newspapers.

Chapter Four draws on current scholarship in the areas of religion, film and gender to demonstrate the importance of cinematic representations of the constructed Islamic woman and how they have been perpetuated within the discourses of Orientalism, Feminism and Islamism. Jack G. Shaheen has done extensive research on American cinema to document how Arabs and Muslims have become considered the uncivilized enemy that terrorizes the civilized West. He examines how and why this stereotype has grown within the film industry. Although Shaheen lays a foundation for understanding the stereotypes of Arab Muslim men, within this survey Shaheen does not investigate or substantiate the depiction of Muslim women in American film. No analysis of Hollywood cinema in regard to the portrayal of Muslim women has been conducted to date. By examining films and numerous movie guides, this chapter demonstrates the thorough research sampling done to illustrate how the Muslim woman is constantly depicted in American cinema as veiled, silent and invisible. I have selected from my sample movies that have portrayed Muslim women in them since the 1990s as well as Blockbuster films that continue the stereotypical depiction of Muslims as terrorists, barbarians, and oppressors. My survey of American films affirms the assertion that Islamic women are made absent through the veil: they remain truncated stereotypes of invisibility. Although my investigation focuses on American cinema, ninety-seven percent of films viewed in

Canada are foreign, and Hollywood films entertain the widest audience.[7] Therefore Hollywood films have a large impact on Canadian ideology and ethics.

Chapter Five explores the voices of women writing from within the Islamic tradition who are interrogating the assumptions of the nationalist framework, and its compatibility with women's rights. Many Islamic feminist writers see political power as a strength to end oppression within their cultures. It explores various eminent Islamic feminist scholars' approaches to the Muslim woman. Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, and Nawal El Saadawi all claim that the veil is a major element of stereotyping, and that it is among the most visible signs of Islamic women's oppression. By continuing this discourse about veiling/unveiling, these authors strengthen the colonial discourse, thus trapping Muslim women within these two reductionistic polarities. The chapter also illustrates how the image of Islamic women in diverse geographic, cultural and ethnic regions have evolved to manufacture a notion of this construct. Chapter Five includes a section where Muslim women's voices are heard as a necessary aspect of the project because it seeks to speak for a community, and therefore there is a need to hear from a diverse group of Muslim women on their own views about their portrayal and its impact.

Methodology

This research is located within the field of Women's Studies. Though it seeks to critique prominent feminist writers, it remains primarily informed by feminist thought. It incorporates scholarship occurring in several other disciplines, including Islamic studies

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[7]"Canada at the Movies," *Canada and the World Backgrounder* 60, no. 4 (1995). Source: http://www.epnet.com/cgi-bin/epwlu...ecs=10/reccount=18/startrec=1/ft=1.

and film studies. The discourse of Orientalist theory is used to argue how the construction of the Muslim woman has been created by the East and the West. My analysis of the history of the Orientalizing discourse draws upon a review of the relevant literature. My analysis of film and popular media content make use of these growing disciplines, in particular of their understanding of nationalism, gender and identity formation. I focus on such theoretical frameworks as to address the issues of racial and gender differences. Pertinent historical developments are introduced. I draw on principles derived from psychoanalytic theory to explore notions of "otherness" in American film and media.

Textual as well as visual works are important because they shape the cultures that produce them. They give us access through these communications of the values and ideas that these communities experience and thus define themselves. Margaret Miles asserts that these values and feelings play an integral part in understanding the life and worship of people.[8] Although these images may reflect fantasies and ideals, they offer a social reality in which these constructions were created, and help further understand the literary works of the time. Popular culture generates and disseminates religious ideology within contemporary society. Margaret Miles invites religious studies scholars to address the representation of gender in film because human relationships are the basis for religious thought.

Islamic feminist thought has incorporated the narratives and images of Islam and gender to express morals and beliefs. It has allowed individuals to derive meaning from these visual and literary products. Their works of feminist theories display how the

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[8]Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

relationships between identity, nationalism and imperialism interact and construct. I use qualitative and quantitative content analysis to supplement each other.

Qualitative content analysis is used to examine the writings of both Islamists and Islamic feminist writers, in order to better understand the significance of assertions. Qualitative content analysis can be defined as "the drawing of inferences on the basis of appearance or nonappearance of attributes in messages."[9] This form of analysis draws more accurate inferences from studies than quantitative techniques. It "often yields better clues to the particular intentions of a particular speaker at one moment in time than more standardized techniques.[10] Also, this form of analysis is important in that it permits the author's own language to be used within the investigation.

Quantitative content analysis on the corpus of images selected from historical and current documents[11] is used in order to highlight the qualitative aspects of the texts being analyzed. Because of the large volume of potentially useful material to be examined, this methodology allows me to focus on a representative sample of the many forms of communication (films, travel logs, newspapers, magazines, literature) that provide relevant data to this research. Findings from this representative sample allow inferences to be made about the larger macrocosm from which it was selected.[12] The principle

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[9]Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading: Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), p. 11.

[10]Ibid., p. 11.

[11]These documents are not limited to the printed page but include all forms of media wherein an image can be conveyed.

[12]Ole R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading: Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969).

methodological theme of this investigation is film. As previously mentioned, an analysis of American film regarding the image of the Muslim woman has not be done before. This thesis takes its samples from film viewing, various movie guides, the extensive work of Jack G. Shaheen, and the use of the internet in order to create a research sampling of American films that focus on Islam, Muslim men and Muslim women in the 1990s. Other forms of popular media are examined in order to demonstrate the assertion that current American film portrays Islamic men as barbaric terrorists and Muslim women as always veiled and oppressed.

Chapter One

Current Relations Between the West and the East

The tragic events that occurred on September 11, 2001 with the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington have been used as confirmation regarding one of America's strongest fears: militant Islamic fundamentalists were poised to become the next most serious threat to Western interests, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war.

Although fundamentalists of any religious affiliation can threaten both individual well-being and national security, North America displays a special fear[13] of Muslims which, according to Richard Payne, may be rooted in historical experiences with, and cultural and geographic distance from, countries in which Islam predominates.

The American Muslim Council conducted a national poll in 1993 and found that out of those surveyed, 43 percent of Americans regarded Muslims as religious fanatics, while only 24 percent disagreed with this image.[14] Many Americans appear to base their views of Arab Muslims on their country's religious identity. Although the United States claims to

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[13]Mark Leonard, "Winning the Peace," *The Observer* (March 2, 2003). Source: http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,905651,00.html. Mark Leonard is the Director of the Foreign Policy Centre in the United Kingdom.

[14]Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 97. Perjorative stereotypes of Muslims in the United States have been documented in various other sources. See See Yvone Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Mehdi Bozorgmehr, Claudia Der-Martirosian, and Georges Sabagh, "Middle Easterners: A New Kind of Immigrants", In *Ethnic Los Angeles*, eds., R. Waldinger and M. Bozorgmehr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996); and, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, and John L. Esposito, *Muslims on the Americanization Path?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

be generally tolerant of different religions, an extensive number of Americans still believe that the Islamic religion, particularly Islamic fundamentalism, poses a threat to American interests and cultural values.

Muslims constitute nearly a quarter of the world's people[15]. They comprise a majority of the population in 44 countries and over 435 million live in the Commonwealth. Yet, this vast and varied group is often viewed by the rest of the world as a standardized, homogenous mass.[16] Unfortunately, the media tends to represent *all* Muslims as Islamic fundamentalists.[17] There are many modern cultural factors that come into play when looking at the gap that separates North America and the Middle East. The news media and the political discourses are among the most important.

The terrorist activities (plane hijackings, suicide bombings) carried out by some Palestinians against Israel in the 1970's in reaction to Israel's control over the West Bank and Gaza as a result of the Six Day War in 1967 put the Middle East into the limelight. The Arab oil embargo of the early 1970's, the Iranian Revolution[18] of 1979, the hostage taking

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[15]L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Although the Middle East is approximately 90 percent Muslim, it represents a little more than one-third of the world's Muslim population. The first four biggest Muslim states, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India, are all situated outside of the Middle East.

[16]Mark Leonard states that the stereotypes that have driven policy have largely been based on the myth that the Islamic world is one single polity. As noted in Mark Leonard, "Winning the Peace," *The Observer* (March 2, 2003). Source: http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,905651,00.html.

[17]See Appendix 5, figure 17: "Threats" for a representation of how Muslim women play a role in this fundamentalism. This image is representative of many other images that started emerging in North American media during the Iranian revolution.

[18]During the Iranian Revolution in 1979 against the government of Reza Muhammed Shah, American and British embassies were attacked, people burned

of 52 Americans at the US Embassy in Tehran for 444 days by Khomeini heightened North America's awareness of Arabs and Islam and helped to breed hostility toward, and a sense of dependence on, people to whom many Americans cannot relate to culturally. When Salman Rushdie published his book *The Satanic Verses* in September 1988, awareness of Islam became prominent again. Some Muslim fundamentalists viewed the novel as a blasphemous parody of the Prophet Mohammed. The book was banned by the Indian government on October 5th, 1988 and by December there were worldwide demonstrations to protest the book. On February 14, 1989 the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa[19], or judicial decree, sentencing Rushdie to death for the blasphemy. He also placed a bounty of $1.5 million on Rushdie, causing Rushdie to go into hiding under the protection of the British government. Such actions in the Western world were seen as barbaric and abhorrent, causing many British and North American writers to speak out on behalf of Salman Rushdie. The coverage of such events illustrates how these representations have

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American flags and chanted "Death to American Imperialism" in the streets. It was also the first time North Americans saw women in black garb marching through the streets carrying rifles in the name of Islam.

[19]Generally a fatwa is considered revoked when the religious authority who proclaimed it dies. After Ayatollah Khomeini died shortly after passing the fatwa, an Iranian foundation offered $2.5 million to whoever carried out the edict. In September 1998, the Iranian government stated that it had no intention to carry out any action to threaten the life of Salman Rushdie. There are still Ayatollahs in Iran who serve on the Assembly of Experts who state that the fatwa is irrevocable and is still in force. See William Samii, "Iran: Rescinding Fatwa Against Rushdie Questioned-An Analysis," *Radio Free Europe* (September 30, 1998).
Source: http://www.rferl.nca/features/1998/09/F.RU.980930131025.html;
and, Barbara Crossette, "Iran Drops Rushdie Death Threat, and Britain Renews Teheran Ties," *New York Times on the Web* (September 25, 1998).
Source: http://www.ishipress.com/fatwa.htm

created a feeling of separateness of cultures in the Western world from Muslims and Islamic culture.

The Gulf War in 1990 was not only a defining moment in history, but it also reaffirmed America's beliefs and values. George Bush Sr., in his state of the union address, claimed that "for two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring example of freedom and democracy."[20] The overwhelming destruction of Iraq was seen as a symbol of good prevailing over evil, and as a reaffirmation of America's perception of itself as a redeemer nation.

The culture of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden have advanced the confrontation with American-led "coalition of allies." Although Hussein was sure to be defeated in the Gulf war, he refused to lose face by giving in to demands made by America. Several journalists noted that North America's "lack of familiarity with the Middle East, and the general perception of Iraq as synonymous with Hussein, effectively prevented the development of empathy for ordinary Iraqis."[21] Moreover, Hussein's actions furthered Bush's efforts to demonize him and portray the conflict as a struggle between good and evil. Hussein was easily perceived as the perfect enemy in American culture. He was regarded by many as a ruthless and dangerous dictator, who threatened to utilize chemical weapons for his own barbaric goals.

Although Bush Sr. accused Hussein of trying to portray the battle as a religious war, he himself kept the notion of religious war very much alive. He publicly stated that

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[20]George Bush, "State of the Union Address, January 19, 1991," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 2: 5 (February 4, 1991), p. 65.

[21]Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 95.

Operation Desert Storm had "everything to do with what religion embodies--good versus evil, right versus wrong, human dignity and freedom versus tyranny and oppression. The war in the Gulf is not a Christian war, a Jewish war, or a Muslim war--it is a Just War."[22] The concept of a just war is firmly established in Western culture. Many Americans seem to think that religious rhetoric is not deemed fanatical when it is done by Americans, though it is associated to fanaticism when used by Muslims nations. George Bush Sr. utilized the imagery of civil religion of Americans as the "chosen people" to legitimate the US involvement in the war against Iraq. He applauded a group of Christian radio and television station officials for their coverage of the war by stating "I want to thank you for helping America, as Christ ordained, to be the light unto the world."[23]

Using a form of 'semiotic warfare', both Bush and Hussein repeatedly summoned the assistance of God and stressed the centrality of religion to the conflict. Bush Sr., whether he truly believed what he proclaimed, was evidently aware of the strength civil religion[24] had in American culture, the belief that America was "God's vehicle for realizing a millenarian utopia."[25] Across the United States, "the mood was that of a nation at prayer".

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[22]George Bush, as cited in Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 118.

[23]Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 194.

[24]"American civil religion has historically been used to legitimate intolerance," as cited in Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 195. The civil religion of the United States creates legitimizing myths, which people use to justify their values, actions and identities.

[25]Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 194.

It is important to note that the night the war began, Dr. Billy Graham was in attendance at the White House with President Bush Sr. It was Graham who spoke of the importance of the American nation 'turning to God as a people of faith' in order to win the war.[26]

As Bush Sr. summoned God for assistance to fight the just war, Hussein, in turn, used prayer to control the way the public responded to the war. He invoked the power of God by stating that "the great divine reinforcement" was the source of Iraq's strength and effectiveness. Hussein also claimed that God's blessing had been bestowed upon Iraq and the 'Arab nation', and that the land was deemed by the grace of God to act as the "cradle of divine messages and prophecy throughout the ages." Having Americans and allied coalition forces in Saudi Arabia was interpreted culturally as an affront against God, an attack upon Mecca and the tomb of the Prophet Mohammed by the "spears of the foreigner."[27] Both Bush Sr. and Hussein remained aware of their cultural roots in their separate war efforts, and utilized the power of religion to mobilize popular support in this cultural confrontation.

The media played a large role in controlling the information allowed to Western countries and their allies (keeping in mind that 65 percent of all the world's news emanates from America).[28] A large portion of less negative information was kept off American

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[26]Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 120.

[27]Ibid., p. 121. The quotation marks are those of the author, but the entire address by Saddam Hussein can be found in *The New York Times*. See "Address by Saddam Hussein to His Citizens," *The New York Times*, (February 27, 1991), p. A8.

[28] Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner, and Herbert Schiller, eds., *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf - A Global Perspective* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992).

television, which affected the way North America saw the war and the so-called "enemy."

Issues arose regarding the Western domination of news coverage in the Gulf in other countries covering the war. In India, some journalists voiced specific concerns about the nature of the material emanating from Western media about the almost exclusive pro-war news coverage from US news agencies and syndicated services. They argued that technologies of death were romanticized by the use of such terms such as 'precision bombing', 'surgical strike', and 'smart bombs' which were dehumanizing and desensitizing; there was a lack of context to the war, rather than a historical understanding of the events leading up to it (Indian publications had noted Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against Iran for five years while Western, primarily US, media were playing that down); the coverage included the malicious demonization of Arabs and Muslims in general and Iraqis in particular; and, Western media often used double standards regarding the use of sanctions: the fact was that twelve resolutions on Iraq led to the war, while hundreds of resolutions on the Arab territories occupied illegally by Israel often went disregarded.[29] Many journalists were appalled by the rampant racism running through the coverage, but this reporting continued in the news more or less unquestioned.

Although President Bush Sr. was quick to use brute force against Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait to a rapid and decisive end, the need for external support to end the atrocity of genocide in Bosnia-Hercegovina carried out by the Serbs against the

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[29]P. Sainath, "The New World *Odour*: The Indian Experience," in *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf - A Global Perspective*, eds., Hamid Mowlana, George Gerbner, and Herbert Schiller (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), p. 72. See also Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) for discussion about news media descriptions of American involvement in the war.

Muslims, received what could be considered by the Islamic communities a meek response, a consequence easily based on the West's lack of economic and cultural ties to the Balkans. US policy declined having any American military involvement in the Bosnian conflict, and chose not to position American troops in Bosnia or execute any air strikes during the presidency of George Bush Sr. By not negotiating or accepting compromises that could have led to a timely diplomatic settlement, although rewarding Serbian interests, the United States displayed its acquiescence to the violence being carried out.[30]

The cultural distance between Bosnia, especially its Muslim population, and the United States played a major role in the way the war was described in Western media. Culturally, Croatia considers itself the most related to Western Europe and the United States, while Serbian identity is historically tied to Eastern Orthodoxy. Muslim-controlled Bosnia is the most foreign and alien. "The Serbs traditionally saw themselves as a vanguard in the historic fight against Islam, the guardian of Europe's eastern gates against the invading Turks."[31] The Croats identify themselves with Rome in the west, instead of Constantinople in the east. The Croats are the most integrated into European civilization. The Serbs have identified with Eastern Orthodox countries such as Greece and Russia, and the Muslims, though European and Slavic, are perceived to be associated with Middle Eastern civilization.[32] "Both the Serbs and the Croats look down on Bosnian Muslims as

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[30]Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[31]Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 201.

[32]Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

traitors and collaborators - Slavs who converted to Islam during the long Ottoman occupation centuries ago."[33]

News story analyses about the Bosnian conflict illustrate an immense significance placed on the cultural, if not geographical, closeness between the Croats and Western civilization. Croats were characterized as "Catholic, westernized, technologically advanced and sophisticated, and practicing western-style democracy." The Serbs, on the other hand, were routinely categorized as "Eastern Orthodox, Byzantine, and 'primitive remnants of the Ottoman empire'."[34] Although the Serbs could be considered separate from European civilization, the Muslims, on the other hand, remain completely outside of the West's cultural domain, therefore alien and 'other'.

Taking into consideration the United States' vast military power and its victory in Operation Desert Storm, leading American scholars and foreign policy experts, including many Muslims, have come to the conclusion that "religious differences" have facilitated the predominately apathetic Western approach towards Bosnia. Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University observed that "relatively little Western concern was expressed over Croatian attacks on Muslims and participation in the dismemberment of Bosnia-Hercegovina."[35] Likewise, Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State in the Carter

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[33]Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), p. 201.

[34]Richard Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interests, and Force in American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 168.

[35]Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs*, 72: 3 (Summer 1993), p. 37.

administration and advisor to then presidential candidate Bill Clinton,[36] proclaimed that "if the situation were reversed and the Christians and Jews were being attacked in Bosnia, there would be a lot more (Western) concern."[37]

The perception of Islam as a major threat to the United States and the West in the post-cold war period, and the assumption that Islam is essentially inconsistent with democracy and other Western values has come to be seen as a determining factor in the way Western countries shape their policies.

Muslim extremist attacks on the United States, such as the bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York in 1993, and increased "terrorist" attacks against Israel and other pro-Western states by Islamic groups opposed to the American based process of peace in the Middle East, as well as international Islamic support for Bosnian Muslims, have increased official American concerns about radical Islamic fundamentalism and lent more credibility to the belief that there truly is an Islamic conspiracy theory. For example, the Oklahoma bombing resulted in Arab-owned businesses being targeted for attack, and police investigated various middle-eastern individuals, only to find out that those responsible were in fact right-wing American citizens.

Following the Oklahoma bombing, Wolf Blitzer from CNN and CBS anchor Connie Chung were quick to accuse the Arabs "because most other attacks against Americans

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[36]Bill Clinton, in his 1992 presidential campaign in the United States, declared that his administration would be open to, and would support, a United Nations relief effort in the former Yugoslav republic.

[37]Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), p. 83.

came from the Middle East."[38] TV newscasters informed the public that the FBI were seeking three males, two who were Middle Eastern with dark hair and beards.[39] Due to these false accusations, there were 227 reported incidents of hostility towards Arabs and Muslims across the United States.[40]

Unfortunately the destruction of the World Trade Centre and attacks in Washington in 2001 have only lent confirmation to the idea that Islamic fundamentalism is indeed a large conspiracy. After the tragedies in New York and Washington in 2001, President George W. Bush Jr. warned Americans that they faced a long, hard struggle against their enemies, but promised that the country would not stand alone this time. He promised to "rally the world. We will be patient. We will be focused, and we will be steadfast in our determination. This battle will take time and resolve, but make no mistake, we will win."[41]

The enemy was ambiguously defined at first, with the famous choice of the motto "crusade against evil," until Bush Jr. made public statements about the fact that the U.S.

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[38]A.M. Rosenthal, New York Times columnist, as quoted in Terry Allen, "Professional Arab-Bashing," *Covert Action Quarterly*, 53 (Summer 1995), p. 20.

[39]Howard Rosenberg, "Negative Stereotyping Distorts Arab's Image," *Los Angeles Times* (July 30, 2001).
Source: http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/prindedition/calendar/la-000061889jul30.column?col=la%2Dheadlines%2Dcalendar.

[40]Terry Allen, "Professional Arab-Bashing," *Covert Action Quarterly*, 53 (Summer 1995), p. 21. In 1997, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (Washington, DC) reported 280 anti-Muslim incidents of violence, discrimination , stereotyping, bias and harassment in the United States for the whole year. This is a very low number considering there were 227 reported incidents of hostility against Arabs and Muslims right after the Oklahoma bombing.

[41]Julian Borger, Richard Norton-Taylor, Ewen MacAskill, and Ian Black, "US Rallies the West for Attack on Afghanistan," *The Guardian* (Thursday September 13, 2001). Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,1300,551079,00.html.

was not at war with Islam; therefore indicating that the notion of religion was still alive. In fact, leaders of the estimated 3.5 million Arab Americans in the United States warned members of their community "against wearing distinctively Islamic dress in public until the wave of anger against American Arabs and other Muslims"[42] in the wake of the attack on September 11, 2001 had died down. The Human Rights Watch noted that the federal government of the United States reported 481 anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2001, 17 times higher than the year before. Also, more than 2000 cases of harassment were reported to Arab and Muslim organizations.[43]

While Western allied newspapers were stating that America's attack on Afghanistan was being done for the right reasons, reporting in Middle Eastern countries cried out for fairness and peace. The Gulf News, UAE stated that "Bush's intention to 'punish' should not disintegrate into plain revenge, but should incorporate justice as well."[44] The Jordanian Times demanded US decision-makers to "evaluate whether they have steered the world's only superpower to dominate under the insignia of justice and international legitimacy" or whether they had already "succumbed to short-term interests, shortsighted considerations and the power of arrogance"[45] regarding its policies towards Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and its behaviour toward Afghanistan.

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[42]Martin Kettle. "Arab Americans Stress Loyalty in Face of Backlash," *The Guardian* (Thursday, September 13, 2001).
Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4255797,00.html.

[43]Laura Fokkena, "Aren't You the Terrorist on TV?," *AlterNet.org* (November 25, 2002). Source: http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=14610.

[44] "What the Papers Say in the Middle East," *The Guardian* (September 13, 2001). Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/o,1300,551050,00.html.

[45]Ibid.

In the Fall of 2002, the Bush administration attitude toward Iraq did nothing to alleviate the general perceptions of an Islamic threat, exemplified by Saddam Hussein: Hussein is depicted as violating the "principle" of world order and international law, his actions as endangering America's vulnerabilities, its dependence on foreign oil, and a vital aspect of American privilege that is broadly associated with the auto industry. "Hussein touched on the deepest fears most Americans have always had: the dread of being held hostage by people who are perceived as different and uncivilized."[46] It was easy to associate Hussein with the foreboding, sinister characters that are so manifest in American visual culture. On March 19, 2003 George Bush Jr. addressed the American nation to inform them that he, along with allied forces, had begun military operations to disarm Iraq, "to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger."[47] Saddam Hussein and Iraq had been targeted as a segment of the "axis of evil" which threatened the world. Although Bush Jr. stated that Operation Iraqi Freedom was not about Islam, he did in fact declare this war a struggle to enforce God's will. Before the beginning of the war, Bush articulated his meaning of freedom:

> And there's no doubt in my mind, when the United States acts abroad and home, we do so based upon values - particularly the value we hold so dear to our hearts, and that is, everybody ought to be free. I want to repeat what I said during my State of the Union to you. Liberty is not America's gift to mankind. What we believe strongly and what we hold dear is that liberty is

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[46]Julian Borger, Richard Norton-Taylor, Ewen MacAskill, and Ian Black, "US Rallies the West for Attack on Afghanistan," *The Guardian* (Thursday September 13, 2001). Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,1300,551079,00.html.

[47]George Bush, Jr., "President Bush Addresses the Nation," *Office of the Press Secretary, White House* (March 19, 2003).
Source: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/iraq/20030319-17.html

> God's gift to mankind. And we hold that value precious, and we believe it is true.[48]

Although George Bush Jr. based his justification for war against Hussein and Iraq on the idea of freedom, he included the idea of God's will as the crux of American identity and values, separate and distinct from the values of Iraq, an Islamic country. God can be seen on the side of the US, because it espouses the values of God. Also, even though Bush spoke favourably of Islam, key administration figures and Bush supporters felt free to give their contrasting opinions. Attorney General John Ashcroft[49] stated that "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith where God sent his son to die for you."[50] Reverend Franklin Graham (son of Rev. Billy Graham), who had given the invocation at President Bush's inauguration, called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion."[51] He was then invited to the Pentagon to perform the Good Friday (2003) religious service. Kenneth Adelman, who serves on the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, stated that "the more you examine [Islam], the more militaristic it seems...its founder,

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[48]Quoted from a speech by George Bush Jr. made in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, February 6, 2003.

[49]Attorney General John Ashcroft, a self-professed Pentecostal Christian, holds a daily prayer meeting in the offices of the Department of Justice each morning at 8.30 a.m. In regards to George Bush Jr. expressing his Christian values, the President has stated that he starts each day kneeling in prayer. His earliest executive orders called for a national day of prayer and a faith-based war on want. He says he reads a passage from the bible each day and reads daily devotionals of Oswald Chambers, the Scottish-born Christian thinker, and Billy Graham. As cited in James Harding, "Preaching to the Converted," *Financial Times* (January 4, 2003).
Source: http://news.ft.com

[50]Gary Leupp, "Religious Bigotry Then and Now: Some Thoughts on Pearl Harbour," *Counterpunch* (December 9, 2002). Source: http://www.counterpunch.org

[51]Christopher Marquis, "A Nation At War: Religious Services: Muslims Object to Graham," *New York Times* (April 18, 2003), p. B10.

Mohammed, was a warrior, not a peace advocate like Jesus."[52] Eliot Cohen, also on the Defense Policy Board, says that the enemy is not terrorism but "militant Islam."[53]

In December 2002, American immigration policy clearly reflected how Arab and Muslim men living in America were deemed a threat.[54] Immigration and Naturalization Services required males 16 years of age and older from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Syria to register themselves with the federal government due to a change in visa policy with these countries as a part of its anti-terror campaign. When men and boys arrived to willingly register for the program, they were arrested. In Los Angeles, more than 700 males were arrested, even though many of them had already applied for green cards. When the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs was questioned about these events, he responded "I don't think there is any question that the change in visa policy is going to be seen by some as difficult and, indeed, humiliating."[55] She continued by stating that President Bush considers "his number one job to be the protection of the American people."

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[52]Lowell Feld, "Right-Wing Christians and Jews Pursue Holy War Against Islam," *Intervention Magazine* (December 7, 2002). Source: http://mediatransparency.org.

[53]Ibid.

[54]After September 11, 2001 the FBI and the Department of Justice announced their intent to interview 5000 men of Arab descent who were between the ages of 18 and 33. Out of those interviewed, 1000 were detained indefinitely. As cited in Laura Fokkena, "Aren't You the Terrorist on TV?," *AlterNet.org* (November 25, 2002). Source: www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=14610.

[55]Megan Garvey, Martha Grove and Henry Weinstein, "Hundreds Are Held After Visits to INS," *Los Angeles Times* (December 19, 2002).
Source: http://www.latimes.com.

The Western construction of the Muslim man portrays him as a militaristic terrorist, based on historical, social and political discourses. Islam is considered a religion that breeds terror, and demands of its male followers to advance terrorism throughout the world. But what of women? Within this construct, the Muslim woman is not an active participant. She is either invisible or silent, and oppressed. She enters the scene mostly as a victim.

Chapter Two

Islamization and Islamic Writings

'You are accountable to none but yourself' (Qur'ān 4:38)

As we enter the third millennium, religions continue to remain vocal and visible. Many habitually use the notion of 'woman' as the symbolic centre of their concerns and arguments. This is especially true of contemporary Islam and the various competing voices in the Islamic world who are trying to impose their view of what a proper 'Muslim woman' is and must be. Dominant Islamic discourse, that of the Islamist, has given unprecedented symbolic importance to women, reshaping their cultural and religious identity as women in Arab and non-Arab countries alike. Islamic women writers are now demanding to be heard, as they have thus far been left out of the writing of their own history. Islamic societies, as they become more prominent and vocal in the global arena, are now focusing on the role of women as embodiments of Islam as a newly powerful religion, as religious and cultural symbols that delineate public from private space, and as a corrective to the perception of the Western media's incessant depiction of Muslims as fanatics and terrorists.[56]

National Identity

In response to what the East perceives as the West's alienating discourse and colonial attempt to weaken Islam, some influential Islamic clerics have stated that Muslim societies, and its women, find themselves with no choice but to return to stronger, more

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[56]Unfortunately, the tragic events of September 11, 2002 in New York City have further re-inforced the Western perception of the Muslim Arab as a fanatical terrorist.

fundamental forms of Islam. According to them, this return to an Islamic theocracy would negate the West's influence in Middle Eastern cultures which has left many Muslims questioning, and fighting for, their national identity in order to resist Western infiltration.

In what is now a post-colonial era, national identity has come to be valued as the story that defines who people are, where they live, and how they got there. Issues of national identity are tied to national matters such as education, multiculturalism, political structures, and personal freedoms. "All of these result, at least in part, from the paradoxical manner that nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye."[57] The continuing renewal of national identity requires a form of forgetting past origins, ethnicities, and places. Some Islamic societies, in their attempts to abolish 'Western' views from their cultures, have rebuilt their nations by fusing nationality with religion. They are returning to idealized traditional Islamic practices as the basis for national identity, disregarding the various origins of these traditions (and recreating them on the perceptions of new authorities). The custom of veiling is a case in point.

Although a complex issue, the reasons for donning the veil are many and mean different things to different people. Some Islamic women[58] had put on the veil during times

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[57]Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 1.

[58]The same issues can be raised for the term *Islamic woman* since Islam as a religion and women who are Muslim cannot be limited to one specific ethnic, racial or geographic category. But for the purpose of this thesis, I wish to deal with the "representation" of the Muslim woman in Western texts, an object that has been shaped by literary as well as visual narratives.

of revolution[59] to demonstrate anti-West convictions in the Middle East. Some other Muslim women put on the veil in order to express their religious beliefs about gender differences. And some Muslim women wore the veil because it was a part of their tribal or ethnic costume.

But the years that have lapsed from the time of revolutions have brought about the imposition of the veil as law in many Islamic countries. Men are now in charge of monitoring women's appearances. Some women have found themselves dis-empowered, while others have responded positively to such conditions.

For instance, in Iran, the *chador*[60] became the symbol of resistance to the Western-supported ruling elite, and to the authoritarian rule which attempted to abolish it by force, though there was also the parallel aim of enforcing the image of the 'proper' Muslim woman.[61] The phenomenon of the "Islamic veil" began to become apparent to Western consciousness with the appearance of *chador-clad* women glorified by the 1979 Iranian

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[59]In the 1920s, when Ataturk introduced Westernizing reforms in Turkey, he banned the veil, and stated in one speech: "In some places I have seen women who put a piece of cloth or towel or something like that over their heads to hide their faces, and who turn their backs or huddle themselves on the ground when a man passes by. What are the meaning and sense of this behaviour? Gentlemen, can the mothers and daughters of a civilized nation adopt this strange manner, this barbarous posture? It is a spectacle that makes the nation an object of ridicule. It must be remedied at once." Ataturk, as cited in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 164. Reza Shah also banned the veil in Iran. Revolutions were held in the 1960s and 1970s to remove restrictions based on religious traditions.

[60]*Chador* in this sense being the Iranian term for a black cape-like garment covering the head and body to the ankles.

[61]Nahid Yeganah, "Women's Struggles in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *In the Shadow of Islam: The Women's Movement in Iran*, ed. Azar Tabari and Nahid Yeganeh (London: Zed Press 1982), pp. 26-74.

Revolution. These women's choice of donning the veil as a symbol of protest "expressed a political activism which belied the widespread Western image of the subservient Muslim female confined to the social margins of her society."[62] During the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Muslim women consciously chose to don the veil as a symbol of protest against Reza Shah's regime[63] (and therefore by implication, against 'Western cultural imperialism'). Since colonial governments had repeatedly used the alleged 'oppressed status of native women' as a reason to replace indigenous governments, nationalist governments and liberation movements have tended to reclaim these so-called 'oppressive' traditions even more vehemently as an act of defiance against the colonizers.[64] The veil has thus become both a symbol of Islamic oppression and Islamic resistance. It is this symbolism which has been used to constrain and control the bodies of women.[65]

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[62]Camillia Fawzi El-Solh and Judy Mabro, "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Women," in *Muslim Women's Choices: Religious Belief and Social Reality,* ed. Camillia Fawzi El-Solh and , Judy Mabro (Providence, RI: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 10.

[63]The Iranian ruler Reza Shah passed legislation in 1936 which banned the wearing of the veil in Iran. Although this move had the support of some of the upper-class women and men, demonstrations broke out . For many Iranians, the veil was considered a symbol of propriety and a way of protection against the gaze of male strangers. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 164.

[64]Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam and the State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

[65]My decision to focus on the agendas of the veil show my own participation, and therefore, collusion with those I wish to show as Orientalizing. By elaborating this discussion, I realize that I am also participating in the control over women's bodies by discussing Muslim women while excluding their voices. I am a non-*hijab* wearing Muslim woman, therefore in the position of being an insider as well as an outsider within my own thesis. I am constrained by colonial discourse and at the same time privileged with the language and perspective of the colonizer.

But the act of veiling as a sign of female resistance is only of benefit to a certain extent. The case in Algeria illustrates this: when independence, in 1962, was finally achieved from the French, veiling then became a male symbol of reversion to conventional norms enforced by the newly independent state and its new male political and religious elite.[66] The same results can be seen in Iran. The strict enforcement of the "Shah's legal abolition of the veil in 1936 was an important reason for the pro-veil backlash enforced by the Khomeini regime after the Iranian revolution in 1979."[67]

Within this political and historical context, the veil has become for both Islamic women as well as for Islamic men, a privileged sign of resistance against cultural assumptions imposed upon them by outside domination. Any perceived attempt by the West to suppress veiling re-enforces in women who choose to wear the veil, their adherence to this cultural identifier, while for women who have not chosen to wear the veil, the practice is now forced upon them as a show of identification with the oppressed group as a whole. The religious and political control of women's lives and appearances by Islamic countries is not understood as an internal issue to the culture, but as an external display of it. The wearing of the veil continues to be a political act of defiance and cultural self determination as long as it is seen to have the ability to offend the colonizing power.

Yet the creation of a national identity can also transform into a version of internal neocolonialism, because it advocates a sense of class hegemony as a part of its

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[66]Jacqueline Siapno, "Gender Relations and Islamic Resurgence in Mindaneo, Southern Philippines," in *Muslim Women's Choices: Religious Belief and Social Reality*, ed. Camillia Fawzi El-Solh and Judy Mabro (Providence, RI: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1994), pp. 184-201.

[67]Ibid., p. 196.

revolutionary articulation. Those who wish to create a popular national culture, in retaliation to perceived European cultural influences, tend to "largely mimic the styles and concerns of the occupying power: during the nationalistic stage they create discourse which is appositional to Europeans, but still reflects their class baggage, since its ties are to the revolutionary leadership's articulation."[68] Within this stage of neocolonialism, the leadership ceases to articulate the narrative of the people, but instead the leader takes on the role of the revolutionary "awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, and a national literature."[69] As tools of the new ideology, women become carriers of tradition, are assigned the role of bearers of new cultural values, and the symbols of their religious community. Rather than being the differentiated transmitters of their particular cultural contexts, they become the signs identifying their community as Islamic. The chador is now transnational, from Iran to Algeria to Morocco, blending all women of Islamic countries into a culturally and socially undifferentiated (religious) society. "Women become the revered objects of the collective act of redemption, and the role models for the new nationalist patriarchal family."[70]

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[68]Kenneth Mostern, "Decolonization as Learning: Practice and Pedagogy in Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Narrative," in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, eds., Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 266.

[69]Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 223.

[70]Valentine M. Moghadam, "Introduction and Overview: Gender Dynamics of Nationalism, Revolution and Islamization," in *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed., Valentine M. Moghadam (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1994), p. 4.

Tradition

Fundamentalism[71] signifies the "activist affirmation of a particular faith that defines that faith in an absolutist and literalist manner."[72] Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the term *fundamentalism* has been used to identify "resurgent Islam,", "radical Islam," and "Islamist movements" in Islamic countries.[73] Islamists wish to establish Islamic society through state power, to establish an Islamic theocracy. "Islamization often includes the adaptation of certain 'universal' Islamic cultural forms and practices, notably changes in the female dress code; donning the veil by women is to Western eyes most conspicuous, and is often interpreted as iconic of a return to orthodox Islamic traditions."[74] Islamization can be characterized as being both homogenizing and extremely heterogeneous in the sense that overall, one finds no unimodal fit between religion and politics; Islamist groups wish to capture and use the state in order to create a national identity; they reject the authority of interpretive tradition while at the same time they read sacred texts in ways that

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[71]I will use the word 'Islamist' rather than 'fundamentalist' because the discourse is confined to the practices *within* Islam, where the terms used are 'Islamism' and 'Islamist practices'.

[72]John O. Voll, "Fundamentalism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed., John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) vol II, pp. 32-34.

[73]William Maley, "Introduction: Interpreting the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 1991), p. 17. For other sources of relevant literature, see John L. Esposito, ed. *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994).

[74]Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland, "Introduction," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, eds., Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (New York: Berg, 1998), p. 3.

"challenge and remake the world."[75] As such, their religious interpretations become political ideologies. The rise of Islamist groups can be interpreted as a reaction[76] to "Western civilizational imperialism." Groups such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt[77] (founded in 1928) and the Jama'at-i Islami[78] (founded in 1941) were extremely anti-Western, and

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[75]William Maley, "Introduction: Interpreting the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 1991), p. 18.

[76]The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was founded by Abbassi Madani, who believed that Algeria had strayed from the path set out by the ulama (hand down moral and religious teachings). FIS (and such other groups like Hamas and Nahda) wished to create an Islamic Republic free of superstition and impiety generated by "colonialism and its instruments within the country." Madani believed that the *umma*, a transnational community which is thought to transcend national boundaries, of which Algeria was a part, faced a problem at the level of civilization. He states that "the response to this problem must be made on the same level. The matter being on this scale, I have ascertained that the so-called modern solution (adopted in Great Britain, France and America) is already failing and is being questioned in these countries. Our problem cannot be solved by borrowing a model which is itself in trouble...this is why I have chosen Islam." Abbassi Madani, as cited in Ahmed Rouadjia, "Discourse and Strategy of the Algerian Islamist Movement (1986-1992)," in *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, ed., Laura Guazzone (Reading, Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1995), p. 71-72.

[77]The Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hasan al-Banna, and the Jama'at-i Islami, created by Abu al-A'la Mawdudi, are considered to be the founding fathers of Islamism. They are the two biggest mainstream Islamist organizations. Afghanistan has been a part of this movement to Islamic revivalism which engulfed the Middle East during the 1970s. See Olivier Roy, "Has Islam A Future in Afghanistan," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001): pp. 199-211.

[78]Abu al-A'la Mawdudi's ideology influenced the norms for almost all Sunni Islamists, such as Pakistan's General Zia, Ahmad Yasin of the Palestinian Hamas, and Abbassi Medani of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front. The principle themes of his ideology include: 1) the undisputed sovereignty of God; 2) the vice-regency of all believers; 3) all practicing and believing Muslims confine themselves to God's will by following the Qur'ān and Sunna; 4) the concept of a government and opposition or of different political parties is ruled out; 5) political leaders and administrators are competent and pious; 6) Islam is comprehensive, and embraces both political and private life. There can be no social or political institution which is religiously neutral;

wanted to guide the Muslim people back to a "purified" Islam based on the Shar'ia and the teachings of the Prophet, which would then permeate every aspect of personal and national life, in order to 'free the nations from Western domination'.[79]

Islamists often consider themselves to be "traditionalists" in the sense that they wish to return to an earlier, purer form of behaviour, by the enforcement of a strict and narrow interpretation of Shar'ia in order to foster an Islamist ideology. Martin Krygier defines "tradition" as having three elements:

> (First is) pastness: the contents of every tradition have or are believed by its participants to have originated some considerable time in the past. Second is the authoritative presence: though derived from a real or believed-to-be real past, a traditional practice, doctrine or belief has not, as it were, stayed there. Its traditionality consists in its present authority and significance for the lives, thoughts or activities of participants in the tradition. Third, a tradition is not merely the past made present. It must have been, or be thought to have been, passed down over intervening generations, deliberately or otherwise; not merely unearthed from a past discontinuous with the present.[80]

Within Islamism, traditions become manifest through social authority, values, and interpretations of sacred and secular texts.[81] They are not unchanging, but always in a

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and 7) if government or public life falls short of this Islamist idea, it falls into the "age of ignorance": these shortcomings of the ideal community can be attributed to Western ideas and institutions. See L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 148-160.

[79]Soroya Duval, "New Veils and New Voices: Islamist Women's Groups in Egypt," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, eds., Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (New York: Berg, 1998), p. 53.

[80]Martin Krygier, "Law as Tradition," *Law and Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (1986), p. 240.

[81]Islamists have been successful in banning what they consider to be immoral or un-Islamic, such as the theories of Darwinism and Freudian psychoanalysis, as well as writings of all kinds. For example, in Egypt, the books of Farag Fawda and Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashmawi have been seized because they have attacked political Islam. Hamid Nasr Abu Zayd applied textual criticism to the Qūr'ān, and was sued as an apostate.

continuing process of reformulation and even creation. For example, the use of the veil has become a recurring theme in Islamist countries as a "symbol of personal investment in intensifying religious commitment and at the same time (as) a public statement of identity in the larger social space."[82] It is a part of religious authoritative discourse as well as a symbol of the continuing response to the perceived Western discourse on Islam: a political strategy, deeply invested with meaning and value and multiple significations. Thus, political rulers who have introduced an Islamic dress code as part of their Islamist programme have met with both opposition and acceptance. For example, some Muslim women have emphasized how the veil now offers them a mobility into a social world outside domestic boundaries, and increases their independence and self-reliance.[83]

Although many of the Islamist movements differ in terms of background[84] and

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See Gudrun Krämer, "Cross-Links and Double Talk? Islamist Movements in the Political Process," in *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, ed., Laura Guazzone (Reading, Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1995), pp. 39-67.

[82]Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland, "Introduction," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, eds., Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (New York: Berg, 1998), p. 10.

[83]Ibid., p. 12. See also Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

[84]Islamism has "evolved and diversified both in response to local and international changes and as a result of the cross influences of the various movements." Laura Guazzone, "Islamism and Islamists in the Contemporary Arab World," in *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, ed., Laura Guazzone (Reading, Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1995), p. 13. Thus, the Arab Sunni movement has led to the creation of autonomous organizations such as the Islamic Jihad, and Hizb al-Tahrir. Shi'a Islamism, whose political organization occurs at the same time as the Iranian Islamic Republic and whose ideology was formulated by the Ayatollah Khomeini, is considered to have provided the first Islamist revolution. They are now limited to a few communities in Iran, and the Hizbullah in Lebanon. There are a mixture of Shi'a and Sunni movements in

political strategies, they all share "the common final objective of establishing an Islamic state - the political configuration considered not only ideal but also essential for the well-being of every Muslim."[85] Within this ideological framework of an Islamic state, the control of morality through the separation of the sexes in society (through the control of women's bodies) remains a key issue. The ideology of an Islamic society requires that anything which creates social difference, such as ethnicity, tribalism, clans, or solidarity networks are un-Islamic.[86] Individual identity does not exist. Corruption and lack of virtue must be eradicated through admonishment and counsel. Thus, a system of re-socialization is created: public space becomes emptied in order to erase social differentiation. For example, in Saudi Arabia, urban space is patrolled by a religious militia who exist to impose religious practice and enforce good behaviour. Social life is restricted: there are no more cinemas or cafés. The new cultural model becomes the family, and it becomes representative of the Islamic identity, where women are confined to the house.[87]

In other instances, such as Iran, women are recruited to have an active presence in the revolutionary movement. But in order to access public space she must preserve her

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Malaysia, the former Soviet Union, and immigrant communities in the West which mix and meet.

[85]Laura Guazzone, "Islamism and Islamists in the Contemporary Arab World," in *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, ed., Laura Guazzone (Reading, Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1995), p. 13.

[86]For example, Afghanistan began the process of detribalization as early as 1892, when Amir Abdurrahman subjugated the Shi'ite Hazara tribes. See Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1994).

[87]Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1994).

honour and purity by maintaining a sense of modesty through hijab.[88] This marks a new place for her in the re-socialized order of urban space, but her body must still be controlled and monitored. In Afghanistan, a woman "must be kept covered, kept out of sight and off the streets" in order to keep her from being sexually dishonoured. These restrictions over women's social behaviour symbolize male honour, while at the same time "subordinating the personal autonomy of every individual, thereby strengthening the impression that it is capable of exercising control over all aspects of social behaviour, male and female."[89]

From the point of view of Islamists, the adoption of Western forms of dress and Western values is indicative of the force of Western cultural imperialism seen as the source of a perceived social and moral decline in many Muslim societies. Since the West is seen as a force that exploits women's bodies, the imposition of Islamic dress on women represents an attempt to make things right, to attain true progress and success, by returning to God's law. But for Islamic women, the move away from "modernization" and towards a more traditional way of Islamic life leaves them trapped. Westernization, as defined by Islamists, as well as any association with Western dress and values, is seen as undermining Islamic life, thus Islamic women find themselves unable to integrate what is considered a modern lifestyle (education, employment) with Islamist traditional values.

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[88]Ibid.

[89]Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Afghan Women Under the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 151.

Islamist Women

So many identities can participate in the construction of an Islamic writer, since there is no fixed, essential characteristic that makes one Islamic. When one writes as a Muslim, it is an identification that is chosen, and therefore carries the authority of assertion. This identification differs from those who are considered *Islamist*. Islamist groups began their rise in the early 1900s.[90] Such groups became stronger and more widespread in the 1970s and have continued to flourish. Islamists are identified as those who wish to establish or return to an Islamized space, where society is re-Islamized and people practice Islam in their daily lives. Islamists wish to "bridge the gap between religious discourse and practical realities through prayer, fasting, segregation of space between the two genders, the veiling[91] of women and so on...Islamization from the 'bottom-up' does not necessarily entail asking women to return to the home, but rather that the sexes are kept separated in public."[92] The Islamists have devoted their lives to the task of establishing a Muslim

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[90]Soraya Duval, "New Veils and New Voices: Islamist Women's Groups in Egypt," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, ed. Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp.45-72. The Egyptian group known as the Muslim Brothers (al Ikhwan al-Muslimun) were formed in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna. They were severely anti-British and anti-Western. They sought to bring the Muslim people of Egypt back to a more purified form of Islam. They preached that by allowing Islam into personal as well as national concerns, it would free the country from Western control. By the 1980s the Muslim Brothers had grown into an institution, with a strong desire to establish an Islamic socio-political order based on Shar'ia.

[91]It is important to understand that veiling in Islamist terms is not just a display of faith. It implies a firm stand of faith to Islam and a negation of worldly matters, such as comfort, vanity, and social tolerance.

[92]Karin Ask & Marit Tjomsland, "Introduction," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, ed. Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 2.

state, enforcing what they consider universal precepts of Orthodox Islamic traditions, while ridding these spaces of foreign infidels and their influences. Just as most Western historical discourse on Islam has used women, their appearance and their behaviour, as the "most visible marker of the differentness and inferiority of Islamic societies,"[93] Islamists frequently use women as the same marker to prove Islam's purity, modesty and wholesomeness. Islamism, a form of fundamentalism, arises out of crisis, in this instance, a crisis of identity.

> 'The people'...are in crisis, due to economic, political and moral chaos that they adhere to 'fundamentalist' ideas in order to change the world. In their zeal to establish a new moral order they use 'the modest woman' as a symbol and force real women of flesh and blood to retreat to the home...Compulsory veiling is analysed as a mechanism of social control of women, and 'symbolizes the lack of choice in the selection of identity: identity in the form of *hijab* is imposed.'[94]

Muslim women are "divided over the definition of their gender interests, over the nature of social arrangements which best serve them and over their visions of a better society."[95] Islamist women, wishing to construct their own identity but also impose that construct upon all Muslim women, call for Muslims to live under rules of conduct based on strict adherence to the laws of Islam. Zaynab al-Ghazali, a famous Egyptian Islamist leader, is totally committed to the establishment of the Islamic state. She was educated

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[93]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 152.

[94]Wilhelmina Jansen, "Contested Identities: Women and Religion in Algeria and Jordan," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, ed. Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p. 86. This source quotes Valentine Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993).

[95]Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction," in *Women, Islam and the State*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 18.

in Islamic studies, and founded the Muslim Women's Association which had a mission of leading women "within the Islamic fold."[96] Fatima Naseef, a preacher from Saudi Arabia, and al-Ghazali believe that calling on jihad would allow for the possibility of women's roles and rights being changed. Naseef writes "fighting is decreed for you, much as you dislike it," as quoted in the Qur'ān in order to remove the enemy from Muslim countries.[97] Fadwa El Guindi, in her book *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance,* espouses the notion of a traditional cultural identity. She suggests this identity espouses egalitarianism, community, identity, privacy and justice. Reserve, restraint in behaviour, voice and body movement are not restrictions, but symbols of the renewal of tradition of Islamic observances. At the heart of Islamic observance is pride, as well as the support of national and women's self-determination.[98]

Although such women are fighting for their convictions in terms of religion, I do not wish to put them in the category of Islamic feminists. Instead I use the term "feminist" to refer to those women who are challenging expectations about women's social roles and responsibilities, rather than returning to expectations already set out in the religious tradition of Islam, as interpreted by the ulamā. Although the term "feminist" connotes strong Western inclinations, I do not believe that this term is strictly limited to change for women in Western countries, or those cultures that have become Westernized. Although considered imperialist in nature by Islamists, we cannot limit usage of the word unless we

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[96]Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

[97]Fatima Umar Naseef, *Women in Islam: A Discourse in Rights and Obligations* (Cairo: International Islamic Committee for Woman and Child, 1999), p. 153.

[98]Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

mean to limit its practice in the world. Women have struggled for liberty and justice from imperialist patriarchies for centuries, and therefore, we cannot assume that "feminism" is limited to those women who have been influenced by Western privilege. Whether a Muslim woman works from within the system she wishes to change, or rejects the rules and norms that bind her, does not limit her participation in the feminist struggle.

There are some who argue that one cannot be Islamic and feminist. Haideh Moghissi states that the Qur'ān does not espouse gender equality, and Shari'ah is incompatible with the principles of human equality. She asserts that Islamic feminism has no "coherent, self-identified and/or easily identifiable" philosophy. Women who utilize this marker are not considered women from within Muslim societies but "diasporic feminist academics and researchers of Muslim background living and working in the West."[99] What she fails to recognize though, is that many who define themselves as Islamic feminists strongly declare their faith in Islam, and therefore feel that their identity is deeply affirmed. Moghissi's fear is that by emphasizing feminism as a form of identity for Middle Eastern women, it will obscure "ways that identity is asserted or reclaimed, overshadowing forms of struggle outside religious practices and silencing the secular voices which are still raised against the region's stifling Islamification policies."[100] But if Muslim women remain silenced, Islamist governments like the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Algerian Front will continue in their onslaught on women's rights to work, travel, and even leave the home. Therefore Islamic feminism must be varied and multiple: women must have the right to

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[99]Haidah Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London: Zed, 1999), p. 126.

[100]Ibid., p.137-138.

choose their identity locations in order to position themselves outside binding and essentialist arguments. As Miriam Cooke so eloquently states:

> To call oneself an Islamic feminist is *not to describe a fixed identity but to create a new, contingent subject position*. This location confirms belonging in a religious community while allowing for activism on behalf of and with other women...They are refusing the boundaries others try to draw around them so as better to police them. They are claiming that Islam is not necessarily more traditional or authentic than any other identification, nor is it more violent or patriarchal than any other religion. They are claiming their right to be strong women within this tradition, namely to be feminists without fear that they be accused of being Westernized and imitative. They are highlighting women's roles and status within their religious communities, while at the same time declaring common cause with Muslim women elsewhere who share the same objectives. They are linking their religious, political and gender identities so as to claim simultaneous and sometimes contradictory allegiances even as they resist globalization, local nationalisms, Islamization, and the patriarchal system that pervades them all.[101]

This chapter focuses on the writings of Islamic feminists because they provide an alternative critical mediation and interpretation of Islam's influence on Muslim women's lives. Their contributions help us understand their political location within the discourse on women as symbols in Islam and how other Muslim women might also find a location for themselves within different allegiances. With the steady rise in fundamentalist[102] demands and dictates on Muslim women, and the continuing general Western perception of Muslim women as oppressed victims in need of rescue from these fundamentalist demands, there is little room left in which to find an identity for oneself that takes into consideration one's individual priorities as well as collective expectations.

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[101]Miram Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p . 60-61.

[102]Although the term *fundamentalist* has been criticized as being ethnocentric, Christian-centric and homogenizing, I believe it is useful in this context as it is being used comparatively with other religious feminist movements.

As Islamist attitudes, based on Islamic theology, narrow their focus on the role of women in Muslim society to prove Islam's superiority, it becomes increasingly necessary to evaluate feminist interpretations of Islamic sources. Five hermeneutic approaches are now used by contemporary feminists within the Christian and Judaic feminist tradition. *Loyalists* accept the Bible as the divine revelation of God but also insist upon the divine intention of respect between man and woman. *Revisionists* believe that the Judeo-Christian tradition of a patriarchal framework is actually historical and cultural, not theological. *Sublimationists* presuppose an equality for maleness and femaleness, and consider the Bible to be allegorical. *Rejectionists* consider religious texts to be overly inundated with patriarchal ideas and therefore must be rejected. *Liberationist* feminism focuses on women's liberation from oppression by transforming social order.[103] These can be reduced to *reformist* and *reconstructionist* models. Reformist models include the loyalists, revisionists and sublimationists. Reconstructionist models include rejectionists and liberationists.[104]

Islamic feminist writers can sometimes be placed within such categories, but to remove Islam from their discourse would be to remove a core element from their identity. No Islamic feminist writer is ready to reject the Qur'ān, but rather may reject the authority of the interpretations or of the interpreters. In proposing changes to women's condition,

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[103]Carolyn Oseik, "The Feminist and the Bible: Hermeneutical Alternatives," in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, ed. A.Y. Collins (Chico, CA: Scholar Press, 1985), pp. 95-103.

[104]Anne Sofie Roald, "Feminist Reinterpretation of Islamic Sources: Muslim Feminist Theology in the Light of the Christian Tradition of Feminist Thought," in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, ed. Karin Ask and Majit Tjomsland (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp. 17-44.

what is questioned is not the framework of Islam, but the meaning of the source of ahādīth, the authority of those sources, and the historical and cultural location from which revelation was revealed and sources written down.

The discourse of modern Muslim feminists is dominated by the issue of the veil. Freda Hussain[105] views the imposition of the wearing of the veil as a patriarchal manifestation which has encumbered Islam's essential message regarding the equality of the sexes. The interpretation of the Qur'ān by religious scholars are contrived or inauthentic, and do not reflect what the Prophet said.[106] Hussain sees the code of veiling in current times as part of a reactionist tendency by Islamic neoconservative organizations towards the threat of modernity in the Islamic world.

Leila Ahmed describes Islamic social systems as a combination of the "worst features of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern misogyny with an Islam interpreted in the most negative way possible."[107] In order to analyse Muslim women's true role and status, Ahmed looks back to the practices of Prophet Muhammad where the discourse of gender is rooted, and the way in which gender is "articulated socially, institutionally and verbally."[108]

Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, launches a historical as well as theological enquiry into the condition of women by drawing attention to the reliability of the sources of hādīth on women in order to investigate their authenticity. She finds that the religious basis

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[105]Freda Hussain, "Introduction: The Ideal and Contextual Realities of Muslim Women," in *Muslim Women*, ed. Freda Hussain (London: Broom & Helm, 1984).

[106]Ibid.

[107]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 128.

[108]Ibid., p. 152.

for the seclusion of women can be traced back to the philosophical basis of the caliphate.[109] Mernissi writes that the veil is a means of male social control and is rooted in the system of patriarchy.

Nawal El Saadawi, at times considered to be a secularist, considers the veil to be a pre-Islamic cultural attribute. She focuses on the way the religious control of female sexuality has been a central process of the maintenance of social order within Islam. El Saadawi finds that the oppression faced by women is "not necessarily due to religious ideologies...but derives its roots from the class and patriarchal system."[110] Women's self determination in pre-Islamic society was based on a chaotic, all-embracing sexuality.

Azizah al-Hibri, while stating that the veil is a custom of non-Muslim origins, believes that Islam as a whole has, through a historical process of co-optation, been devoured by the world ideology of Patriarchy.[111] Al-Hibri acknowledges that the Qur'ān states that men and women were created from the same soul and are assigned the same spiritual rights and obligations. There were successful women in the beginning era of Islam: Khadijah, the first wife of the Prophet was a successful business woman. A'ishah, the woman the Prophet married after the death of Khadijah, became a major jurist and political

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[109]The Caliph succeeds the Prophet and rules with the authority of Allah, as a deputy of the Prophet. Abu Bakr was the first caliph to replace the Prophet after his death, and therefore inherited spiritual as well as material leadership. See Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993).

[110]Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980), p. 10.

[111]Azizah al-Hibri, "A Study of Islamic Herstory: Or How Did We Ever Get Into This Mess?,"in *Women and Islam*, ed. Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1982). pp. 207-220.

leader. Amongst the Companions of the Prophet were hundreds of women, "some of whom asked him one time to schedule special meetings with them because men tended to dominate discussions."[112]

Al-Hibri asserts that the Prophet encouraged women and their active participation in public life. Even as patriarchy and authoritarianism were on the rise in the later centuries of Islam, Muslim women such as Arwa the Queen of Yemen, Shajarat al-Durr who ruled Egypt, and various authors, scholars and jurists were still capable of achieving great successes. Islam's vision of women's rights allowed women to reach such successes. Under Islamic law, women are guaranteed the right to work and earn. Medieval jurists agreed that the Muslim woman was capable of being financially independent. Furthermore, after marriage the Muslim woman kept her own name and was not required to do housework. "Traditional medieval jurists noted that the marriage contract was contract not of service but of companionship."[113] But patriarchy has eroded away the true values of Islam.

As the Islamist movement and its position regarding the role of women gains more ground, debates regarding women's role and status within these movements, and in Muslim societies, become more complex. Islamic feminist scholars, in trying to provide a sense of equality to women, are reinterpreting the Qur'ān so that it is more compatible with contemporary life. As can be seen, there is no agreement amongst them. Some view the laws as equal but different for women. Other writers consider Islam fully equal for men and

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[112]Azizah al-Hibri, "Women and the Taliban", *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (March 11, 2001). Source: http://members.aol.com/yahyam/azizah.html

[113]Ibid.

women, and others believe that women's original status has been superseded by patriarchal culture.

While at the same time promoting Western egalitarian perspectives on gender roles, Islamic feminists avoid any identification with a Western secular framework or lifestyle, as they choose to remain identified as Muslim. They wish to find a framework that is more egalitarian to women but which still stems from Islamic religious principles. In Chapter Five, I focus on the discourses of Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi and Nawal El Saadawi, three highly distinguished scholars who have each done extensive investigations into the history of Islam, in order to provide the main arguments of Islamic feminism concerning the reinterpretation of Qur'ān and ahādīth, and the understanding of women's role and status within Islam.[114]

The Evolution of the Image of the Muslim Woman

The "Muslim Woman," as a cultural product of Orientalism and Islamist thought, has evolved in a way that perpetuates the idea of a homogenous image. She is imagined through overriding paradigms which contain multiple discrepancies. She has become the site of meaning to promote the Orientalist discourse (passive and oppressed) as well as a model for Islamic traditionalists (sign of purity). Through Islamism, the East has done what Orientalism has done to Muslim women: reduced their image to one truncated,

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[114]I focus on Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi and Nawal El Saadawi as the three Islamic feminist voices because their discourses represent the majority of the views that exist within Islamic feminist writings, and I believe that their works are highly respected by many Islamic feminist scholars as foundational discourses within the field of Islamic feminism.

totalizing ideology. Instead of continuing the polar constructions of Muslim woman as a single notion, I illustrate how the image of the Islamic woman in diverse geographic regions has evolved to manufacture the notion of this construct. The following investigation on the dress variations of Morocco, Afghanistan and Egypt are used to show how the image of the Muslim woman has evolved from a diverse ethnic and geographic portrait, to a universally veiled woman: a totalizing image of absence, invisibility and silence.

Women's Dress of Morocco

In 1971, Ahmed Sefrioui, director of visual arts for the museums of Morocco, wrote an article entitled "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco",[115] describing the contrasting people and their costumes which make up Morocco (see Appendix 1.1, 1.2a, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5). He described how city women tended to wear caftans (open in the front, with or without sleeves) and outer layers of flowered or embroidered fabrics. For outside wear, women used to wear a haïk (a wrap), but now it had been replaced by the djelleba. Veils covered the face, usually white, allowing the eyes to be visible. Berber women did not cover their faces. Western styles of clothing were also appearing in the cities. "Tribal particularism" was more noticeable in women's dress. Hair, headdress, and jewelry are important to "ward off the evil eye"[116] (see Appendices 1.5 and 1.7). Tattooing is also practiced among the tribes (see Appendices 1.3 and 1.10), whereas women in the cities tend to use mixtures to paint designs between their eyebrows and on their chins, and to underline the

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[115]Ahmed Sefrioui, "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco," *Vogue* 158, no. 10 (December 1971), pp. 117-124, 171, 182.

[116]Ibid., p. 182.

eyebrows. Colour is also diverse: Berber women wear red or yellow babouches. Wives of important persons wear gold-embroidered velvet. But along the Saharan border, black or indigo blue is worn, usually without any ornament.

In 1982, Edmond El Maleh wrote about Morocco, and described women in severe black coverings which hid the faces of women, fine white djellabas, silver jewelry (see Appendices1.6 and 1.8), and women in yellow babouches (slippers of hand-embroidered leather).[117]

Currently, the urban use of the djelleba as the national dress of Morocco (with the hood folded over the head) has become generalized to the rural population, including the use of face veils. In the cities, women of all classes have conformed to this form of dress now known as Islamic dress. Individual identity has been removed: the woman has become hidden, and through this hiding, she becomes absent.

Women's Dress of Afghanistan

Thomas J. Abercrombie, in his article "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerors"[118] displays the variety and richness in dress that made up Afghanistan in 1968. He encountered over a dozen ethnic strains and twenty different languages amongst the people of Afghanistan (see Appendix 2.1). People living in the cities wore Western clothing (see Appendix 2.4), Uzbecks from the North wore long striped robes. Women were seen

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[117]Edmond El Maleh, "Marrakech, la capitale qui a donne son nom au Maroc," *Double Page,* no. 20 (1982). Double Page is a monthly photographic magazine.

[118]Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerers," *National Geographic* 134, no.3 (September 1968).

unveiled, wearing scarves, or even the *chadri* (see appendix 2.2) which covers the body, is sleeveless and is made of silk (identical to what is called the *burqa* in Arabic, except it came in a variety of colours). Pushtin communities secluded women from the gaze of foreigners and non-family members. Women were seen in the streets and working in the shops, moving freely (see Appendices 2.5 and 2.6).

Within hours of the Taliban taking over Kabul in September 1996, women were instructed to cease working, could only move outside the home when necessary and only with faces covered and accompanied by a male family member.[119] The burqa became the enforced dress of the Taliban. The hijab,[120] adopted by many refugee women, was not considered acceptable enough for the Taliban because it did not conform to their "culture and because it does not conform to Islamic Shar'ia since it is very smart and draws attention."[121] The woman was not only hidden, she became the burqa. Her presence was eliminated from society: the Afghan woman could not attend school or work. Her burqa did not just cover her body, it made her invisible.

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[119]Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Afghan Women Under the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

[120]The hijab in this context is considered the body covering which is ankle-length and long-sleeved, with a waist-length head covering drawn across the face just below the eyes. It is typically black. Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Afghan Women Under the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 152.

[121]This statement was made by Haji Mawlawi Qamaluddin, Deputy Director for the department responsible for the Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice, a religious police force of the Taliban. Haji Mawlawi Qamaluddin, as cited in Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Afghan Women Under the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed., William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 151.

Women's Dress of Egypt

In Egypt, dress, speech, and gestures can signify various origins of the people living there (see Appendices 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3).[122] Andrea Rugh performed a systematic study to examine the patterns of dress throughout Egypt to show how individuals used dress to display elements of personal identity and status. At the community level dress symbolizes a pride in ethnic community, locale, and honour. At the individual level, complicated inventories of dress elements and modes of artfully displaying them give plenty of room for concealing or revealing the psychological and physical dimensions of the self."[123] Women's dress and style mark geographical distinctions (see Appendices 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5). But as Rugh demonstrates, regional identities are becoming overwhelmed by other more powerful identities. Since 1967, a new Islamic style of dress has appeared, called *hijab*,[124] (see 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7) which are similar to the modest dress in Saudi Arabia and among the Bedouin. "This dress conforms maximally with fundamentalist interpretations of religious

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[122]Andrea B. Rugh gives an example conversation she had about identifying women in Egypt. "'How do you know that woman is a Christian?' I would ask. 'Because she is wearing a black shawl of the kind many Christians wear,' was my companion's reply. On another occasion I would comment, 'That woman in the store buying material was a Christian wasn't she, because she wore the black shawl?' 'No, she was an Arab (bedouin), because of the way she spoke and because she was asking about bedouin material to make the dresses they wear.' 'But why do you assume that most women who wear shawls are Christians?' 'Because in this quarter the majority of people are Muslims who come from the provinces of the Delta where the shawl is not so commonly worn'." Andrea B. Rugh, *Reveal and Conceal: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. vii.

[123] Ibid., p. 5.

[124]The standard dress is an ankle-length robe flowing from the shoulder, with longs sleeves and a high neckline. A head covering is worn low on the forehead to cover the hair. In some cases, women may add gloves, and a full face veil with cutouts for the eyes. See Andrea B. Rugh, *Reveal and Conceal: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 151 for line drawings.

injunctions that the modest woman's body should be covered, her clothes loose-fitting, and her hair concealed."[125] Rugh notes that dress styles (see Appendices 3.8 and 3.9) in general have become more conservative in pattern so that it meets Muslim standards. More than any other single factor, the changing interpretation of what is considered appropriate dress is defined religiously, particularly for females.[126]

The Muslim woman has become an ideological construct. With the assertion of a universal Islamic identity, the women of Morocco, Afghanistan and Egypt lost their individual identities. The Islamic dress code has eliminated ethnic, class and geographical elements, making the Muslim woman an essentialized symbol, silenced and unknowable. This covered, silent portrait of the Muslim woman is what the world identifies as Islamic worldwide.

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[125] Andrea B. Rugh, *Reveal and Conceal: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 150-151.

[126] Ibid.

Chapter Three

The Muslim Woman in the Images and Discourse of Orientalism

Colonialism is an elusive concept, since many writers have used the terms Colonialism and Imperialism interchangeably. According to Michael Doyle, Colonialism is a possible outcome of Imperialism, which is the process of determining "a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society."[127] This relationship can be implemented by force, political collaboration, or the imposition of economic, social or cultural dependence. Edward Said develops Doyle's analysis by adding that both Imperialism and Colonialism are maintained "and are perhaps even impelled" by ideologies which claim "that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination."[128] The culture of Imperialism, to Said, is a complex phenomenon where social existence and individual consciousness, the world and the text, collectively establish each other. He "construes imperialism as a cultural phenomenon that occurs within multileveled relations of power and knowledge that are irreducible to language and that are captured poorly by terms such as 'text' and 'discourse'."[129]

Many European colonies were established in the nineteenth century when missionaries were sent out in order to "civilize" the natives, while others began as trading

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[127]Michael Doyle, as cited in Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 8.

[128]Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 8.

[129]William D. Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 88.

posts or planter's estates. The Middle East had already had contact with Western countries, so colonialization was driven more by economic motives. Often, Colonial powers have legitimized their presence and economic rule over colonies by invoking the benefits of bringing development and progress to the underdeveloped colonies.

> The cultural counterpart of economic rhetoric is the concept of the civilizing mission. At the heart of this policy is the paternalist idea that the 'backward' undeveloped inhabitants of the colonized areas need to be educated and brought up to the level of the superior culture and life-style of the colonizing power.[130]

European colonialists' annihilation of the "other" culture, and their imposition of new languages upon the East have created in the colonized countries a discontinuity between memory and culture.

According to Said, the image of the "Muslim" is created from colonial discourse in order to create a colonial subject that is a social production based on "difference". This image is used to differentiate and devalue the Muslim "Other" from Europeans.[131] Similarly Homi Bhabha asserts that the colonial subject is:

> constructed within an apparatus of power which contains, in both senses of the word, an 'other' knowledge - a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourses as that limited form of otherness, that fixed form of difference, that I have called stereotype.[132]

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[130]Office of Tibet, *China's Tibet: the World's Largest Remaining Colony (Report of a Fact-Finding Mission and Analyses of Colonialism and Chinese Rule in Tibet),* The Government of Tibet in Exile. Source: http://www.tibet.com/Humanrights/Unpo/chap5.html. Accessed August 2002. The Office of Tibet was established in 1981. It is the official agency of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

[131]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). This book was first published by Pantheon in 1978.

[132]Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, Routledge, 1994), p. 70.

Reflections of the Muslim Woman: Early Images

Colonial expansion at an unprecedented level overtook the second half of the nineteenth century through direct conquest and domination. Britain and France established Imperialist foreign policy throughout the world, causing power struggles over colonized lands for trade interests. This period saw an increase in colonial political and social intervention combined with a need to keep Europeans separated from "native" populations. This interaction "between culture and imperialism was played out in connection to gender."[133] Benedict Anderson, through his analysis of the development of a vernacular print culture, demonstrates that "visual and literary culture played a crucial role in the construction of the 'imagined' national communities in Europe that underpinned the imperial ideologies and administrations of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries."[134] According to Anderson, visual and literary representations of the Orient and the Orientalized "other" encapsulates the attitudes of Europe towards these "native" populations.

Edward Said's[135] theoretical formulation of the concept of Orientalism allows us to understand the relations between the East and the West, or the Orient and the Occident. Orientalism, as a discourse, allows us to see how the "knowledge" of the Orient is bound up in its domination by the West. Orientalism classified the East as different and inferior,

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[133]Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 13.

[134]Benedict Anderson, as cited in Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 13.

[135]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

which in turn legitimized Western intervention and rule. Orientalism produced representations that were not:

> simple reflections of a true anterior reality, but composite images which came to define the nature of the Orient and the Oriental as irredeemably different and always inferior to the West. Orientalism establishes a set of polarities in which the Orient is characterized as irrational, exotic, erotic, despotic and heathen, thereby securing the West in contrast as rational, familiar, moral, just and Christian.[136]

An example of this kind of representation is given by the French colonial powers' handling of local dress customs in North Africa. When France colonized Algeria, the dress of the Algerian (as symbolized by the dress of its women) became a politicized arena of comparison to European dress. It had to be eradicated because the colonial powers wanted to bring Algeria into closer congruence with European norms and they interpreted this vestimentary "difference" from European dress as a resistance to colonialism:

> The officials of the French administration in Algeria, committed to destroying the people's originality, and under instructions to bring about the disintegration, at whatever cost, of forms of existence likely to evoke a national reality directly or indirectly, were to concentrate their efforts on the wearing of the veil, which was looked upon at this juncture as a symbol of the status of Algerian women.[137]

The specific way in which Algerian women dressed and its cultural "originality" were interpreted by European colonizers as part of what they considered to be an indigenous patriarchal oppression forced onto women.

The veil became a marker of political resistance and its continued wearing became synonymous with "traditional" patterns of behaviour. It became a privileged sign to both

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[136]Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 16.

[137]Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 37.

the Algerian man and woman of resistance to "the cultural assumptions being imposed from an outside dominator."[138] That the veil is oppressive to women is not considered by Algerians to be descriptive of Algerian culture, but rather an European mis-representation of it. The veil as oppressor is understood by Algerians to be an European discourse, not an Algerian one. The significance of the veil has changed in light of political circumstances, and what was once an element of culture now becomes a political act: wearing the veil is now an active sign of Algerian rebellion to European colonialism.

Orientalist imagery permeated writings, paintings, photographs and postcards which allowed the European observer to access the privacy of "other" women. Algerian writer Malek Alloula, in his book *The Colonial Harem*[139] (a collection of Algerian postcards produced and sent by the French during the early 1900s), examines the East-West relationship of the French in Algeria to reveal an intense preoccupation with the veiled female body. The West was unwavering in its desire to rid Algeria of the veil, because it saw the veil as a sign of Islam's backwardness and oppressive nature. Alloula's anthology discloses the critical role images of women played during the imperialist domination of the East by the West. Alloula asserts that although the postcards were from the early twentieth century,

> they do not represent a historically isolatable phenomenon. They are part of a conflict whose consequences continue to interest contemporary global

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[138]Kenneth Mostern, "Decolonization as Learning: Practice and Pedagogy in Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Narrative," in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, eds., Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 261.

[139]Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

> politics and which has important ramifications in the intellectual arena as well.[140]

The Algerian women in these postcards do not represent Algeria, but instead the "Frenchman's phantasm of the Oriental female and her inaccessibility behind the veil in the forbidden harem."[141] These images continue to pervade the imagination of the Westerner, who regards the Muslim woman as somehow more exotic, but also passive and oppressed by her religion and culture: they are indicative of the idealized power relations between the colonizer and the colonized..

When paintings no longer fascinated (see Appendices 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3), photograph postcards began circulating, offering "knowledge" rather than interpretation of the colonies to the tourists and the soldiers. This "knowledge" not only perpetuated the image of the Muslim woman as slave (see Appendix 4.1), concubine (see Appendix 4.7) and prisoner (see Appendix 4.5) to the colonists, but it made its way back to Europe, which exponentially increased the systematic distortion of any actual Algerian and Middle Eastern societies, and enforced the idea of a hegemonic Islam.

These postcards, even though often posed, offer a sense of heightened realism (see appendix 4.8) suggesting that the photo provides a commonplace image of Algeria, thus it guarantees "truth" about the society, culture and religion. "At a time when mass media do not yet exist, the postcard fills the gap and adds its 'inspired' chatter to colonialist

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[140]Barbara Harlow, "Introduction," in Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. xi.

[141]Ibid., p. xiv.

discourse."[142] These postcards offer a privileged view into prohibited space (see Appendix 4.6). The voyeurism of the male photographer takes the male Western consumer into imaginary female spaces, where Islamic male society imprisons its women, without being able to totally control them. Only in the private space[143] of the harem can Muslim women become visible to the photographer (the voyeur), because in the public space, they must remain invisible and hidden (see Appendix 4.4). Alloula states that the postcard, by displaying these women to a Western gaze, has in fact freed them from their harem prisons. "The postcard lifts the veil from them and grants them a space (that of the postcard) in which they can romp and frolic to their hearts' desire."[144] Their women's societies have been raided and their private spaces have been made transparent; their bodies have been consumed by the Western gaze.

According to Malek Alloula, through these images, the Algerian woman has become, for Western consumption, "available and consenting, welcoming and exciting, submissive and possessed."[145] They have become the concrete representations of the colonial

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[142]Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 44.

[143]Roland Barthes states that "the age of Photography corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather into the creation of a new social value, which is the publicity of the private: the private is consumed as such, publicly." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 98. Thus, the colonial postcard makes visible the invisible, and can literally be seen as the public consumption of the private.

[144]Malek Alloula, "The Colonial Harem: Images of a Suberoticism," in Oxford Readings in Feminism: Feminism and Pornography, ed., Drucilla Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 399.

[145]Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 122.

perception of the native woman as commodity, ready to be manipulated and capitalized upon. Tourism and American cinema would eventually make these "made for the West" images obsolete, while continuing the contradictory messages of the Muslim woman as a denied and available object of sexuality, yet at the same time hidden and imprisoned.

Reflections of Muslim Woman: Early Descriptions

Writings by Western writers about the Orient began much earlier than the mass distribution of images, in order to portray to Europe a representative idea of what was to be found in the East by Westerners. During the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, much was written in French literature about Turkish and Persian morality.

The seraglio, or harem, was of constant interest. French writers described the sexual excesses which harems promoted, the "generalized perversion and the absolute limitlessness of pleasure."[146] In 1665, Jean Thévenot, in his book *Voyage du Levant*, characterized the women of the harems as greatly idle, which in turn caused them to be depraved so that they were constantly searching out ways to distract themselves.[147] The harems represented the exotic and erotic nature of Islamic women, suggesting a permissiveness that can only exist within this "prison" created by Islamic men.

Western observers, in the form of travelers, often wrote at length about the appearance and sexuality of the Muslim women throughout various parts of the Middle

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[146]Ibid., p. 95.

[147]Jean Thévenot, as sourced in Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, translated by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

East. The nineteenth century travelers constantly wrote about and linked together the harem and its immorality on the one hand, and the veil and its oppressiveness on the other hand. These travel books were considered respectable and objective sources because it was implied that the Europeans were capable of knowing more about the Orient than the Orient itself.[148] These narratives shaped the myth of the Orient, and rendered it timeless and static,[149] even though these narratives were often varied and sometimes inconsistent. "Much Western literature referred to the harem as though it was present everywhere in the Middle East, as depicted in Orientalist paintings and descriptions of the seraglio in Istanbul."[150]

Although women travelers were free to visit the harems in Egypt, many of the women writers would depict Muslim women as childish and ignorant, not reflecting the lives of the women encountered in the harem, but reflecting pity for these women instead. E. H. Mitchell, in 1891 stated that she would have visited the harems if it helped "our poor sisters to escape from their captivity, but to go and see them in their detestable prison was more than a Christian should have to bear."[151] Not only did Mitchell avoid any type of

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[148]See Rana Kabani, *Europe's Myths of the Orient* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). Kabani argues that writers such as Richard Burton and E.W. Lane produced books for Western consumption, which included Western biases. These travel narratives had official support and were influential in forging the imperial representation of the non-Western world.

[149]These static and timeless accounts tend to view Islamic societies as part of a single nation or community, with one "Islamic ideology."

[150]Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1991), p. 6.

[151]E.H. Mitchell, as cited in Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1991), p. 8.

engagement with these "poor" women, she also gave her description of their tedious and oppressive lives without even encountering them and therefore knowing their conditions first hand.

Although during the nineteenth century European women were calling for equality of roles for women in European countries, they often stressed the differences between the "oppressed" women of the Middle East with their own lives. Margaret Strobel argues that European women also benefitted from the oppression of Eastern women. They produced discourses which reproduced the ideological justification for colonization. Their interactions with "native" women were not based on a framework of equality but rather on hierarchy. Within their own narratives about the colonized women which they observed, they were unable to acknowledge their own position of privilege.[152] Mabel Sharman Crawford, in her book *Through Algeria,* published in 1863, declared that:

> whilst it may be freely admitted that masculine eccentricity or originality of character is to be admired, very few will allow that any departure from ordinary rule is approvable, or even justifiable in a woman. We can applaud our grandmothers for overstepping the conventional proprieties of their day, or we can recognize the right of Chinese and Turkish ladies to go about with uncrippled feet and unveiled faces. But, clearly as we can see the follies of our ancestors, or those of contemporary nations, we cling with unreasoning reverence to every restriction on feminine liberty of action imposed by that society amidst which we live.[153]

The West sustained a view of cultural superiority towards the Orient, and the oppression of Muslim women continued to be understood as determined by religion. Islam was

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[152]See Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

[153]Mabel Sharman Crawford, as cited in Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths: Western Travellers' Perceptions of Middle Eastern Women* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1991), p. 11.

regarded as the cause and effect of this oppression. Muslim women were considered bound by a cruel code of restriction, inaccessible, imprisoned within harems and hidden from men. Women's lives in secular societies of the West were less oppressing, therefore the discourse of Orientalism had to include the call to liberate the Muslim woman from Islam.

Islamic Women as Subject and Object in The Light of Orientalism

In his authoritative work entitled *Orientalism*,[154] Edward Said reframed world history as a global phenomenon. According to him, the division between East and West was produced through historical encounters of Imperialism. Orientalism, as a *discourse*[155] of knowledge (produced in Western intellectual centres of knowledge), socially constructed the "imaginative geography" of "The Orient."[156] The Orient was invented by Europe, and defined by the culture and language of Europe. The Western colonial encounter with the East was not only a process of capitalist expansion, political domination, and financial extraction, but played a profound role in producing representations of both East and West.

> As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism thus comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on

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[154]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[155]Edward Said uses the term *discourse* in Michel Foucault's sense to define Orientalism. "My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period." Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p.3. The term *discourse* used here thus refers to a body of texts that can construct social realities as individuals experience them.

[156]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p.1.

> the Orientalist and on the Western 'consumer' of Orientalism...the Orient ('out there' to the East) is corrected, even penalized, for lying outside the boundaries of European society, 'our' world; the Orient is thus '*Orientalized*'; a process that not only marks the Orient as the province of the Orientalist but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codification...as the *true* Orient. Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist.[157]

Thus the 'Orient' becomes a construction, separate from the 'real thing' which can now be misrepresented by Orientalism. According to this formulation, the success of the West depended not simply on domination but also on the imposition of hegemony and the "development of consent:"[158] the colonized had to accept the "knowledge" of the Orientalist so that they would be willing to be governed. Even those writers who romanticized and valued the East were part of the process of "othering" and homogenizing.[159]

Said does not pay particular attention to the Orientalization of women. Within his theoretical reformulation of "world history as a global phenomenon, (where) the division between West and East" was produced within a historical encounter of imperialism, Said also overlooks the political function of the "viewed" women of Orientalizing narratives. Supposedly these women are inaccessible, hidden in harems and hidden from men. Yet they are "gazed" at through photographs, postcards and writings that depict them in detail.

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[157]Ibid., p. 67 (original emphasis).

[158]Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 17.

[159]See Julia Clancy Smith, "The 'Passionate Nomad' Reconsidered: A European Woman in *L'Algérie française* (Isabelle Eberhardt, 1877-1904)," in *Western Women and Imperialism*, eds., Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp.61-79.

Thus, the colonizer and the colonized are male, and the role women seem to play in creating this narrative reflects a male-centred stance.[160]

Frantz Fanon argues that the colonizer authenticates his "civility" by comparing himself to his perception of the colonized man as oppressor of his own woman.[161] The European male becomes the defender of colonial women against the oppression of their own men: thus colonial rule of the East is legitimized.[162] One can extend Said's discourse by arguing that the images and narratives produced by the Westerner (male or female) of the 'Muslim woman' played an integral part in Orientalizing the East. The inherent contradictions within these representations of women (they were exotic and yet oppressed by Islam), are useful in revealing some of the fictions of the discourse of Orientalism as Imperial power. Structured around a basic dichotomy between the East and the West, between Other and Self,[163] the regime of knowledge that Said calls Orientalism has made polar assumptions about Islam, and by imposing these on Islamic women, has also constructed reductive polar representations of these women. Women were used as agents by Westerners in the process of "civilizing" the colonized, and Western women also

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[160]See Friga Haug, *Beyond Female Masochism* (England: Verso Press, 1992) for an explanation on how the colonized woman becomes an object in the struggle for power between the colonizer and the colonized.

[161]Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

[162]See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,* eds., Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): pp. 51-80.

[163]Matthew Bernstein, "Introduction," in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, eds., Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), p.3.

played the part of authority as colonizers as well. See, for instance, the discussions on the missionary, the colonial wife and the suffragette presented later.

Such an extension of Said's perspectives highlights a major ambiguity in his discourse. Said claims that Orientalism operates within a textual attitude, which reduces "the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live"[164] into textual representations, making text into reality. But in *Orientalism*, Said often replicates what he criticizes. His discourse on Orientalism also becomes homogeneous in the way it portrays the West in the same way as the men of the West reduce the idea of the men of the East. In his writings, Said also focuses only on the idea of Western men, forgetting the role of women. The Western woman is ignored; the Oriental woman never appears but remains an object, sign and symbol of the East. This discourse on Orientalism has no place for diversity; neither does Said's critique of Orientalism.

Said looks to the East and claims that the West has constructed one image of the Oriental. But in doing so, Said also enforces the idea that there is only one East: he amalgamates Islam, Arabia and even Asia into one unified entity, while at the same time overlooking the place and role of women in these diverse cultures and societies. By homogenizing the East, Said himself Orientalizes. Furthermore, Said does to the West what he says the West does to the East: creates a homogenous entity that is in essence a construct in relation to what the East stands for to the Western world. Within this construct, the West can only stand for "peacefulness, liberality, logic, and virtue," if the

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[164]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 93.

Oriental is considered "gullible, lethargic, suspicious, irrational, depraved and childlike."[165] Meanwhile, Western Orientalist discourse and Said's discourse on Orientalism continue to overlook women as fully functioning social entities.

Still, Edward Said's basic critique of the West and his notion of "Orientalism" are now an essential component of any discussion of the relationship between the Islamic world and the European world. Edward Said's arguments are known: Europe's historical fear, envy and hatred of the "infidel" helped shape the ideology of Orientalism, and fortified it with a sense of superiority over the colonized Islamic world. At the center of the critique of Orientalism,[166] one finds the recognition that the colonizers depicted the colonized as inferior, in need of progress which could only be offered by their colonial rulers. The West was defined as the standard against which the Orient was, and continues to be, measured.[167]

Introduction of the Veil into Contemporary North American Thought

The issue of the veil has a complex history. Narratives about Muslim women were seldom found in Western medieval texts, and did not depict these figures as veiled or segregated. It was not until the seventeenth century that the veil and the "seraglio" or harem began to surface, in part because no European could access the Middle East until the Danish expedition to Arabia Felix in 1761-67. However veils were not considered an

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[165]William D. Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 71.

[166]See Edward Said's writings in *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[167]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

exclusively Islamic feature since European women were still using them when venturing out of their homes. From the 1800s on, when the West began its colonial expansion into Islamic lands, it is estimated that 60,000 books were published in the West on the Arab orient alone.[168] European attitudes were reflected not only in scholarly work, but in travel books, which were often based on gossip and second hand European accounts. These books,[169] many of which were written by women,[170] were produced specifically for Western consumption and were replete with Western biases. Even those who valued the Orient were part of this "othering" and homogenizing.[171] Written at a time of increased Western sexual repression and social secularization, these books and diaries represented Islam as

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[168] Laura Nader, "Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Control of Women," *Cultural Dynamics* 2, no. 3 (1989): pp. 323-355.

[169]See, for instance Grace Ellison, *An Englishwoman in a Turkish Harem* (London: Methuen, 1915); Elie Lambert, *Delacroix et les Femmes d'Alger* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1937); Robert Halsband, ed., *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Annie van Sommer and Samuel M. Zwemer, eds., *Our Moslem Sisters: A Cry of Need from Lands of Darkness Interpreted by Those Who Heard It* (New York: F.H. Revell, 1907); and Gordon Waterfield, ed., *Letters From Egypt 1862-1869 by Lady Duff Gordon* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969). Please note that all these books were written by women.

[170]Although Western men did write about the Orient, women were given access to the harems and baths where Muslim women were found. For male Western descriptions, see Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* [1749], translated by Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966) ; Frederic Calvert, *A Tour to the East in the Years 1763 and 1764. With Remarks on the City of Constantinope and the Turks* (London, 1767); and William Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (London, 1798).

[171]Julia Clancy Smith, "The 'Passionate Nomad' Reconsidered: A European Woman in L'Algerie francaise," in *Western Women and Imperialism*, eds. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 61-79.

a theocratic power, and the Orient as a place of depravity and sensuality.[172] It was within this context that the veil and the harem,[173] as the Muslim space for women, became prominent symbols for Western writers.

> When the Orient was Orientalized (to paraphrase Edward Said), when a vast and complex body of knowledge about the Islamic Other developed simultaneously with Western subjugation of that world, the image of the Muslim woman most familiar in the West today emerged.[174]

As Western discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries focussed on the issues of human rights and individual liberty, its representation of the Muslim Orient began converging on the image of the "uncivilized" ignorant male who mistreated women and used them as sex slaves. For present day Islamic scholars such as Mohja Kahf, "the Muslim woman has become the prime model of the enervated, disabled, oppressed creature, the definitive victim of a tyranny"[175] that has for centuries threatened European interests. The harem, from the Enlightenment period on, came to be characterized as a "metaphor for injustice in a civil society and the state and arbitrary government."[176] This was the dark underside of the new European ideology of (a glorified) female middle-class domesticity.

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[172]Rana Kabani, *Europe's Myths of the Orient* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

[173]The *harem* in these depictions are illustrated as sexual prisons, where women are held as slaves. These women are at once considered powerless and invisible, and yet at the same time, are fetishized as erotic and sexual objects.

[174]Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 8.

[175]Ibid,, p. 136.

[176]Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), p. 60.

Today, the issue of veiling is a complex one. There are many reasons why Muslim women wear the veil, even though Western writers continue to reduce this issue to a symbol of Muslim women's oppression. For example, whether Muslim women activists today espouse the ideology of veiling or not, they have been active in advocating an improvement of women's socio-economic position in Islamic society: they are not passive. But the work of these Muslim women activists tends to go unnoticed by scholars and feminist activists in the West. This is partly due to the fact that many Western writings continue to depict Islamic societies as a single community, adhering to a single ideology. In reality, the Muslim concept of the Islamic community or *Umma* does not correspond to a single concrete reality. There is no homogenous or unifying order to Islam. Nonetheless, external Orientalizing narratives about Muslim women continue to condemn Islam as a religion, seeing it as a single social entity and as the source of Muslim women's supposedly common oppression.[177]

Much of the West continues to view adherents to Islam as being violent, confrontational, and barbaric, particularly in the treatment of their women. Islamic countries, on the other hand, have for centuries continually fought the colonial legacy of European cultures. Muslims entering Western societies, therefore, do so with ambivalent feelings: of anger at the colonial attitudes fostered about them and of fear of Western retaliation based on these racial presuppositions. Islamic women have come to find

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[177]Patricia Jeffrey, *Frogs in the Well: Indian Women in Purdah*, (London: Zed Press, 1979).

themselves trapped between the androcentrism of Islam and the paternalistic views of the West, an East-West dichotomy which tends to be "absolutist" and bipolar.[178]

North American news media have enforced the image of the oppressed, veiled, silent Muslim woman, who continues to be victimized by her religion and the patriarchal culture in which she lives.

When Muslim women's lives are the centerpiece of news articles[179], their voices often still remain silent. They continue to be excluded from defining how they are talked about, or even from how they should talk. For instance, in the *Toronto Sun* newspaper on Monday April 13, 1998 there was a half page article regarding the changing times for Muslim women. From the headline, it was assumed that there would be a variety of voices of women from the countries discussed. Instead, the customs and practices of a few women living in the country of Morocco are offered to the reader as representative of all Muslim women around the world.

> When Nabila Benkiran goes to the beach, she slips into a waterproof tunic and pants--to maintain her modesty and spare men any temptation. A few decades ago, even that would have been unthinkable. Religious and cultural taboos made beaches forbidden territory to women in this Muslim nation. Today, women lounge on Morocco's beaches in tiny swimsuits, sit primly in ankle-length "djellabas" or steal away for a swim in gear like Benkiran's. The contrast reflects the alternatives facing the world's half-billion Muslim women. In the land of Islam--stretching from Asia to this African kingdom--tradition,

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[178]Rey Chow, "Violence in the Other Country: China as Crisis, Spectacle, and Woman," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (eds). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p. 89.

[179]Of the three articles cited in this section, images from the articles have been included in Appendix Five: Islamic Women as Depicted in North American Media in order to show corresponding notions about the news stories.

> local custom and politics mix with religious credos to determine not only how women dress, but their role and status.[180]

This commentary of the lives of Moroccan women does not include any discourse by the women who live there, but rather offers a Western perception of a world in which these women live. The author, by leaving out the voices of these women, in fact continues to silence them. The article is not written to share their perspective, but written for a Western culture.

In trying to envision the effects these negative stereotypes of the "oppressed" Muslim woman have had in Canada, the country in which I live and have encountered these perspectives first hand, this article written by Michele Lemon[181] in the *Globe and Mail* national newspaper on Tuesday, January 31, 1995 clearly expresses one prevailing attitude:

> Waiting for the bus on a warm, sunny day outside a grocery store in Mississauga, my musings about the difference between a scarf and a veil are answered. I see a pre-Medieval spectre before my eyes. A woman covered from head to toe makes for the store. On her hands in this 24-degree heat are a woolen pair of winter gloves. The white piece of cloth covering her face flutters ever so slightly in the breeze, but never enough to allow for a glimpse of the person who hides behind it. All that one sees are her eyes. I feel I've been punched in the stomach. Her oppression, for oppression it is, becomes a symbol of the difficulty all women once faced and a startling reminder that the struggle for equality has not ended. I understand all too well why she wears this hideous costume, but I despise it nonetheless. How could anyone defend the outfit as preserving anything but the low regard and true unimportance of women, all protestations of respect to the contrary......It is not the woman I despise but her compliance in a charade that can in no

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[180]"Times Changing For Muslim Women," *Toronto Sun* (Monday April 13, 1998). See Appendix 5.1.

[181]The article states that Michele Lemon has an M.A. in Islamic Studies from the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. She teaches college in Mississauga.

way be defended on religious grounds, that handy refuge of the desperate authoritarian.[182]

Lemon is unable to see the woman, she only sees the veil. In fact, through her description of what she sees, Lemon de-humanizes the woman in front of her, and reduces her to nothing more than a patriarchal symbol that must be abolished.

There was only one article published in response to Lemon's by Rahat Kurd on Wednesday, February 15, 1995 (two weeks after the fact), questioning whose voice the reader had heard in the original article and what voice was left invisible: no one questioned the Muslim woman and her practices. She is considered weak and powerless, and therefore not capable of thought. As Kurd states, Michele Lemon's "failure to simply try communicating with the woman whose face veil she objected to so strenuously is not encouraging."[183]

Appendix Five (*Islamic Women as Depicted in North American Media)* offers an array of images of Islamic women, as currently depicted in media. The images in Appendix Five illustrate how the notion of Muslim women as oppressed and silenced continues to be presented, and how such representation conveys the idea of one homogenized "Muslim woman" (with no context as to geography, ethnicity or class). Also included is a list of newspaper articles on Muslim women found in six major Canadian newspapers from 1993-1997. Only the words "Islam" and "wom*n" were searched, but the titles of the articles overwhelmingly display the fact that the majority of articles written about Muslim women

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[182]Michelle Lemon, "Editorial," *Globe and Mail* (January 31, 1995). See Appendix 5.2 for image that followed the article.

[183]See Appendix 5.3 for the image included with the responding letter.

include the notion of "veil" and "religious oppression." Out of the 96 articles found, more than half of the news stories talked about the death of Muslim women, their silence imposed by an Islamic society and the imposition of the veil upon their bodies.

Chapter Four

How North American Film Portrays Islam

Not only are perceptions assimilated from television, books and the newspaper industry, but they are also strengthened through popular film. The commercial film industry creates cultural products that often reflect societal norms. The popularity of these images is based on the fact that they reflect the "anxieties and longings" of their audience:[184] as contemporary cultural "texts," they are capable of expressing "the pressing concerns"[185] of a moment in history. Film is often informed by the news, and reinforces the images portrayed through these media outlets: they are capable of conveying religious ideology and values in contemporary culture.[186] Popular media such as cinema performs religious functions as public sites for the vocalization and discussion of meaning.[187] Therefore films,

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[184]Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. x.

[185]Ibid., p. x.

[186]See Darrol M. Bryant, "Cinema, Religion, and Popular Culture," in *Religion in Film*, eds., John R. May and Michael Bird (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), pp. 104-114. Bryant claims that art is the expression and reshaping of the loyalties, anxieties and aspirations of a society. He states that "movies do what we have always asked of popular religion, namely, they provide us with archetypal forms of humanity - heroic figures - and instruct us in the basic values and myths of our society. As we watch the characters and follow the drama on the screen, we are instructed in the values and myths of our culture and given models on which to pattern our lives." p. 106.

[187]Kelton Cobb, "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Film in Tillich's Theology of Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXIII, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 53-84.

as a social form of religion, are considered powerful conveyors of ideology and ethics.[188]

Although fantasy,[189] these media representations are usually taken for granted to be rooted in reality, while they reinforce stereotypes and manufacture consensus. Joel Martin and Conrad Ostwalt, in the introduction to their edited volume entitled *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film*, argue that movies are permeated with religious values. They have more than the power to entertain:

> films, as with other cultural forms, have the potential to reinforce, to challenge, to overturn, or to crystallize religious perspectives, ideological assumptions, and fundamental values. Films bolster and challenge our society's norms, guiding narratives, and accepted truths.[190]

As viewers, we tend to accept many of the images on screen as somehow truly reflective of the "universal truths" of the world in which we live.[191] This also means that cultural expressions, exhibited through media and film, are shaped by politics.[192]

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[188]Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967).

[189]See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66-84 about the colonial stereotyping of the Other as "fantasy." He states that the stereotype is a substitute as well as a shadow. The colonized Other has become a wild fantasy of the colonizer.

[190]Joel Martin and Conrad Ostwalt, *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press Inc, 1995), p. vii.

[191]See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969) and Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed., Michael Banton (London: Tavistock, 1966), pp. 1-46 for a explanation of how secular significances, such as popular film, can effectively define reality in a consumer society.

[192]Joel Martin and Conrad Ostwalt, *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press Inc, 1995), p. 10.

In the past eighty years, while American cinema "continues with a long tradition in which images have been used to produce emotion, to strengthen attachment, and to encourage imitation,"[193] it has reflected its relationship to the Orient[194] in an ever-changing evolution. It has adopted the narrative and visual conventions, as well as the cultural assumptions, on which Orientalism is founded. The Orient is at first seen as mysterious, and the recurring figure of the veiled woman in movies[195] such as *Thief of Damascus* (1952), *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), and *Ishtar* (1987) becomes an allegory for the Western requirement to unveil the mystery of the Orient.[196] The Arab Muslim is seen as backward and undeveloped, in need of Western knowledge and domination. The Orient, in these films, is rescued from its own obscurantism:

> Colonized people, like women, here require the guidance and protection of the colonial patriarchal figure. The madonna/whore dichotomy, applied within a colonial context, distinguishes submissive 'natives' who are 'warm,' 'giving,' 'noble savages,' form the rebellious 'barbarians' dangerous to civilization and themselves, yesterdays 'assassins' and today's 'terrorists.'[197]

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[193]Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 3.

[194]We must remember that Hollywood's view of the Orient is a product of the colonialist imagination as well as Western male gaze. See Ella Shohat, "Gender in Hollywood's Orient," *Middle East Report (Number 162)* 20, no. 1 (January-February 1990): pp. 40-42.

[195]Bibliographic information about all movies cited in this thesis can be found in the Film Bibliography section.

[196]See Ella Shohat, "Gender in Hollywood's Orient," *Middle East Report (Number 162)* 20, no. 1 (January-February 1990): pp. 40-42.

[197]Ella Shohat, "Gender in Hollywood's Orient," *Middle East Report (Number 162)* 20, no. 1 (January-February 1990): p. 40.

The image of the Arab as a dangerous threat in the Western world has been accentuated by the recent historical conflicts between the West and the Islamic Middle East (such as the Gulf War, the Salman Rushdie Affair, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the US war on Afghanistan in retaliation for the bombings of September 11, 2001 and the war on Iraq against terrorism). "Most movies involving terrorism look at the subject from a US perspective."[198] The cultural expression of Muslims and Arabs in the cinema reinforces, and is reinforced by, the structure of power relations between the Middle East and the United States (and the Western world).

The news media and the film industry, thought to give a more-or-less accurate depiction of the world, plays a large part in sustaining stereotypical images as representative of the whole culture of Islam (and this is not done in isolation, but often in concert with governments, military and industrial complexes). From the beginning of American cinema in 1896, the image of the Arab (who is Muslim) has always been stereotypical - "the cultural 'other',"[199] which are often projected along racial and religious themes. "Today's imagemakers regularly link the Islamic faith with male supremacy, holy

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[198]Christopher Read, "Terror Movies Surging in Popularity: Viewers Seeking Insight," *National Post* (September 19, 2001).
Source:
http://www.nationalpost.com/features/siege/story.html?f=/stories/20011019/695104.html
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[199]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 2. Jack Shaheen has undertaken a comprehensive review of Arab screen images, discussing virtually every feature that Hollywood has made portraying Arabs, which includes more than 900 films. Out of these 900 films, Shaheen found only 50 feature films which included Arab women, all portrayed as eroticized, demonized or humiliated and silent. In his survey, Shaheen does not focus on the image of the Muslim woman in the films. He reserves only two pages entitled *Maidens* in his introduction to give a brief overview regarding the portrayal of Arab Muslim women in the movies.

war, and acts of terror, depicting Arab Muslims as hostile alien intruders, and as lecherous, oily sheikhs intent on using nuclear weapons."[200] The "Arab" has countlessly been depicted as a murderer, rapist, religious fanatic, oil-rich and ignorant, and abusers of women. During the early 1900s, films embellished on the images of the Arab caricatures written about by the Europeans. In mythic Arabia, bearded Arabs rode camels in the desert, waved swords, killed each other and coveted Western heroines.[201] Women were kept in harems and belly danced in revealing clothing. These old stereotypes have been replaced with new ones. The sheik and lusty despot has disappeared, leaving hijackers, kidnappers and terrorists. Muslim women have disappeared behind the chador and burka.[202]

Select usage of words by the media (a further example of semiotic warfare) in describing Islam plays a large part in the sensationalizing and stereotyping of Islam. In hundreds of movies, Arabs and Muslims have been referred to in very negative ways. Such slurs as devil-worshipers, rag-heads, towel-heads, sand-niggers, son-of-whores and sons-of-she-camels have been hurled at Arab characters in Hollywood movies. "Still, other movies contain the word 'Ayrab', a vulgar Hollywood epithet for Arab that is comparable to dago, greaser, kike, nigger and gook."[203] More recent successful movies have increased

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[200]Ibid., p. 9.

[201] Ibid.

[202]Alice Swensen, "Hollywood Harems: A Documentary by Tania Kamal-Eldin," *Café Arabica* (May 2000).
Source: http://www.cafearabica.com/culture15/culture15/culharems15.html.

[203]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 11.

the depiction of Arab Muslims as faceless militant terrorists. For instance, the word *"terrorist"* is used eight times to describe the Muslims in the movie *The Siege*.[204] Rarely does the media distinguish between religion and politics in Islamic countries. Furthermore, the acts of terrorists are taken to represent the views and beliefs of most Muslims.

Therefore all we encounter in depictions of Islam is a primitive, backward religion, associated with so-called Muslim fundamentalism, that being militant, terrorist, and violent, increasing the fear of this "other" religion. Many Muslims feel that they in fact are not the terrorists but rather are the ones being terrorized. Muslims entering Western societies do so with ambivalent feelings of frustration at the colonial attitudes fostered about them and of the fear of Western retaliation based on these racial suppositions.

In fact, anti-Islamic sentiment escalated into violence in many parts of the world after the tragic events on September 11, 2001, even though no groups had yet claimed responsibility or been officially blamed. For instance, in Chicago, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Arab-American community center, a firebomb was thrown at a mosque in Montreal, in Australia a schoolbus filled with Muslim schoolchildren was attacked and a Lebanese church was covered in swastikas and then an attempt was made to burn it down, and 300 protestors in Illinois marched on a mosque keeping people from worshiping. Mosques and Islamic centers in various American and Canadian cities were placed under constant police protection based on a series of threats and anti-Muslim incidents.[205]

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[204] *The Siege*, directed by Edward Zwick (USA, 1998).

[205] Staff and Agencies, "Anti-Islamic Violence Breaks Out Around World," *The Guardian* (September 13, 2001).
Source: http://www.gaurdian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4256234,00.html.

Not only does the media fail to portray Islam accurately, but it fails to show how Muslim people around the world perceive their own fate and faith in the new world order.[206] The diversity of Islam (the fact that culture and politics shape one's understanding of religion) has been muted: actually, North American people who are rushing to see such films are, at the same time, learning about Islam, or rather unlearning, since these films are based on fantasy and are not truly reflective of all Muslims. Canadian video stores recorded a large surge in rentals of movies featuring violent terrorist attacks on Americans after the tragic incidents occurring in New York and Washington. *The Siege* (1998) was ranked number 3 on the list of top selling DVDs. *True Lies*,[207] a 1994 movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as a US agent battling an Islamic terrorist group named the Crimson Jihad, ranked number 5. In the movie, murderous Muslim fanatics steal nuclear weapons and threaten to detonate them in the United States. The Arab Muslim characters appear brutish, and incapable. In contrast, Harry (Arnold Schwarzenegger) shows "just and superior Western values."[208] *Air Force One*,[209] a 1997 movie about an Islamic terrorist hijacking of the American president's plane was renting 10 times higher than before the attacks.

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[206]Anser Hassan, "Invitation to Islam: Islamic Stereotypes in Western Mass Media," *The International Relations Journal* (September 1995). Source: http://psirus.sfsu.edu/intrel/irjournal/sp95/hassan.html.

[207]*True Lies*, directed by James Cameron (USA, 1994). This movie made over $146 million at the box office in the United States.

[208]Markus Kirchhoff, "Depicting 'Arabs': *True Lies*," *Cinema and the Middle East Conference, Hambourg* (December 1999).

[209]*Air Force One*, directed by Wolfgang Peterson (USA, 1997). This movie made over $172 million.

The official spokesperson for Rogers Video, one of the largest video chains in Canada, claimed that people were perhaps trying to gain insight into the events and the minds of the terrorists, looking for similarities and even wondering if the attackers had received their ideas from a Hollywood plot as the media had started speculating on this thought as well.[210] The media in many ways has painted a distorted picture that equates terrorism with all Islam, and Hollywood has reinforced this muted stereotype, which is often overwhelmingly negative. Regrettably, it is one of the only images that people can know based on these images. Islam has continually been depicted as 'other', separate from values of Western democracy and society: now though, Muslims will have to battle against the label of Islamic terrorist.

The movie *Navy SEALs*[211] was released in 1990, and was one of the first instances in popular film that Islamic "terrorists" were shown to endanger the "civilized world."[212] Viewed in hindsight, this movie can be seen as the beginning of the portrayal in American films of the Islamic threat extending into the Westernized world. In the movie, the US flexes its power by stepping in to deal with the threat as it spreads into allied countries (in

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[210] Christopher Read, "Terror Movies Surging In Popularity," *National Post* (September 19, 2001).
Source:
http://www.nationalpost.com/features/siege/story.html?f=/stories/20011019/695104.html
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[211] *Navy SEALs*, directed by Lewis Teague (USA, 1990). This movie made $24.8 million at the box office.

[212] Movies such as *Protocol* (1984), *Jewel of the Nile* (1985) and *Bolero* (1985) offer caricatures of Arab peoples. Movies such as *Delta Force* (1986), *Iron Eagle* (1986) and *Into the Night* (1985) begin to offer images of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists who hate Americans. See Jack G. Shaheen, "The Hollywood Arab," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 14, no. 4 (Winter 1987): pp. 148-157.

this instance Spain). A special elite force known as the Navy Seals, created to deal with acts of terrorism and guerilla wars, are sent in to halt the Islamic terrorist group in order to protect the defenseless, innocent civilians. The story-line is as follows: An Islamic "anti-American" terrorist, Ben Shaheed, is the leader of a group called Al-Shahoudah, which has stolen stinger missiles and then begins to attack civilian aircraft in Spain. The Navy Seals are sent in to destroy the missiles. Although images of Beirut are shown, Muslim women are nowhere to be seen. In fact, the only "Muslim" woman (she says that she is half-Muslim) in the movie is a reporter, who claims to have access to the Al-Shahoudah. In order to prove her loyalty to America, she is persuaded by a Navy Seal member to break her journalistic code of ethics to reveal the whereabouts of the terrorists.

This movie illustrates the looming threat of Islam, and the terror and death they inflict in their own city, Beirut. In the credits, one of the Muslims is listed only as "terrorist", with no recognition to the character portrayed. This movie, in effect, links terrorists to Islam specifically. As the image of "terrorist" Islam develops over time in popular film, Islam is depicted as an encroaching threat aimed at getting closer to US interests (in relation to the actual threat perceived in the US and the Western world): although this threat has proven real, not all Muslims are threatening. The Hollywood film industry can be seen as advancing the fears of American viewers regarding this Islamic conspiracy.

Another kind of threat to American citizens is depicted in the film *Not Without My Daughter*.[213] Set in the mid-1980s during the Iran-Iraq war, the movie tells the story of a couple living in America but who go to Iran for a brief visit. There, the American wife, Betty

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[213]*Not Without My Daughter*, directed by Brian Gilbert (USA, 1991).

Mahmoody (Sally Fields), is battered and intimidated, kept under house arrest, while her Iranian husband, Moody, becomes violent and jealous. Moody (Alfred Molina) is "a pure product of his culture, a mysterious, misogynist Easterner."[214] He is depicted as a fanatic, who is willing to beat his wife in order to have her follow the tenets of Islam. The wife plots to escape Iran with her daughter back to the West.

The movie began filming in the summer of 1990 and was released in January 1991 while tension was mounting in the Middle East: Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait in August 1990. The movie's highest box office ranking was the week the war in the Persian Gulf began. Although movie reviewers denounced it for exploiting the stereotype of the demonic Iranian, it made over 14 million dollars. The few reviews written about the movie concurred that "it consisted of approximately 80 percent racism and 20 percent melodrama."[215] Reviewers acknowledged the fact that the movie exploited the stereotype of the demonic Iranian. Despite the negative reviews, in the absence of other film representations of Iran and Islamic culture at the time, it was able to gain control of a broad audience in order to disseminate its particular perspective on Islam and Muslims. The movie was granted authenticity, and was accepted as characteristic of all Islamic, as well as Middle Eastern culture, even though the movie was based on the story of only one woman's experience.[216]

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[214]Caryn James, as cited in Margaret Miles, Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 71. The article "Embrace the Stereotype: Kiss the Movie Goodbye" by Caryn James appeared in *The New York Times*, January 27, 1991.

[215]Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 71.

[216]Ibid.

In the movie *Not Without My Daughter*, the Islamic threat is now felt directly by an American woman, even though not on American soil. We are not presented with a Muslim woman's point of view, but rather the voice of an American woman, who is depicted as the only one capable of offering a dissenting opinion of the life around her. All other Muslim women shown in this movie play minor roles, either as forces of the oppression (they are chador-covered women who carry guns in order to enforce the law of veiling), out to further the violence of Islam, or silent voices who cannot help themselves but can only lead this American woman to men who will save her from this "primitive" society. They are seen as victims of the oppressing Islamic government, either mimicking their rules onto other women, or women afraid to speak for fear of reprisals.

By selectively concentrating on the experience of Betty Mahmoody as an American victim trapped in Iran, the movie continues the silencing of the voices of Islamic women within the movie. No individual thought or personality can be ascribed to these women, further enforcing the view that Muslim women have no power to control their situations. They are hidden behind veils, making them invisible: this invisibility is their oppression. Only an American woman appears capable of outwitting her Muslim husband and escaping the clutches of the evil rule of Islamic Iran. Claiming to be a story based on fact,[217] this film depicted women, especially American women, as victims of the savage, violent Islamic religion in Iran, in need of American protection. The religion of Islam is equated with

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[217]The original novel by Betty Mahmoody offers a description of how her husband's personality changes over time, from a happy and successful man into a "domestic tyrant." This is one of many divergences from the novel not found in the movie. As cited in Margaret Miles, *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p. 74.

ignorance: Moody, in trying to explain his family's behaviour since the revolution, states that they are a very religious people and basically uneducated. And Betty Mahmoody constantly reiterates throughout the film how primitive this Persian and Muslim nation truly is. She flees Iran to assure that her daughter will not be raised as a Muslim in such an oppressive country, where national identity is Islamic. The only likeable Muslims in the film are those who have had exposure to the West or been influenced by it.

Another movie released in 1990 was *The Sheltering Sky,*[218] set in post World War II North Africa. It tells the story of a young American couple who journey across the Sahara desert. Kit (Debra Winger) and her husband Port Moresby (John Malkovich) wander the streets of inhospitable towns where the muezzins are always calling out prayers, filled with Muslim men who are greedy, and Muslim women who are veiled and always in the background. Women are envisioned from a distance: they are seen on rooftops, tending to children or in alleyways, sitting at the backs of buses, but always away from the social realities of the men. This distancing makes them inaccessible. Although the coverings of the women change colour from town to town (beige and black), they are never spoken to, and never speak.

When Port has a conversation with an elderly female British travel writer who spends her time writing of North Africa, she says of the Arabs, "they search our rooms, they steal our things and they eavesdrop. The Arabs, they are a stinking low race with nothing to do but spy." When Port becomes ill with fever, Kit tries to enter a hotel, but is not allowed entry. At this point in time, a local woman finally speaks in the movie, telling

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[218]*The Sheltering Sky*, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci ((USA, 1990)

Kit that because of the epidemic, she cannot let them enter. She speaks to them from behind a curtain, and we never see her face, again remaining veiled and hidden. When we do see the people who have been stricken with the Typhoid epidemic, all we are shown are women's heads covered in cloth, and children with flies all over their faces, huddled in a back alley. There are no ill men, just hidden women and children, an invisible part of society. At one other point in the film, the viewer hears another Muslim woman speak: a chador covered woman brings food for Kit while Port is ill, but she never enters the doorway, and the camera never closes in on her face or figure. She remains a distant veiled figure, on the threshold of the room, a liminal entity, never entering and not really being seen.

Reviewers also found this movie to be highly stereotyped, where a foreign culture attempts to devour the grief-stricken American woman, Kit, after her husband dies. "The image of the turbaned tribesman creeping over the sand to attack the American woman is part of the eroticism and danger that imbues *The Sheltering Sky*."[219] The movie is interspersed with scenes of men praying, working and walking in the streets, and hustling tourists. The Muslim women are all covered and hidden, in a way denying their function in society.

The same dark alleys, filthy towns and inhospitable Arab Muslims can be found in the movie *Naked Lunch*,[220] produced only one year later in 1991, again based in Tangier.

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[219]Caryn James, as cited in Jack G Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 427. The review appeared in the *New York Times* (January 27, 1991) and made stereotypical connections to the movie *Not Without My Daughter*.

[220]*Naked Lunch*, directed by David Cronenberg (CAN, 1991).

Based on the William Burroughs novel, the movie is set in 1953, and Bill Lee (Peter Weller), in a drug induced state, finds himself in a bizarre land called Interzone, a strange and surreal place inhabited by "Arabs, mugwumps, half-alien, half-insect creatures, man-sized centipedes, carnivorous typewriters and bizarre humans."[221] Hidden amongst all these freakish creatures are women covered in chadors, veiled and silent. This nightmarish hallucination is also filled with muezzins calling out the times for prayer, drug users, gay men and lesbian women.

Amongst the women, there is one who speaks and is unveiled: her name is Fadela (Monique Mercure). When she is seen in the market surrounded by veiled Muslim women, someone points out that they are indeed lesbians - "Fadela's lovers." Fadela is the only female resident who speaks to the Americans. She is referred to as a witch and her female lovers are her coven, because she has power. She is also considered to be on intimate terms with a major drug supplier named Benway (Roy Scheider). It is only when Bill Lee tries to find Benway to free himself of this hellish world, that he realizes Fadela is really Benway in drag: there are in fact no women who really speak or have power in Interzone. The truth of who Fadela is turns out to be apocalyptic. Fadela, who is most likely Muslim as Interzone citizens are Arab Muslims, is killed for having power and for revealing herself. A woman cannot exist with power, and so she is literally split apart, and

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[221]Jack G Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 345.

from her skin emerges Benway. In a way, she has committed fitna,[222] a transgression of territorial sexual limits which brings on chaos, disorder and destruction.[223]

In 1991, another movie showing the hazards of Western women spending time in Islamic countries was made in Hong Kong. *Armour of God II*, starring Jackie Chan was re-released in the United States in 1997 as the movie *Operation Condor.*[224] I bring up this movie to illustrate how the anxiety of Westerners towards Muslims and Arabs continues to be perpetuated. Jackie (Jackie Chan) is an adventurer, hired by the US embassy in Spain to find a cache of gold hidden in the Sahara desert. The gold had been stolen by Germans during World War II from other European countries and the United Nations wishes to give it back to the appropriate countries.

Jackie, along with a partner Ada (Carol Cheng), Elsa (Eva Cobo de Garcia) the German granddaughter of one of the men who hid the gold, and a traveler named Momoko (Shoko Ikeda) they find along the road, head out into the desert to find the gold but are constantly being attacked by two bumbling Arab Muslims (recognizable by their checkered

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[222]Fitna has various meanings. One meaning is that it is a test from Allah. The other meaning is that it is a form of chastisement or punishment. See Sur'ah 2:191 of the Qur'ān.

[223]Fitna is ascribed to A'ishah, the Prophet's wife. She was considered the first Islamic woman to transgress the territorial sexual limits. Fitna describes chaos, disorder and destruction. Fitna is used to describe the reason why there will be more women than men in hell. It has also been used to describe the negative outcome of a woman who is put into political office. See Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993).

[224]*Operation Condor*, directed by Frankie and Jackie Chan (USA, 1997). Although this movie was a re-release of an earlier film, was edited and poorly dubbed, it managed to make over $10 million dollars in the United States.

kuffiyehs[225]). When asked which organization they belong to, they reply that they are "soldiers of the faith who will never give up the holy battle." In the desert, Ada and Elsa are kidnaped by desert bandits and put up for sale at a sex slave auction. At the auction, we see rich sheiks bartering for the women, and they are finally sold for 150 camels. Luckily, Jackie has disguised himself as a sheik to buy the girls and rescue them from the "smelly" Arabs. It seems that non-Arab women cannot be left alone for fear of being kidnaped and sold into slavery, for the pleasures of rich Arab Muslim men. Throughout the movie, the two Arab Muslim men are depicted as inept, but constantly show up invoking the name of Allah as thanks for finding Jackie again so that they be able to get the gold themselves. Arabs are portrayed as greedy, foul smelling men who constantly threaten Western interests, the gold and the "lovely" women who accompany Jackie.

The curiosity toward Muslims, who have been viewed from a distance by North Americans, then transforms into anxiety when Muslim nations are seen as military adversaries. Religious rhetoric becomes a significant catalyst in the selling of the Gulf War to North Americans. The culmination of the stereotype of Islam as the embodiment of evil, tyranny and oppression, in comparison to the good, righteous, and democratic United States becomes manifest in many of the films made after 1990.

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[225]In many American movies, the Arabs are often recognizable by wearing the kuffiyeh, a Palestinian symbol. Interestingly enough, this head covering has become a hot fashion accessory in Japan, with teenagers wearing it around the chin, with camouflage t-shirts and army-style pants. They are sold in army surplus stores. See Brian Whitaker, "An Arab Aesthetic," *The Guardian* (November 13, 2001). Source: http://www.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4298366,00.html.

This fear of an encroaching threat can be observed in the movie *Executive Decision* (1996).[226] Directed by Stuart Baird, *Executive Decision* is about a US 747 airliner being held hostage by Muslim terrorist Nagi Hassan (played by David Suchet: he also refers to himself as Altar, meaning "revenge" in ancient Arabic), who is intent on destroying the plane and all of Washington, DC in a suicidal mission as a form of revenge for the death of his wife and children.

The movie begins with Colonel Austin Travis (Steven Seagal) and his special forces team, who are raiding a Chechen Mafia house in Trieste on May 17, 1995 in order to recover a cache of stolen Russian chemical weapons. The mission is unsuccessful because the chemicals have disappeared. Three months later, the United States captures an Islamic leader in Cyprus. In response to the capture, Nagi Hassan hijacks a plane coming from Athens, and threatens to blow up the plane if the leader is not released.

A US Army Intelligence consultant, David Grant (Kurt Russell) believes that Hassan's real motive is to destroy Washington in a suicidal attack. The United States decides that its only course of action is to destroy the plane before it reaches US airspace. Grant and his team eventually get on the hijacked plane, where they do indeed find the chemical weapons. Although the American President is willing to let Jaffa, the Islamic leader, free to stop Hassan's mission, Hassan does not desist in his kamikaze-style plan to destroy the "heart" of America. He states,

> I rejoice in your freedom, Abu Jaffa. Allah has blessed us. A great destiny awaits us both. In a few hours you will see I have achieved a great glory on your behalf. All the people of Islam will embrace you as its chosen leader.

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[226] *Executive Decision*, directed by Stuart Baird (USA, 1996). This movie earned more than $56.6 million dollars at the box office in the United States.

> I am your friend, the sword of Allah, and with it I will strike deep into the heart of the infidel.

Claiming to be "the true soldier of Islam," Hassan shoots his second-in-command who does not wish to continue the mission, and then takes time out to do his daily prayer. The act of prayer at this point suggests that his actions are acceptable as a devout Muslim. Another terrorist is shown to wear a ring emblazoned with the word "Allah" on it. And Hassan himself upholds his cause as "Qur'ānic." Terrorism is equated with Islamic practice and belief.[227]

The bomb on the plane is eventually disarmed, but Hassan does not give himself up. He kills the pilot while screaming "Allah Akbar" and then is shot dead by one of the US Special Forces team. The film ends with the Frank Sinatra tune "It's Nice to Go Trav'ling", insinuating that it's okay to travel but there is no place like the good old United States of America. The credits at the end of the film do not even list the names of Hassan's cohorts, but bills them simply as "terrorists."

This movie takes us one step closer to visualizing the "Islamic threat" attempting to invade American airspace, and therefore heightens our anxiety. "Any non-American with an Arab or Islamic background is a suicidal threat to the United States."[228] The voices of Islamic women remain silenced and invisible, further reinforcing the threat of Muslim men onto their own women as well as onto Western men and women. The actions of Muslim men are carried out over the bodies of dead women, which keeps them silent and visible

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[227]Jack G Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).

[228]Tom Tunney, "Executive Decision," *Sight and Sound* 6, no. 6 (June 1996), p. 38.

as the motivator of their actions, but invisible on the screen. They are defined only through their relationship to the male protagonists. Journalist Edward R. Murrow aptly states, "what we do not see or read is as important, if not more important, than what we do see." [229] Through the use of selective imagery (violent men, absent women), the "cultural other" is further vilified. A flight attendant named Jean (Halle Berry) tries to understand Hassan and asks him how threatening the lives of the people on the plane can help his cause. Hassan's only response is that it is not her "place" to understand. The Muslim is too different to comprehend.

The power of Islam in this movie is displayed as violence and aggression, men who are representations of the "primitive", fundamental and fanatical aspects of Islam, which threatens the innocent, as they continually encroach on US space.[230] Although we as viewers may wish to think that these stereotypical depictions of Islam subsided with the Gulf War, they do in fact continue to persist. *Executive Decision* was made in 1996 and from March 17 to March 26 was the highest grossing film in the country. Executives at

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[229]Heather McCoy, "Author Speaks on Arab Stereotyping," *The Daily Beacon* (October 15, 2001). Source: http://dailybeacon.utk.edu/article.php/3948.

[230]The movies *True Lies*, *Executive Decision*, and *Rules of Engagement* have all been assisted by the United States Department of Defense and the US Marine Corps, who provided needed equipment, personnel and technical assistance. More than fourteen feature films which depict Americans killing Arabs have credited the Department of Defense for their assistance in the making of these films. When the Department of Defense was questioned about their involvement in the movie *Rules of Engagement* by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, their responding letter stated: "we would not provide assistance to a production that we believed implicitly or explicitly encouraged audiences to believe that untoward behaviour of ethnic or religious characters on the screen would be generalized to include all members of the group in reality." As cited in Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 405.

Warner Brothers claimed that the movie was not meant to be stereotypical, but that it was in fact a reflection of "the headlines of the moment."[231]

The Siege,[232] released in 1998, is loosely based on the bombing of the World Trade Centre. This movie continues to perpetuate this primitive, violent and aggressive Islam by finally developing the Islamic threat into a direct attack on the United States: Islamic fundamentalists threaten its greatest icons, the FBI building (One Federal Place) and New York City, in order to gain the release of an imprisoned sheikh. In fact, all Arab and Muslim Americans have become suspects, and are persecuted for information regarding the "homogenous" threat of Islam. The opening scene of the film shows the bombing of an American military building in Saudi Arabia. Bill Clinton, then president, is shown calling the people responsible for the bombing "terrorists" and "cowards" because they have committed "murderous acts." As the film continues, the background sounds of Muslims praying are underscored by the muezzin's call to prayer echoing through New York city and FBI Headquarters. Then the viewer sees a city bus, and realizes that Arab Muslim terrorists are holding people hostage, including six children. FBI agent Anthony "Hub" Hubbard (Denzel Washington) pleads with the terrorists to let the elderly go, but instead the terrorists blow up the bus at the moment when the elderly begin exiting the bus, and thus litter the streets with their bodies. This bombing is put into the context of reality, with law enforcement officials stating that this has been the "worst terrorist bombing in the United States since Oklahoma city," leaving 25 people dead.

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[231]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 189.

[232]*The Siege*, directed by Edward Zwick (USA, 1998). This movie earned over $40 million dollars at the box office.

Authorities search Muslim homes, malls and student organizations searching for, as Hub states, "anyone critical of this country." Arab Muslims are then shown bombing a crowded Broadway theatre, killing the "city's cultural leaders," and then trying to bomb a school and using children as hostages. Hub is able to save the children and shoot the Arab Muslim. When the FBI building, which houses the Counter-Terrorism Taskforce, is destroyed and 200 people are killed, the US chief of staff asserts that the Arab Muslims are "attacking our way of life." News coverage labels this as "war", and images of angry Americans are shown calling Arab Muslims "towel-heads" along with women in chadors. The President of the United States enacts the War Powers Act and Martial law (the original title of the movie) is declared in New York, allowing the army to enter New York to find the terrorists. General William Devereaux (Bruce Willis) takes charge of New York and states that they are looking for 20 men, but that they will search the 15,000 Arab and Muslim men living in Brooklyn to find the culprits. 2,000 men between the ages of 14 to 30 are rounded up and put into detention camps behind barbed wire, while the army conducts house to house searches. Even Frank Haddad (Tony Shalhoub), an Arab-American FBI agent who has been an American citizen for 20 years and served as an agent for 10 years, finds his twenty year old son interned in the camp because they are "Shi'ite" and therefore suspect. Outside the camp, images of covered Islamic women are shown, but they do not speak, they just wait for the men.

Hub and Frank finally find a man named Samir (Sami Bouajila), who they believe is responsible for getting the bomber, Ali Waziri, into the country. Samir is a teacher at a Brooklyn college who teaches Arab Studies and seems to spend his time with other Arabs in cafés in Brooklyn: he has not truly integrated into American society. We learn that

Samir's brother was a suicide bomber in Palestine, and he died because he was told that "to die for Allah is beautiful" and that his brother will live in paradise with 70 virgins. Throughout the film, we learn various things about CIA agent Elise Kraft[233] (Annette Bening): Samir is her contact, and she is having a sexual relationship with him; while being tailed by the FBI we see pictures of her wearing a veil like a Muslim woman; she speaks fluent Arabic, lived in the Middle East and thought it was paradise, had a Palestinian boyfriend ("they seduce you with their suffering") and "loves Lebanese men." Elise finds out that Samir is the last bomber because he begins to ritually wash himself, as a Muslim would do before prayers. She watches him pray, cleanse his hands and don the ceremonial cotton tunic associated with death. Elise goes to quote the Qur'ān to stop Samir, but he pulls a gun on her. Hub shows up but it's too late, Samir shoots Elise and Hub then shoots Samir.

While Elise lays dying she too prays, beginning with what seems to be the Lord's Prayer[234] but ends her prayer with "Inshallah" (God's will) at the end, leaving us to wonder if she too is a Muslim spy. Elise seems to exhibit signs that she is indeed Muslim, but the truth remains hidden: only when she reveals herself through prayer does she lose her life. Her affiliation with Samir makes her too different, not American enough. Devereaux earlier states that women do not understand the Middle East, and that Elise/Sharon was

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[233]We find out that Elise Kraft is also known as Sharon Bridger, part of covert operations in Iraq during the Gulf War. She was responsible for training men to help bring down Saddam Hussein, and Samir is one of those young men she trained in how to build bombs.

[234]The first Surah of the Qur'ān also has the same lines in it: guide us to the straight way and forgive those who trespass. Because the translation is the same, it is unknown whether Elise kraft is praying the Christian or the Islamic prayer.

compromised because she suffered for "her suffering people." The threat to America has become internal, with the fear that immigrants are now a menace, and the fear that American people will convert to Islam. Hub, by shooting Samir, ends "the siege" on America. The only other images offered of Muslim women in the movie remain silent: they are always shown as covered by veils and chadors, secluded in the immigrant parts of Brooklyn, never speaking and therefore largely invisible to the lives of the Muslim men and Americans in the movie.

Although American Arabs felt under attack and discriminated against, and went so far as to ask the director to change the plot by substituting 'militiamen' for 'Islamic fundamentalists', it was released in its original form. Producer-Director Edward Zwick stated in a HBO special on the making of *The Siege*, that the movie was in fact "based on truth, rather than a fiction thriller."[235] Denzel Washington, who played the lead character, told a CNN reporter that "this is not a stereotypical view of any group of people, by any means...unfortunately, we're imitating life."[236]

Other films that continue this discrimination include *Three Kings*[237] (1999) and *Rules of Engagement*[238] (2000). In the movie *Three Kings*, there are more images of Muslim

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[235]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 432.

[236]Ibid., p. 432.

[237]*Three Kings*, Directed by David O. Russell (USA, 1999). This movie continues the trend that the only helpful Muslims are those who have had exposure to the West. This movie made over $60 million dollars at the box office.

[238]*Rules of Engagement*, directed by William Friedkin (USA, 2000). Portrays the demonstrators in Yemen as fanatically anti-American. US marines open fire on the Yemenis violently demonstrating outside the US embassy in Yemen, shooting 83 men, women and children. This movie made over $61 million dollars.

women, but most are silent and fully covered in black chadors (remaining invisible). The movie *Three Kings*, set at the end of the Gulf War in March 1991, is about four greedy Army members who are in search of Kuwaiti gold stolen by Saddam Hussein. The movie begins with Troy Barlow (Mark Walhberg) shooting a "rag-head." Captured Iraqi soldiers are being forced to undress "like all the other towel-heads"[239] when an American finds a map of the gold stuffed into one of the body parts of an Iraqi.

Archie Gates (George Clooney) is about to retire from the Special Forces in two weeks, and decides that he is deserving of some gold, so enlists three men (who have the map) to find it. As the four Americans enter a town with a bunker where the gold may be, Saddam Hussein's Republican Guards are shown killing Iraqi rebels and civilians who are opposing Saddam. Chador-clad women are holding babies and cowering. While searching the bunker, the Americans find Amir, the leader of the uprising, and free him from torture by the Republican Guards. The rebels ask the Americans not to leave, but they don't wish to get involved. At this point in time, a Muslim woman speaks out to the Americans, demanding them "don't go, don't go, don't leave." She is the wife of the man being tortured: she is wearing a veil, a skirt and a blouse: not the traditional chadors which the other women are wearing. Her action of speaking out against her country causes the Republican Guard to act out by shooting her in the head point-blank. The scene is shown in slow motion, graphically displaying the blood flying from her head as she is executed. By actively speaking out, this woman has defied her religiously ordained passive role as

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[239]Chief Elgin (Ice Cube) takes offense to the phrases "dune-coon" and "sand-nigger" because they are derogatory to African Americans, but the terms "towel-head" and "camel-jockey" are permitted.

the object of male control and gaze,[240] while at the same time enforcing the silence that is imposed upon Muslim women by their men. The cost of her transgression is her destruction. By killing this Muslim woman, the Republican Guard re-establishes male authority, and her body becomes the signifier of the oppression and ultimate destruction by patriarchal Islam.

Some Muslim and Arab American groups found this movie not to be stereotypical because it included positive characters. Hala Maksoud, president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee stated, "it shows the Arab and the Muslim and their complexity, with feelings and normal aspirations."[241] The racist language used by Army personnel during the movie were overlooked: terms such as "dune cune", "sand nigger", "towel jockey" and "raghead" were often used to refer to the Arab Muslims. Muslim women were continually invisible in the movie: the one woman to act differently was executed. The positive reading of the film narrative could be derived from "reading against the grain." Although Muslims were still "othered" in this film, they were capable of benefitting from the text.

> An audience member from a marginalized group (people of colour, women, the poor, and so on) has an oppositional stance as they participate in mainstream media...Out of habit, as readers of mainstream texts, we have learned to ferret out the beneficial and put up blinders against the rest. From this wary viewing standpoint, a subversive reading of a text can occur. When

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[240]See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Viking Press, 1972); Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 28-40; and Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquarade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Patricia Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 41-57.

[241]Staff, "Hollywood in Non-Stereotyping Shock," *Guardian Unlimited* (October 1, 1999). Source: http://film.guardian.co.uk/News_Story/Exclusive/0,4029,87971,00.html.

> things appear strange to the viewer, she/he may then bring other viewpoints to bear on the watching of the film and may see things other than what the film-makers intended. The viewer, that is, will read "against the grain" of the film.[242]

Rules of Engagement,[243] made in 2000, further perpetuated the idea that Muslims are murderous fanatics, including Islamic women. The movie takes place in contemporary Yemen, "an Arab country of 16 million people with whom the United States have had peaceful relations for decades."[244] Colonel Childers (Samuel L. Jackson), in charge of the Twenty-fourth Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard the USS Wake Island in the Indian Ocean, is ordered to take out a team to San'a, Yemen because the US Embassy is under attack. In Yemen, we see men, covered women with only their eyes visible, and children chanting in front of the Embassy. No context is given for the riot and the American ambassador even seems confused as to why the embassy is being attacked. When Childers shows up, they are shot at from two snipers on a rooftop (there are two chador-clad women standing behind them), and so he evacuates the Ambassador and his family. Childers gives the order to "engage hostile targets as they appear. Deadly force is authorized." Captain Lee negates the order, stating that there are women and children in his line of fire. Childers

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[242]Jacqueline Bobo, "*The Colour Purple*: Black Women as Cultural Readers," in *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, ed. E. Deidre Pribram (New York: Verso, 1988), p. 96. See also bell hooks, *reel to real: race, sex, and class at the movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996) for further discussion about spectators and the oppositional gaze.

[243]*Rules of Engagement* made over $61 million at the box office in the United States.

[244]Jack Shaheen, "'Rules of Engagement': A Highwater Mark in Hollywood Hate Mongering With U.S. Military 'Cooperation'," *Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs* (June 2000).
Source: http://www.washington-report-org/backissues/062000/0006015.html.

tells his Captain that he wants him to fire into the crowd, yelling "yes goddamn it! Waste the motherfuckers!!" At this point, all the marines on top of the embassy rooftop open fire into the crowd below, and we see people thrown backward from the force of the bullets, blood gushing from mouths, and children falling over. After calling a cease-fire we see a toddler sitting next to the body of his chador-covered mother (no face is shown), and then in the center of the crowd six black chador-clad women stand up amongst the dead people and start wailing. The mission is considered "complete."

Upon his return to the United States, Childers is charged for the murder of 83 Yemeni men, women and children: it is considered an international crisis as no weapons or ammunition were found amongst the dead, therefore considered unarmed. Sokal (Bruce Greenwood), the National Security Advisor, does not want the United States held responsible for the "actions of one man" so proceeds to hide evidence as to what really happened at the embassy. Childers is constantly berated for killing "innocent women and children" but he responds that the crowd was hostile: "They fired on us. They fired first sir." Even though Childers has a navy cross and two silver stars for composure in battle, he is tried for 83 counts of murder, breach of peace, and conduct unbecoming an officer.

Childers hires Hodges (Tommy Lee Jones) as his lawyer. Hodges goes to Yemen to see if he can find evidence to save his friend. Yemen is filled with scenes of men dancing with knives, chador-covered women in the background, and men praying. All of a sudden there is a close-up view of a veiled woman, only her eyes gazing out, who is carrying tea, while another man tells Hodges that the Marines shot first and the Yemeni were only trying to defend themselves. Muslim men shout at Hodges in the street, yelling "Allah will give us justice" and a young girl on crutches calls him a killer. Upon finding no

evidence, Hodges confronts Childers, asking him if he opened fire because the were "rag-heads, camel-jockeys, or fucking gooks?"[245] Sokal finally looks at the videotape, and we see two men holding machine guns within the crowd, and then two more with handguns. The scene changes and we see six other men holding machine guns, while a woman in chador ducks behind them. We become aware that Yemeni Muslim men were armed in the crowd and responsible for the shooting at the embassy, which killed three US soldiers.

As the trial progresses against Colonel Childers, Hodges finds evidence that there was a terrorist plot brewing in Yemen against the Americans. He has found two political propaganda cassette recordings while in Yemen, and asks the Yemeni doctor who is there as a witness against Childers to translate the tape: it is a Declaration of Islamic Jihad Against the United States, and proclaims "we call on every Muslim who believes in God and hopes for reward to obey God's command." God's command is "to kill Americans and plunder his possessions wherever he finds them. To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military is the duty of every Muslim who is able." Hodges finds further evidence showing that the State Department reported crimes of terrorism against tourists by "fundamentalists" in Yemen. Almost every Yemeni man (many depicted wearing kuffiyehs) who has been given a speaking part in the movie is proven to be a liar, covering up for a country of killers.

Just when we are beginning to believe Childers is in indeed innocent, he has a flashback: we see a woman fully covered in black, with a red veil covering her face so only

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[245]The comment of "fucking gooks" refers to the fact that Childers and Hodges fought together in Vietnam. Childers shot a "gook" to get him to stop firing on the location where Hodges was trapped.

her eyes are visible, holding a machine gun and staring at Childers. Then we see the whole crowd armed with weapons, and we are told that only Childers was able to observe the fact that the crowd was armed based on his position. The flashback differs from the scenes in the video, where the Muslim woman is the first to strike against Childers and the other marines. The video shows only men with guns, and a woman cowering behind them. We are left not fully knowing the truth, but aware that Childers is found innocent by a jury of his peers. The image of the Muslim woman as destructive and violent is rare, but also representative of the fact that she cannot survive. It is her face Childers sees, and because of it, he orders his men to fire upon everyone in the crowd. Her power and destruction leads to the death of everyone in the courtyard. Throughout the movie, we only see veiled women, silent and lurking among rooftops and balconies. They do not speak and are in a way absent. They have become invisible within their chadors: they become their chadors, symbols of a universal Islam, along with its oppression and ruthlessness.

These stereotypical images have also manufactured themselves into family-oriented animation; popular visual culture intended to fascinate the minds of children. Unfortunately, the message conveyed through this medium continues to strengthen the violent image of Islam as well as the perceived injustice that Muslim women face.[246] Based on the book *Arabian Nights*, the opening scene of the movie *Aladdin*[247] shows a

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[246]Caricatures that portray Islamic women as weak and oppressed have become more pervasive in recent years. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[247]*Aladdin,* directed by John Musker and Ron Clemens (USA, 1992).

shady storyteller sitting on a camel singing "Arabian Nights". The lyrics begin:

> Oh I come from a land,
> From a faraway place,
> Where the caravan camels roam.
> Where they cut off your ear,
> If they don't like your face,
> It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.[248]

Offering a depiction of the "cultural" laws of Islam through Jasmine, a young girl who is forced to follow the rules of her religion against her will, *Aladdin* angered many North American Muslims because they did not feel that they could relate to the characters or the culture portrayed. The story is of Princess Jasmine (Linda Larkin), forced by law and her father, the Sultan, to wed against her wishes in Agrabah. The "law" says that she must marry a prince by her next birthday, which is in three days. Jasmine is upset because she doesn't want to be forced to marry, but to "marry for love." Her father continues by saying that it's not only the law, but the fact that he wants to make sure that someone will care and provide for her when he's gone. In anger towards Jasmine, the Sultan (Douglas Seale) turns to Rajah the tiger (Jasmine's only friend) and states, "Allah forbid you have any daughters."

Jasmine escapes the palace only to find that the "threat" of Islam is greater outside the palace walls. Jasmine is caught for stealing an apple to feed a hungry child, and the penalty is the cutting of her hand by a grotesque Arab street vendor, but Aladdin (Scott Weinger) comes to her rescue by calling her his sister who's "a little crazy." In the alleys

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[248]From the movie *Aladdin*. In 1993, Disney executives deleted two lines from the opening lyrics for the video version because of public pressure. They removed "Where they cut off your ear" and "If they don't like your face" but decided to keep the line "It's barbaric, but hey, it's home." As noted in Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).

of Agrabah are women, some dressed provocatively as belly-dancers, while others have veiled faces. Aladdin does not know who Jasmine is, and tells her of his wish to one day live in the palace, so that he can have valets and servants. Jasmine sees the palace as a place were people tell you "where to go and how to dress," alluding to her feelings of imprisonment. The Palace Guards eventually find Aladdin and Jasmine, and she is returned to the palace.

The remainder of the movie is taken up with Jafar (Jonathan Freeman), "a tall, dark and sinister, ugly man" trying to get a magic lamp. Aladdin gets the lamp and the genie inside helps Aladdin win Jasmine's hand in marriage by making him a prince, but Jafar steals the lamp and banishes Aladdin to the ends of the world. Jafar, as royal counsel to the Sultan, tries to marry Jasmine, and when she doesn't respond, he replies, "so you're speechless, a fine quality in a wife." In various other scenes, we see Jafar about to strike Jasmine, and has her chained to serve him. Aladdin eventually returns to save Jasmine, and banishes Jafar. The Sultan, recognizing Aladdin's true kindness, says that he will change the laws so that "from this day forward the princess can marry whomever she feels worthy." Upon telling Aladdin that she chooses him as her suitor for marriage, his banal response is "Hey, just call me Al."

The producers of this film intentionally deviated from the original "Arabian Nights" and throughout the film, they disregarded Arab culture and language. Names were mispronounced and the Arabic signs on storefronts were nonsensical. Aladdin was Disney's 31st animated feature film, and it won two Academy Awards (one Oscar was won for the lyrics of the film). It was also Disney's second most successful monetary film ever,

earning more than $216 million.[249] In the United States, the film ranked number 5 in rentals during 1992, making more than $60 million dollars profit as a video. Within the movie, the Arab Muslims become caricatures, marginalized and conventionalized to accentuate the differences amongst themselves. Speaking of the film, a former spokesman for California's South Bay Islamic Association stated that "all the bad guys have beards and large bulbous noses, sinister eyes and heavy accents, and they're wielding swords constantly. Aladdin doesn't have a big nose; he has a small nose. He doesn't have a beard or a turban. He doesn't have an accent. What makes him nice is they've given him this American character."[250] By the end of the movie, Aladdin has become entirely Americanized, who says "just call me Al."[251] The evil Muslims are all big, dark and have beards.

The movie *Aladdin* continues the Orientalist stereotype where all the evil characters are seen as grotesque, smelly, bearded and dark. The good guys are all small and clean-shaven. Even the women are portrayed as exotic, "wearing the briefest of harem costumes" [252] or isolated away from the others within the palace, harems or balconies. The perpetual view of Arab Muslims as barbaric, backward, oppressive and cruel continues to be reinforced in almost all North American filmic portrayals. Animation is no exception.

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[249]Out of all the movies researched in this investigation, *Aladdin* earned more money at the box office than any other movie. *Air Force One* was second overall, earning $44 million less than Aladdin, bringing in just over $172 million.

[250]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 52.

[251]Quote taken from the movie *Aladdin*

[252]Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), p. 103.

Many of the movies investigated in this chapter have repeatedly appeared on various television networks. *Air Force One*, *True Lies*, *The Siege*, and *Not Without My Daughter* have all been replayed on television since 2002, while television shows themselves have begun the inclusion of Arab Muslim plots into their shows. This year alone, *West Wing*, *Law and Order*, and *The Agency* all dealt with Arabs and Muslims who were oppressing their people, killers, bombers or terrorists.

In the last ten years, over twenty one major movies have been released which depict Arab Muslims as killers.[253] Since films are considered powerful conveyors of ideology and ethics, within these films, the cinematic representations of Islamic women show how they are situated in the mindset of American culture: they suffer at the hands of Islam, are made invisible by the fact that they are always covered and silenced. The inevitable link between Islam and oppression is reinforced through these films. In the rare instances that Muslim women step outside of their passive roles, they are either threatened or killed. They become, through their chadors and veils, the tragic depictions of bodily suffering and death within patriarchal Islam. The fact that they are not seen close up, do not speak, and are hidden at all times reminds the American audience that within patriarchal Islam, women's appropriate place is under the control of men. The Orientalist and the Islamist production of the truncated Muslim woman continues to be perpetuated in Hollywood film, continuing the existence of this particular image in contemporary society. The theme of the Muslim

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[253]Parts of the Arab-American community refer to such movies as part of the "Three B Syndrome: Arabs are portrayed as either Bombers, Billionaires or Belly dancers. Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, "100 Years of Anti-Arab and Anti-Muslim Stereotyping," *The Prism* (Accessed March 26, 2003).
Source: http://www.ibiblio.org/prism/jan98/anti-arab.html.

woman in occultation, or in hiding, continues to dominate the portrayal of this image in a post-9/11 world.

Good Muslims

Within all stereotypes, the opposite must be found. In searching North American films for the image of the Muslim, a few positive images were located. Out of the 900 films examined by Jack Shaheen, only 5% of all the movies (approximately 50 movies) debunked the barbaric image of Islam. The most famous Arabs to be depicted were characters that tried to help the oppressed: Aladdin, Ali Baba and Sinbad.

The movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*[254] takes place in the twelfth century. Robin Hood (Kevin Costner) is a prisoner in an Ottoman jail, where he is tortured by guards speaking Arabic. When a guard threatens to "cut off the infidel's hand", Robin plans his escape, and in the process rescues a Moor, Azeem (Morgan Freeman). Azeem vows to help Robin Hood, stating "you saved my life Christian. I will stay with you until I have saved yours." The two men travel to England where Robin Hood goes to battle with the Sheriff of Nottingham, Azeem by his side. Azeem is shown praying while the men are in Sherwood Forest, and when asked about his faith, he explains that as a Muslim "it is vanity to force other men to our religion."

Although Azeem is called "savage" and "barbarian" at times throughout the movie, Robin Hood tells his men that Azeem is to be treated equally. In the film, Azeem is seen to have many skills: he has a telescope, uses gunfire, and even has medical skills. He also

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[254]*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, directed by Kevin Reynolds (USA: 1991).

continues to practice his religious beliefs, declining alcohol because "Allah forbids it." When asked about his dark skin, he claims that "Allah loves wondrous variety." In the end, Azeem saves Robin's life from a witch and returns back to the Middle East. Although the beginning of the movie does portray cruel Ottoman Muslim guards, the character of Azeem remains neutral. He stays loyal to Robin until he has completed his vow. But in a way, he is also considered exceptional, not like other Muslim men. Robin Hood says to Azeem, "you truly are a great one. You're an honour to your country."

The Thirteenth Warrior[255] is based on Michael Crichton's 1976 novel *Eaters of the Dead* and is set in the tenth century. Ahmed Ibn Fahdlan (Antonio Bandaras) is thrown out of Baghdad for desiring another man's woman. The movie begins with Ahmed telling us his story, as three veiled women escorted by a guard walk by. The woman who looks into the camera is the woman he covets, and the credits of the film call her "Shaharazhad (Arabian Beauty)." This is the one and only time we see Muslim women in the movie (with a male voice-over), and the woman who is the cause of Ahmed's eviction from the opulent life of Baghdad.

Ahmed and his courier Melehisidek (Omar Sharif) encounter a landed ship of "Northmen" (Nordic warriors). While spending the evening with them, the Northmen are beckoned to help a northland village which is being attacked by an "ancient evil." Thirteen warriors are needed, and Ahmed is chosen as the thirteenth warrior, although he does not fight (he is an ambassador) and does not even know their language. He travels with them to help them and along the way, he learns their language by listening. When one of the

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[255]*The Thirteenth Warrior,* directed by John McTiernan (USA: 1999).

Northmen insults his mother, Ahmed replies by calling him a "pig-eating son-of-a-whore" and claims that his mother is a pure woman from a noble family.

Ahmed is the only one who can write, and teaches the Northman leader to also write, when he asks Ahmed to "draw speech." Ahmed, saying that he is a Muslim, shows him how to write "there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet" in Arabic. When they finally arrive at the village, they encounter bodies that have been eaten by their attackers. Ahmed becomes ill and states "I am not a warrior" but a Northman counters by saying "you soon will." Ahmed arms himself with a Nordic sword, which is too big, and proves himself a good metal worker when he shapes it into a scimitar. When the Northmen and Ahmed enter into battle, Ahmed keeps his faith, calling on Allah to be merciful. Throughout the movie, Ahmed is seen praying to Allah, declining to drink alcohol and willingly putting his life on the line to save the Northland villagers and children. Also, the Northmen refer to Ahmed as "little brother", "friend" and "Arab."

By the end of the movie, after defeating the attackers of the Northern people, Ahmed prepares to leave. He dons his original Middle Eastern clothing, and while on the boat, the Northmen call out "Goodbye Arab" and he responds with "Goodbye Northman." The final scene shows Ahmed beginning the tale of his adventures, and his first line written in Arabic is "Praise be to Allah, merciful and compassionate."[256] Throughout the film, Ahmed is portrayed as intelligent and helpful, and the Northmen accept him into their group willingly. Respect and friendship are shown to each other, even for each others' religion. At one point in the attack on the village, the Northmen begin praying to their gods, and

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[256]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 482.

Ahmed also joins them in their prayers. The leader of the Northmen, as he lays dying, believes that if someone were to write his story, he will die with glory. Ahmed, showing respect to the leader, does that by telling his tale of travel with the Northmen.

Another Arab Muslim image offered is that of the helpful person, someone who has been educated in a Western country or influenced by Western morals: in the movie *Three Kings*, the one Arab Muslim who is the leader of the rebels, and whose wife is executed for speaking out to Americans for help, helps the American soldiers. We learn in the movie that he was educated at Bowling Green in America. He returned to Iraq to open up some hotels. When he asks for help from the Americans, he states "we're fighting Saddam and dying, and you're stealing gold." In this statement, he differentiates himself from the fanatical Muslims who commit acts of terror and war. But in the same movie, the Republican Guard who tortures one of the American soldiers also claims to have been trained by Americans, but in weaponry.

This same Americanized Muslim is found in the character of Frank Haddad in *The Siege.* We learn that Frank is a Shi'ite Muslim from Lebanon, but he has also been an American citizen for 20 years and a member of the FBI for 10 years. When his son is interred in the camp, he resigns from his job, throwing his badge at Hub and stating "here, tell them I'm not their sand-nigger anymore." Eventually, when Hub asks Frank for his help to catch the last terrorist, Frank returns to the FBI and continues his job. Edward Zwick, the director of the film, pointed out to people who called the movie stereotypical, that

Haddad is "the single rounded character in this movie,"[257] implying that one good Muslim in the movie was adequate enough to round out the image of the terrorist, fanatical Muslims blowing up New York.

There have also been a handful of movies that depict Muslim women as compassionate and heroic. In general though, the majority of the movies that offered images of Muslim women envisioned them as silent, shapeless bundles under black garb, eroticized, veiled belly dancers, or as enchantresses - "possessed of devils." [258] The images of women, covered and silenced by their black veils do not take into account the variety of fashion that exists in the Islamic world. Not all women living in Arab countries wear black cloaks and veils, but the images given by Hollywood offer only one homogenous, truncated image, a woman who is alienated from the Western world, silenced and oppressed by the ordinances of her religion. This stereotype seems to appear not of itself, but as a counterpart to the dark, violent, male terrorist or the barbarian man who are the main protagonists of the majority of the movies. Even in cinema, the veiled woman exists not for herself but for the definition of the Muslim man.

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[257]Laurie Goodstein, "Hollywood Now Plays Cowboys and Arabs," *The New York Times* (November 1, 1998).
Source: http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/arbholl.html.

[258]Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 21.

Chapter Five

Islamic Feminism and Islamic Women

The Body of the Muslim Woman

According to Haug and McBratney, the colonial attitude of Western societies such as the United States politicizes identity, including individual identity and its expression. There is an intimate relationship between the body and various forms of cultural regulation and conflict. For example, it has long been argued that women's bodies embody morality; therefore the woman's body, and the colonized woman, become an object of struggle between the colonized and colonizer in terms of power relations.[259] Women's bodies become the site of competing authenticities:

> The body and its specific behavior is where the power system stops being abstract and becomes material. The body is where it succeeds and fails, where it is acceded to or struggled against. The struggle for control, top-down vs. bottom-up, is waged on the material terrain of the body and its immediate context.[260]

Many feminist scholars focus on the importance of the body as a site of both discursive domination and surveillance[261] and of struggle and resistance.[262] Malek Alloula,[263] in his

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[259]See Frigga Haug, *Female Sexualization*, (England: Verso Press, 1987) and John McBratney, "Images of Indian Women in Rudyard Kipling: A Case of Doubling Discourse," in *Inscriptions: Feminism and the Critique of Colonial Discourse*, no. 3/4 (1988): pp. 47-58.

[260]John Fiske, "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 162.

[261]See Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Women and Values: Readings in Recent Feminist Philosophy* (3rd Edition), ed. Marilyn Pearsall (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1999), pp.151-165; and Susan Bordo, "Material Girl: The Effacements of Postmodern Culture,", in *The Female Body: Figure, Styles and Speculations*, ed. Laurence Goldstein (Ann Arbor:

commentary on the postcards produced by the French during the time of colonial rule in Algeria, asserts that the representations of the marginalized semi-clad Algerian woman created and maintained a contradictory discourse about denied and available sexuality, such that these women became devalued by the colonizer, becoming a reflection of the culture of the colonized.[264] Mohja Kahf adds that at the same time, the Muslim woman became the object of visual pleasure through the act of voyeurism.[265] Viewed by this colonial 'Western gaze', Muslim women are perceived as oppressed by Muslim men, and have come to symbolize or be symbolized by a culture and religion that the West finds

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University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp. 106-130.

[262]See N. Beausoleil, "Make-up in Everyday Life: An Inquiry into the Practices of Urban American Women of Diverse Backgrounds," in *Many Mirrors: Body Image and Social Relations*, ed. Nicole Sault (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp.33-57; and Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis, *Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

[263]Although Malek Alloula does not make claims to be a feminist, he stated that he tried to force the postcard "to reveal what it holds back (the ideology of colonialism) and to expose what is repressed in it (the sexual phantasm...and uncover the colonial perception of the native." As cited in Fadwa El Guindi, Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 24. Alloula is aware that the colonial gaze is male, and is violent.

[264]Malek Alloula, "The Colonial Harem: Images of a Suberoticism," in *Oxford Readings in Feminism: Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucilla Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 381-403.

[265]Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

difficult to comprehend. Muslim women's bodies and women's dress have thus become politicized.[266] Lama Abu-Odeh concludes that control over women's bodies, and therefore the veil, has become a war zone where "the cultural struggles of post colonial societies are waged."[267]

It is ironic that while overlooking its own patriarchal practices, Western colonial power recognizes and codes the cultural "originality" of the veil as one that subjects women to an unacceptable degree of patriarchal oppression. And that the West, as the colonizing power, sees the veiling of Islamic women as proof of the inferiority and barbarity of Islam, and finds in it justification for its endeavours to bring about the fall of Islam. Muslim women have been repeatedly told that in order to free themselves from their oppression, they must remove their veils, and become 'civilized.' Frantz Fanon, in his book *A Dying Colonialism*, argues that in Algeria, it has been the "tenacity of the West, in its endeavour to unveil the [Islamic] woman, to make them [Islamic women] an ally in the work of cultural destruction," which has had the opposite effect of strengthening this so-called traditional pattern of behaviour.[268] For this reason, "whatever the cultural status of the veil worn by Arab

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[266]Kenneth Mostern, "Decolonization as Learning: Practice and Pedagogy in Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Narrative," in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, eds. Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[267]Lama Abu-Odeh, "Post-Colonial Feminism and the Veil: Considering the Differences," in *New England Law Review* 26, no.4 (1992): p. 1527.

[268]Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press,1967), p. 49.

women prior to colonization, under colonialism wearing the veil exemplifies resistance to colonial power."[269]

Islamic Feminist Writers and the Veil

When Western discussion arises about women's role in Islam (especially in the media), images of oppression, inequality, and segregation are often conjured up. Because of these attitudes, many Muslims have been the target of pejorative stereotypes.[270] These stereotypes are not based on any natural truth, but rather are "current episodes in a series of subjugations,"[271] to use an expression coined by Michel Foucault. The Western gaze assumes that Islamic women are often deemed, by their religion, to be second class citizens, and therefore frequently endure systematic abuse. The Western eye tends to focus on the practice of veiling as the most significant abuse against Islamic women, perhaps because it is a highly visible manifestation of Islamic identity and of the social separation of the sexes. Many Western feminists have adopted the same attitude: the custom of veiling is considered highly "oppressive" and therefore a proof of the inferiority

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[269]Kenneth Mostern, "Decolonization as Learning: Practice and Pedagogy in Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Narrative," in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, eds. Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 261.

[270]See Mehdi Bozorgmehr, Claudia Der-Martirosian, and Georges Sabagh, "Middle Easterners: A New Kind of Immigrant," in *Ethnic Los Angeles*, ed. R Waldinger and M. Bozorgmehr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996); and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 345-378.

[271]Michel Foucault, as quoted in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 148.

of Islam which leads to a justification for the West to undermine Muslim religion and society. These feminists ignore the fact that in recent years, the act of veiling has been taken up by many Muslim women as a symbolic form of resistance, and its importance lies in its visibility. Many Muslim women scholars have accused Western feminists of "veil-centrism", meaning the tendency to uncritically focus on the veil as the most unambivalent sign of Muslim women's oppression,[272] and of ignoring the actual religious and political context of Muslim women's lives and identities.

To understand this context, it is important to note that Islam is more than just a set of beliefs and ritual practices. Islam constitutes a complete system of thought and rules of behaviour meant to encompass all facets of human lives. The Qur'ān contains God's will and His commands (kalām allāh), which were revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. These commands are considered divine. They have been received for the final time, and no human can change them, nothing can be added or subtracted.[273] God's will is also expressed in the ahādīth,[274] which contains the reports about the sayings, actions and decisions of the Prophet Muhammad. It is the sunnah[275] that provides for

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[272]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[273]Bo Utas, ed., *Women in Islamic Societies: Social Attitudes and Historical Perspectives*, (London: Curzon Press, 1983).

[274]The ahādīth (singular: hādīth) makes explicit what remains implicit in the Qur'ān. Since the Qur'ān does not always state explicitly what humans should do in all situations, a hādīth is referred to in order to specify what should be done. The body of literature which forms the ahādīths are accounts relating to actions or decisions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. They have been authenticated through a system tracing the saying of the Prophet to the author who textualized it.

[275]Sunnah refers to the reports of the example of Prophet Muhammad, through his words, deeds and silence, which are then considered to be the normative model of

interpretations of the Qur'ān and for the adaptation of its commands and norms to existing and changing social systems. The shari'ah, religious law that governs all aspects of Muslim life, is composed from the Qur'ān as well as from the ahādīth.

Although Islamist scholars contend that the Prophet Muhammad introduced the practice of veiling, it actually predates his teachings. The veil was already in evidence in the Christian Middle East and Mediterranean regions at the time of the rise of Islam. In areas such as Arabia, veiling was connected with social status, and was used by the Greeks, Romans, Jews and Assyrians.[276] The Qur'ānic verse that is used to justify the veiling of Muslim women remains vague, and therefore open to much interpretation. Surah 24 Al Nūr (The Light), Verse 31[277] states:

> And say to the believing women/ That they should lower/ Their gaze and guard/ Their modesty; that they/ Should not display their/ Beauty and ornaments except/ What (must ordinarily) appear/ Thereof; that they should/ Draw their veils over/ Their bosoms and not display/ Their beauty except/ To their husbands, their fathers,/ Their husbands' fathers, their sons,/ Their husbands' sons/ Their brothers or their brothers' sons,/ Or their sisters' sons,/ Or their women, or the slaves/ Whom their right hands/ Possess, or male servants/ Free of physical needs, / Or small children who/ Have no sense of the shame/ Of sex; and that they/ Should not strike their feet/ In order to draw attention/ To their hidden ornaments/ And O ye Believers!/ Turn ye together/ Towards Allah, that ye/ May attain Bliss.

Since the Prophet's life is the standard by which a Muslim must live his or her life, emulation of his behaviours becomes very important. At the time of Muhammad, only his

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behaviour. The Sunnah is found in the narrative reports of the ahādīths.

[276]The Assyrians are a Christian group which dominated the Mesopotamia area. Today the Assyrians are a mixed population group of Jacobites, Nestorians and Chaldeans. There are linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversities amongst the Assyrians.

[277]*The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Translation and commentary by 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1989), p.873-874.

wives were required to veil amongst all the other Muslim women.[278] After his death, the veil became a common place item among upper-class Muslim women.

Feminist scholarship in the last few years has demonstrated that women "frequently become the sign or marker of political goals and of cultural identity during processes of revolution and state-building."[279] As Muslim societies come to see themselves as under siege from Western pressures, this identification process leads to a more determined enforcement of traditional ideals. As security is deemed to be endangered in such communities, women sometimes become their prisoners.[280] The image of security lies with the purity of the community, reflected by the social and sexual control of women's bodies. Women's behaviour and appearance come to be defined by, and are subject to, the political and cultural objectives of political movements, such as national liberation. Thus, as we have seen, women's emancipation becomes one of the grounds for nationalist struggles in achieving political independence, and asserting national identity. But nationalism does not necessarily have to be a progressive form of change. Feminism and nationalism are not always complementary to each other. As Nahda Abo observes, "in almost all liberation movements where women are actively involved, a general reversal of

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[278]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[279]Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994), p. 2.

[280]Yasmin Ali, "Muslim Women and the Politics of Culture and Ethnicity in Northern England," in *Refusing Holy Orders*, ed. Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Virago Press, 1992), pp. 101-123.

their roles becomes the fact of life after national liberation and the establishment of the nation-state."[281]

Perhaps because of this role reversal, many women's movements have sprung up within Islamic societies. Women writing from within the Islamic tradition are interrogating the assumptions of the nationalist framework, and its compatibility with women's rights. Many Islamic feminist writers see political power as a strength to end oppression within their cultures.

Within the Islamic tradition, some writers approach the issue of women living in Islam from differing views, often employing bipolar constructions. One of these views is built on the belief that capitalism and imperialism, internationally and nationally, have become the enemy of Islamic women, leading to their oppression. For instance, Nawal El Saadawi, a contemporary feminist writer, states that the underdevelopment of women's equality in Arab countries is based on economic and political factors, mainly foreign exploitation of resources and national riches. Women's oppression, she writes, is caused by the "patriarchal class system which manifests itself internationally as world capitalism and imperialism, and nationally in the feudal and capitalist classes of the third world countries"[282]. She believes that if women become politically organized and "struggle to become an effective political power", they will "force society to change and abolish the

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[281]Nahda Abo, "Nationalism and Feminism: Palestinian Women and the Anthophyta–No Going Back?," in *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed., Valentine M. Moghadam (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994), p. 150.

[282]Nawal El Saadawi, "Women and Islam," in *Women and Islam*, ed., Azizah al-Hibri Oxford: Pergamino Press, 1982), p. 206.

structures which maintain women as victims of", what she calls, "the crudest, most cruel and sometimes most sophisticated forms of oppression and exploitation."[283]

If foreign exploitation is the cause of Muslim women's oppression, then Islam's retaliation against Western pressures should liberate its people. But if Islam's retaliation is built on the control of women, then women do not participate in this liberation. They continue to be oppressed, only the identity of the oppressor changes.

Very different are the views of pro-veiling Muslim female writers who defend the practice on religious grounds. The veil is thought by them to demonstrate a Muslim woman's obedience to the tenets of Islam; to indicate sexual difference between men and women as clearly stated in the Qur'ān; to remind women that their duties lie within the home and not in the public sphere; and again, to act as an anti-imperialist statement against Western practices and culture.[284]

By re-appropriating the veil, understood as a sign of colonial oppression, the Muslim woman is able to use it for her own purposes. On the simplest, most material level, wearing the veil is economical because it saves the expense of buying fashionable clothes. Under existing patriarchal conditions, the dress also protects women from male harassment in the public sphere, while allowing them independence they may not otherwise have. It allows women access to co-educational education and sexually integrated work places, as well as access to public transport in areas where sexually integrated space is still considered an alien concept and is an uncomfortable social reality

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[283]Ibid., p. 206.

[284]See Jen'nan Ghazal Read and John P. Bartowski, "To Veil or Not to Veil: A Case Study of Identity Negotiation among Muslim Women in Austin, Texas," *Gender and Society* 14, no.3 (2000): pp. 395-417.

(because much of the population has strong rural origins). It gives women an "Islamic dignity and self-righteousness"[285] which allows them to take part in an otherwise hostile and sexist society. As a Muslim college sister put it,

> Some argue that tahaggub is not Islamic, that Muhammad's wives did not veil. But Muhammad's wives did not have to – they were not in public as we are today. Even if it is not required Islam does require it for us in the modern situation. It is more needed today than in the 7th century.[286]

Many of the women who are adopting the veil in different Muslim societies tend to be young women who are working or in school.[287] The ritual of wearing this dress elicits a sense of segregation, which allows integration while defusing any sense of stress and impropriety. At the same time, it also affirms women's presence in public space as being in no way challenging or violating Islamic ethics. Since by wearing the veil they are creating legitimate social spaces for themselves, Leila Ahmed (see next section) does not see the impact of women adopting Islamic dress as a negative or harmful act to women's autonomy, but rather as a way for women to legitimize their presence outside the home.

Unlike the feminist movement in North America which tends to look at issues of universal human rights based on a Western standard of individualism, the feminist movement within Islam takes into account the Muslim cultural context in order to bring about change. By concentrating on the writings of Islam, many of these writers wish to effect change from within.

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[285]Fadwa el Guindi, "Veiling Infitah with Muslim Ethic: Egypt's Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Social Problems* 28, no. 4 (1981): pp. 465-485.

[286]Ibid., p. 482.

[287]Lama Abu-Odeh, "Post-Colonial Feminism and the Veil: Considering the Differences," *New England Law Review* 26, no.4 (1992): p.1527.

Leila Ahmed (An Eastern Voice)

Leila Ahmed is a scholar who has focused much attention on the issue of defining women's place in Muslim societies. Born in 1940, and raised in Cairo, Ahmed experienced Arab nationalism personally with the Egyptian revolution in 1952 which brought Gamal Abdel Nassar to power. During the 1960s, Ahmed attended Cambridge University where she received her PhD. She was Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of the United Arab Emirates, before becoming a professor of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. In 1999, she became professor of Women's Studies in Religion at Harvard Divinity School, where she currently teaches.

With the rise of Islamist movements and their reinstatement of laws and practices considered core to Islam, she began to investigate the heritage of Islamic women and its relationship to notions of gender. She readily admits in her book *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*[288] that the discourses on the veil played a large factor in contributing to her focus on the study of Middle Eastern women in history.

> The debates going on in the contemporary Arab world between Islamists and secularist – between advocates of veiling and its opponents – and the ways in which the issues of the veil and women as they figured in these debates were apparently encoded with political meanings and references that on the face of it least seemed to have little to do with women, again brought the issue of discourse to the fore. Similarly, in the way in which Arab women are discussed in the West, whether in the popular media or the academy, and the sense that such discussions often seem to be centrally even if implicitly engaging other matters through the discussion of women– such as the merits

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[288]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

or demerits of Islam or Arab culture – also highlighted the importance of taking the discourses themselves as a focus of investigation.[289]

Ahmed focuses on how the "discourse of the veil" emerged into modern thinking. European encroachment on the Middle East had a large impact on the socioeconomic, political and cultural changes of the early nineteenth century. At this time, issues of class, culture, imperialism and nationalism "became entangled with the issue of women."[290]

Ahmed contends that the publication of Qasim Amin's book *Tahrir al-mar'a*[291] (The Liberation of Women) in 1899 trapped Muslim women within a false debate. Using the pretext of the veil, Amin launched an assault on Islam by advocating substantive reforms for women. Amin called for the abolition of the veil as well as fundamental cultural and societal changes which Egypt and all other Muslim countries had to make in order to give women their freedom. Women's advancement in society could only be brought about by imitating European ways. Amin tied women's status in society to the nation's progress, arguing that it was not an "exaggeration to claim that women are the foundation of the towering constructs of modern civilization."[292] As men "advanced" their way of thinking, women would become less dominated by men. Amin admired Europe and America

[289]Ibid., p. 2.

[290]Ibid., p. 6.

[291]For the entire text in Arabic, see Qasim Amin, *Tahrir al-mar'a*, in *Al-a`mal al-kamila li Qasim Amin*, 2 vols., ed. Muhammad `Amara, (Beirut: Al-mu'assasa al-`arabiyya lil-dirasat wa'l-nashr, 1976). See also Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and The new Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, translated by Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press: 2000).

[292]Qasim Amin, as cited in Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Marriage of Feminism and Islamism in Egypt: Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Postcolonial Cultural Politics", in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 256.

because women participated in trade and industry, had knowledge of the arts and even contributed to politics. Visible changes could be seen in Egyptian society by the 1890's. People could be seen consuming alcoholic beverages, adopting European dress and foreign words, women were changing their manners and had greater freedom; "they were increasingly to be seen on the streets displaying their ornaments."[293] Qasim Amin's book created a new discourse where the connotations, beyond the position of women, now encompassed issues of class and culture:

> Both the key features of this new discourse, the greatly expanded signification of the veil and the fusion of the issues of women and culture, that made their formal entry into Arab discourse with the publication of Amin's work had their provenance in the discourses of European societies. In Egypt the British colonial presence and discursive input constituted critical components in the situation that witnessed the emergence of the new discourse of the veil.[294]

Although considered to be one of the first Arab feminists because of his advocation for women's education[295], his call to end veiling and seclusion as well as banning polygamy, Amin's work also had deeper implications. Amin believed that educating Egyptian women would make them better mothers, "capable of bringing up the kinds of good citizens required by the modern nation; and they would become better marriage

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[293]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 142.

[294]Ibid., p. 145.

[295]Although Amin referenced European women's public achievements, he only advocated primary education for girls, and never indicated that higher levels of education and professions were for anyone except poor women and women without male support, so that they would not turn to "improper occupations". See Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Marriage of Feminism and Islamism in Egypt: Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Postcolonial Cultural Politics", in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 256.

companions for the educated modern man, capable of truly understanding him."[296] His writings were supported by the British administration because they seemed to advocate the adoption of a European outlook.

Cultural imperialism was an integral part of the colonizing process, and women became the central symbol for demonstrating Islam's inferiority to Western ways. The unconventional practices of Islam with respect to women had in some way always been a part of the Western narrative regarding the quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam.[297] Lord Cromer, British Consul General, also used the language of feminism[298] on his assault of "other" religions (especially Islam) and "other" cultures in order to justify the Victorian colonial establishment of Western superiority. He believed that Islam bred inferior men because the religion and society itself were inferior to European ones. He compared the European male to the Oriental by stating that:

> the European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of ambiguity; his is a natural logician, albeit he may have not studied logic; he

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[296]Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Marriage of Feminism and Islamism in Egypt: Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Postcolonial Cultural Politics", in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 256.

[297]For accounts of early Western representations of Islam see Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966); and R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[298]Lord Cromer, while advocating the unveiling of the Muslim woman in Egypt, was in England, a founding member and at one time the president of the Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage. The feminist language he opposed in his own country was used by him against the cultures of colonized peoples in order to further establish Western colonial power in foreign countries. See Constance Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge, 1967). See also Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1978).

> loves symmetry in all things...his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description.[299]

Cromer blamed the 'degradation' of Islamic women on the inferiority of Muslim men. He believed that it was essential that "Egyptian men be persuaded or forced into imbibing the true spirit of Western civilization, for it was Islam's degradation of women, expressed in the practices of veiling and seclusion"[300] which was the deadly impediment to the Egyptian's development of a higher moral character and mental perception only to be found through Western civilization.

By stating that Egypt's 'backward' cultural practices, such as the veiling of women, were the reason for Egypt's economic stagnation and proclaiming the superiority of Western ways, Qasim Amin aided British occupation and the insertion of the European Capital system into Egypt and the Middle East.

Ahmed states that the central argument of the colonial discourse on Islam amalgamated a colonialism defined by male dominance with feminism into a new colonial discourse toward Islam centered on women. Islam was considered by the West as naturally and constantly oppressive to women, the customs of the veil and segregation exemplified women's oppression, and these customs were understood as the essential reasons for the overall and all-encompassing backwardness of Islamic societies. For

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[299]Lord Cromer, as cited in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 152. See also Judith E. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) to read the Cromer Papers.

[300] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 153.

Ahmed, Muslim societies were instructed that they could only move forward towards becoming civilized if these practices that were "intrinsic" to Islam (and therefore Islam itself) were eliminated. According to her, the most visible marker of the differentness and inferiority of Islamic societies to the Westerners was the practice of veiling, and it now had become for them the symbol of "both the oppression of women (or, in the language of the day, Islam's degradation of women) and the backwardness of Islam, and it became the open target of colonial attack and the spearhead of the assault on Muslim societies."[301]

Ahmed also acknowledges that Christian missionaries played a role in speaking out against what they perceived as the degradation of Islamic women, which again further justified their attack on Muslim cultures. She gives as an example an event at a missionary conference held in London in 1888; there, it was stated that Muhammad had been exemplary as a young man but that eventually he took many wives in his later life and set out to preach a religion with the intention of extinguishing women completely. By introducing the veil, Mohammad was considered to have "had the most terrible and injurious effect upon the mental, moral and spiritual history of all Mohammedan races".[302] Missionary men and women believed that Muslim women needed to be rescued by their

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[301]Ibid., p. 152.

[302]Rev. Robert Bruce, as cited in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 154. See also Annie van Sommer and Samuel M.. Zwemer, eds., *Our Moslem Sister: A Cry of Need From Lands of Darkness Interpreted by Those Who Heard It* (New York: F.H. Revell, 1907).

Christian brothers and sisters from "the 'ignorance and degradation' in which they existed, and to be converted to Christianity."[303]

Ahmed contends that all the major voices of Western colonialism, the British administration, the missionaries, and even the feminists[304] of Britain, were in agreement that Muslims needed to give up their customs, dress, and if not their religion, that there was a definite need for religious reform along Western notions of civilization. Furthermore, for all of them, the veil and auxiliary Islamic customs regarding women were the prime matters requiring reform.

Ahmed criticizes Qasim Amin's justification for changing the position of women and for the abolition of the veil, by claiming that it is fundamentally the same justification as Cromer's and the missionaries'. Declaring that Islam was a backward religion, Amin stated that changing the women was a necessary process in order to make Muslim society abandon its backward ways and to follow the Western path to success and civilization. To Amin, the veil constituted an immense impediment to the advancement of the nation.[305]

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[303]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 154. See also Annie van Sommer and Samuel M. Zwemer, eds., *Daylight in the Harem* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1911).

[304]European feminists, who were critical of the practices carried out by men in their own societies towards women, promoted the European male representation of Other men. In the name of feminism, they attacked the cultures of the Others, and the particular practices such as veiling. This discourse of "colonial" feminism made strong connections between issues of culture and the status of women. The progress of women in these Other cultures were markers for the progress of these nations: the only way women could progress was to abandon the ways of their native androcentric culture in favour of another culture. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 244.

[305] Amin states that is the responsibility of the Egyptian to compare how Western nations have advanced in comparison to his own. This comparison will "force us to look

His call for women's liberation was based on the transformation of Muslim society established on a Western model. He wished to replace Islamic-style male dominance for that of Western-style male dominance. Therefore his attack on the veil was not in fact a plea for the "liberation" of women, but rather "nothing but the internalization and replication of the colonialist perception"[306] about native culture and society.

Although over thirty books and articles were written in response to Amin's book offering counter-arguments, the rebuttals came in the form of an affirmation of the customs he had attacked. Just as Amin had used the issue of women and the need for unveiling to sustain his generalized assault on Muslim society, the rebuttals to his work also used the issue of women but now in the form of an endorsement of the Islamic traditions that he had attacked--veiling and segregation. This new Arab narrative of resistance to colonialism, in order to negate the opposition, appropriated the terms set in the first place by the colonial discourse.[307] This narrative of resistance would become typical as a response to continuing Western forms of Oriental discourse on the Middle East and Islam.

Ahmed shows how Amin's book signaled the beginning in mainstream Arabic dialogue of the colonial narrative of women and Islam, where the veil and the treatment of

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at our religion and the ways in which our pious predecessors lived, and to follow in their footsteps. We, like them, will listen to the teachings, follow the good aspects of those teachings, learn to disapprove of inappropriate behaviour, accept the good components, and walk the road of happiness, progress, and strength." Amin continues by claiming that "the veil as we know it is a great hindrance to a woman's progress, and indeed to a country's progress." Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, translated by Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press: 2000), pp. 46-47.

[306]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 160.

[307]Ibid.

women served to exemplify Islamic inferiority. The opposition to this colonial narrative also illustrates the manifestation of an Arabic discourse developed to resist it:

> This narrative of resistance appropriated, in order to negate them, the symbolic terms of the originating narrative. The veil came to symbolize in the resistance narrative, not the inferiority of the culture and the need to cast aside its customs in favor of those in the West, but, on the contrary, the dignity and validity of all native customs, and in particular those customs coming under fiercest colonial attack - the customs relating to women - and the need to tenaciously affirm them as a means of resistance to Western domination.[308]

It is this Western discourse, which condemned the veil as a sign of the inferiority of Islam, that eventually circumscribed the new connotations of the veil and gave rise to its development as a Muslim symbol of resistance.

While saying that the rise of the discourse of the veil was in fact determined by the West in order to give new meanings to the veil in Middle Eastern society, Ahmed also provides a historical understanding of the rise of the veil in Islamic tradition. Ahmed claims that the veil was adopted by Muslim women through assimilation. It had been used in Sasanian society, which prevailed in the Iraq-Iran region, where segregation of the sexes and the utilization of the veil were prominent in the Christian Middle East and Mediterranean regions at the time Islam arose. Muslims conquered this society and its people and eventually adopted aspects of its culture and institutions[309]. Therefore veiling was not in fact an Islamic practice, but rather a practice of Persian royalty, and Muslim women were not required to wear the veil: Prophet Muhammad required only his wives to wear the veil. After his death, upper-class women began veiling, and it became an

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[308]Ibid., p. 164.

[309]Ibid.

everyday item among Muslim upper-class women. Harems were also a practice of Persian royalty and after the first Persian conquest of Mesopotamia, harems became more widespread among the elite, because they reflected wealth and power.[310]

The Islamic society that arose from the fusion of conquests "played a key role in defining Muslim law and institutions, including many which are still in place today."[311] Ahmed also states that the Christian church which had dominated the area later conquered by the Muslims had to an extent legitimized and justified misogyny based on biblical stories, which Islam accepted because it incorporated these stories as divinely inspired. Therefore Islam also incorporated "seamlessly an already-developed scriptural misogyny into the socioreligious universe it too would inscribe."[312]

Thus, Ahmed illustrates that the discourse of the veil had two cultural origins, and neither were based on true Islamic doctrine. The practice of veiling and seclusion were embedded in pre-Islamic society which continued based on an intermingling of different socioreligious systems: Islam assimilated these features. Then in the early nineteenth century, the societies of the Middle East underwent another social transformation, based on its domination by European colonial powers.[313] These transformations again had a great impact on women's lives: this time the discourse was based on colonial domination and the struggle against it.

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[310]Ibid.

[311]Ibid., p. 19.

[312]Ibid., p. 36.

[313]Ibid.

Although Ahmed acknowledges that the veil began as a non-Islamic tradition, and that Western discourse of the nineteenth century developed new meanings for the veil to explain the veil, she also states that the veil has many constructive aspects today. She states for instance that by adopting 'traditional' Islamic dress, women are in actuality creating an authentic public space for themselves. She believes that the adoption of Islamic dress and the explicit affiliation with Islam expresses a person's affirmation of the ethical and social customs of Islam. Within the context of anti-colonialism, Ahmed sees the veil as a form of resistance, the most accessible expression of rebellion by women in societies where they have been allowed to participate in the political struggle. Its importance lies in the very fact that it is so visible. She also believes that there are a variety of practical advantages to adopting Islamic dress.[314]

She describes how the veil, which had become less visible in urban Egypt during the middle decades of the twentieth century, began to grow more widespread and important as a visible emblem of "Islamic dress" for both men and women with the rise of Islamic groups in the 1970s. "A variety of factors have contributed to the spread of these groups and the new type of Islamic outlook."[315] Its "re-appearance" began among university students in major urban centers, such as Cairo, Alexandria, and Assiut. It is with the students and young professionals of both sexes that the formal or informal relations with the Islamist movement flourished and were manifested openly by women veiling

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[314]Ibid.

[315]Ibid., p. 217.

themselves.[316] The *hijab* and modern dress being adopted throughout the Middle East can be considered modern forms of dress.

This new "Islamic" dress can vary in terms of body covering. The clothing that Muslim women often now wear does not include a veil in the sense of a face covering, but rather consist of a variety of styles of head-coverings, which cover the hair, and a variety of coverings for the face, which can cover it to varying degrees, but may not be worn at all. These coverings are designed to observe the Islamic requirement that dress be modest, and therefore not sexual in any way; this command applies to both men and women. Surah 24 Al Nūr (The Light), Verse 30[317] states;

> Say to the believing men/ That they should lower/ Their gaze and guard/ Their modesty: that they will make/ For Greater purity for them:/ And Allah is well acquainted/ With all that they do.

These types of modest garments are generally in the form of robes or loose-fitting, long-sleeved, ankle-length garments which remain loose enough to avoid the contours of the body. Ahmed states that men and women who have conformed to this code have in fact created new dress styles, neither traditional to any part of the Arab world or the West, but somehow combine features of them. "Although called Islamic dress (al-ziyy-al-islami) the term means that they fulfill the Islamic requirement of modesty, not that they derived, as

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[316]In Arabic women are referred to as *mutahajibat,* which means 'veiled ones'.

[317]*The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary.* Translation and commentary by 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1989), p.873. On the same page, 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī offers this commentary (footnote 2983) for the verse stating that: "The rule of modesty applies to men as well as women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman (or even at a man) is a breach of refined manners. Where sex is concerned, modesty is not only 'good form': it is not only to guard the weaker sex, but also to guard the spiritual good of the stronger sex."

a style of clothing, from an Islamic society of the past."[318] Also, the "Islamist call for women to return to their roles as wives and mothers does not represent anything resembling what could be considered 'traditional'."[319]

Although this Islamist call for the restoration of "original" or "authentic" Islamic ways has alarmed many academics and Islamic feminists, Ahmed sees positive aspects to such customs. "In modern times traditional dress has come to be confined to the lower classes and the peasantry; traditional dress therefore identifies the wearer as from these classes, whereas al-ziyy al-islami, which might be seen as a democratic dress, erases class origins."[320] It can also provide a sense of community by affiliation with Islamism.

> Essentially, the adoption of Islamic dress and the affiliation with Islamism express an affirmation of ethical and social customs – particularly with regard to mixing with the opposite sex – that those adopting the dress and affiliation are comfortable with and accustomed to. For women Islamic dress also appears to bring a variety of distinct practical advantages. On the simplest, most material level, it is economical. Women adopting Islamic dress are saved the expense of acquiring fashionable clothes and having more than two or three outfits. The dress also protects them from male harassment. In responding to a questionnaire women stated that wearing Islamic dress resulted in a marked difference in the way they were treated in public places.[321]

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[318]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 220.

[319]Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Marriage of Feminism and Islamism in Egypt: Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Postcolonial Cultural Politics", in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 263.

[320]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 221.

[321]ibid., p. 223.

Women are said to be "carving out legitimate public space for themselves"[322] by taking up Islamic dress, and at the same time redefining public space in order to accept women. Thus Islamic dress can be seen as a transition to modernity, because it allows for a more sexually integrated social atmosphere. "Far from indicating that the wearers remain fixed in the world of tradition and the past, then, Islamic dress is the uniform of arrival, signaling entrance into, and determination to move forward in, modernity."[323]

But at the same time, Ahmed argues that although young women cannot be faulted for adopting Islamic dress since this dress has allowed them to pursue educations and professional careers, and has allowed them to access a path of political, educational, professional, and economical autonomy for themselves, she also condemns them. Even though she states that these women are not intending to affiliate with a cultural and ethical Islamism, their support and strength to such political forces aids these forces in the realization of their objectives, which would allow them to "institute authoritative theocratic states that would undoubtedly have a devastatingly negative impact on women."[324]

Ahmed takes a diplomatic view on veiling by quoting from a survey on veiled and unveiled women that Zeinab Fadwan conducted in 1982: she comments that both groups are remarkably similar on issues of human rights and especially the inherent justice of Islam. Some unveiled women even endorsed the imposition of Islamic law, although they did not want it codified according to the norms of what Ahmed calls "establishment Islam,"

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[322]El Guindi, as cited in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 224.

[323]Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 225.

[324]Ibid., p. 231.

which is unambiguous in the way it perceives and creates a hierarchy of gender relations. It eliminates "those who challenge its authority or its particular understanding of Islam, including other Muslims intent on heeding the ethical over the doctrinal voice."[325] Ahmed is capable of separating the veiling issue from establishment Islam but eventually takes away women's agency because she does not believe its wearing is a free choice.

Although Ahmed offers a reinterpretation of religious, social and historical texts of Islam, her focus contributes to the Orientalist narrative. Her scholarship does not take into consideration the possible empowerment of women through Islam. While confirming their Islamic identity through Islamic dress, women in various Islamic societies and communities are engaged in ongoing struggles in order to advance their own empowerment. She assumes that these women have neither agency nor free choice. Regardless of her interpretations, which should be considered favourable to women, she does recognize the individual's right to choose. Acknowledging that some countries have imposed the veil onto women by law, there are countries where the desire to return to the veil demonstrates a larger social, political and economical impact on women in these locales.

Ahmed, in her article entitled "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem"[326] again acknowledges that the veil is pre-Islamic in origin and further states that women who habitually wear the veil do not experience it as an oppressive custom. She claims that it is a "symbol of women being separated from the world of men."[327]

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[325]Ibid., p. 230.

[326]Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 3 (Fall, 1982): pp. 521-534.

[327]Ibid., p. 523.

In her article "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, A Preliminary Exploration: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen," Ahmed offers two definitions of the harem.[328] The first image is that which conjures up fascination and loathing to the Westerner; it claims that the harem is a system that allows men to have sexual access to more than one female. This image was developed by the Western male visitors to Muslim lands even though they had no access to harems. One report, by George Sandys, described the sultan's harem by stating that "it is unlawful for anyone to bring ought in unto them with which they may commit the deeds of beastly uncleanness; so that if they have a will to eat cucumbers, gourds, or such like, they are sent in unto them sliced, to deprive them of the means of playing the wantons."[329] In fact, many of the nineteenth century accounts of Western men portrayed Muslim women in general to have tendencies of unnatural lust and licentiousness.

Ahmed argues that harems can be as accurately defined as "a system whereby the female relatives of a man - wives, sisters, mother, aunts, daughters - share much of their

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[328]Ahmed gives an alternative narrative about the institution of the harem in her article entitled "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, A Preliminary Exploration: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen," in *Women and Islam*, ed. Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), pp.153-168. She states that the Turks were furthest ahead in developing the harem "to the point where it most nearly embodied and was even almost militaristically organized around the notion of woman purely as sex-object and reproduction machine. Thus, in addition to 'a multitude of female slaves and eunuch-guards' the Turkish harem contained ' a group of women chosen for their beauty and destined for the pleasure and service of the sultan." Leila Ahmed, "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, A Preliminary Exploration: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen," in *Women and Islam*, ed. Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), p.154.

[329]George Sandys, as cited in Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 3 (Fall, 1982): p. 524.

time and their living space, and further, which enables women to have frequent and easy access to other women in their community, vertically, across class lines, as well as horizontally."[330] Therefore, although the West has often perceived the harem as a negative place of confinement, it can also be seen in a positive light, a female-only space, where men are refused entrance and thus women have authority. Ahmed states that the word "harem" is in fact a variation of the word *haram*, which means "forbidden," as well as "holy." This suggests to her that it was the women who were in fact doing the forbidding, "excluding men from their society, and that it was therefore women who developed the model of strict segregation in the first place."[331]

Ahmed's most recent book, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America - A Woman's Journey*[332] continues her examination of women and gender in Islam, but it is written in the form of a personal narrative in order for her to discuss issues of identity with which she was confronted as she lived in both the East and the West. She writes that she feels trapped within two different notions of Arab - and that neither is accurate: they both ascribe to her feelings and beliefs that are not hers. "It was only when my discordant memories failed to make sense that I was compelled to look more carefully into the history of our Arab identity. Eventually I began to see the constructed nature of our Arab identity as it was formed and reformed to serve the political interests of the day."[333] Ahmed further asserts that women's

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[330]Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 3 (Fall, 1982): p. 524.

[331]Ibid., p. 529.

[332]Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America - A Woman's Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

[333]Ibid., p. 256.

role in Islam and their understanding of it surpasses the manufactured boundaries placed on it by notions of both Western feminism and Arab nationalism. In fact, according to her, women who have listened to the Qur'ān are capable of understanding its "essential" themes and its faith.

Although Ahmed gives women space and agency within her writings, she continues the Oriental outlook by claiming that there is some essential truth that women must return to in order to live and experience a true Islam. Her writings provide active, powerful and empowering approaches to gender relations and Islam, but at the same time, by "proving the 'Eastern' woman has agency too,"[334] it may be unknowingly validating Western liberal values. "The power of Orientalism comes from its power to construct the very object it speaks about and from its power to produce a regime of truth about the other and thereby establish the identity and the power of the subject that speaks about it."[335] Ahmed claims that Islamic women know the truth of the Qur'ān, and this essentialness gives them their true identity, not one constructed by nationalism, Orientalism or Islamism. But by claiming this truth, she establishes an identity for the Muslim woman and speaks for this subject: thereby Orientalizing her. Ahmed's arguments can be used to grant, in fact, authenticity to the Islamist argument, that cultural symbols such as the veil and segregation can be upheld as symbols of struggle against cultural imperialism. Her reconstruction of a gender-equal Islam may be reductionistic in interpretation, stating that the patriarchal (foreign) voice subordinated women. For example, the cultures of the Persians and the Byzantines

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[334]Lila Abu-Lughod, "*Orientalism* and Middle East Feminist Studies," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (Spring, 2001): p. 105.

[335]Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Toward a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 90-91.

caused negative influences which undermined Islam's egalitarianism. Thus, by offering a purified image of Islam, Ahmed validates the "traditionalist" mandate, to purge Islam of its undesirable practices and norms.

In her article "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, A Preliminary Exploration: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen," Ahmed states that Arabic feminism has "become an instrument by which the fundamental assumptions of the culture are reinforced."[336] Often, the support of women's rights by feminists in the Arab world "in fact overwhelmingly endorses the Arabic civilization's traditional conception of women."[337] Nevertheless Ahmed does not believe that she is "modern" or "European" in her outlook since she remains loyal to her cultural identity. She thus offers what she perceives to be the authentic principles of Islam which women should be able to follow as a matter of "choice."

Nawal El Saadawi (An Eastern Voice)

Why keep asking me about my identity? (Nawal El Saadawi)

Nawal El Saadawi[338] was born in the village of Kafr Tahla in the Qalubiyya Province in the Egyptian Delta in 1931. In 1955 she graduated from Cairo University in the Faculty

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[336]Leila Ahmed, "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, A Preliminary Exploration: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen," in *Women and Islam*, ed. Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), p.161.

[337]Ibid., p.161.

[338]Spellings for Nawal El Saadawi's name vary to include Nawal el Saadawi, Nawal al Saadawi, Nawal El-Saadawi and Nawāl Sa`dāwī. I have chosen to use this spelling as it is the most common usage in spelling and the way it is used on her official website and the title of the reader by Nawal El Saadawi, *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997).

of Medicine. She became Director-General of Health in Egypt and founded the Association for Health Education. In 1972 she lost her job at the Ministry of Health for her writings on gender and sexuality. She also lost her position as Assistant General Secretary in the Medical Association of Egypt as well as her job at the Health magazine. She was the president of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, an international organization which she founded; it was banned in Egypt in 1991 for opposing the Gulf War: its funds were seized and given to a religious women's group. In 1981 she had been imprisoned by Anwar Sadat for her writings and her outspoken speech.

In her writings, El Saadawi approaches issues of discriminating gender relations and discusses how they have been sanctified by Islamic laws and norms. She deals with the constraints imposed by shar'ia, Islamic law. In 1992 her name appeared on a fundamentalist death list. She eventually accepted a teaching position at Duke University in North Carolina with her husband of many years, Sherif Hetata (as a form of self-imposed exile). She has written numerous books, fiction and non-fiction, about Arab women's rights, and how women's positions differ in the Islamic world.

In April, 2001 an Egyptian lawyer attempted to sue El Saadawi because her activities were in "contempt of Islam" and thus made her unfit to remain the wife of a Muslim, a court source said. Nabih Al Wahsh wanted to separate Nawal El Saadawi from her husband based on declarations made by Egypt's mufti, Sheikh Nasr Farid Wassel, who said she had "renounced the teachings of religion, straying from the circle of Islam."[339]

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[339]See Tekla Szymanski, "Battling Bigotry: Nawal el-Saadawi, " *World Press Review* 48, no. 9 (September 2001). Source: http://www.worldpress.org/. See also AFP Cairo, "Egypt: Lawyer Sues Feminist to Separate From Husband", *Arabia.com* (April 19, 2001). Source: http://www.arabia.com; and the Dr. Nawal El Saadawi Official

According to the article, Islamic teachings state that a Muslim must have a wife who is either a Muslim or who recognizes one of the two other monotheistic religions. Muslim women for their part must marry a Muslim. Wahsh filed a complaint against El Saadawi on April 9, and had accused her of "contempt of Islam" for an interview she gave that was published on March 6, 2001 by the independent weekly newspaper *Al Midan*. El Saadawi is well known as a leading feminist in Egypt, having led several campaigns against female circumcision and misogyny. She has also stated that the Qur'ān makes no mention of an obligation for women to wear the Islamic *hijab* scarf.

In response to this attack, El Saadawi wrote a public letter on May 14, 2001 stating:

> On the 6 March 2001 a weekly newspaper published an interview I had given a few days before I left for a long lecture tour in Germany, France and the United States. In this interview I reiterated the views I have defended in all my writings during the last forty years and pronounced publicly in many parts of the world including the Arab Region. In these views I link questions of sex and gender to politics, economics and culture at the local and international level and strike at the roots of all forms of exploitation and oppression whether class, patriarchal, racial, national, or religious. Those who are in power have always tried to silence my voice. These attempts to silence me have increased steadily in the past years which have witnessed the predominance of capitalist neo-liberal forces and their allies including religious fundamentalism.
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> In the interview which I gave I repeated my opposition to the veiling of women which implies that women are only bodies, to polygamy, to inequality in inheritance rights and insisted that all of these were in contradiction with the true spirit of Islam and the correct interpretation of the Qūr'ānic text. I also mentioned that some of the practices of Islam had been inherited historically from the pre- Islamic era and that this was a natural phenomena in all religions and gave as an example that of the pilgrimage. The newspaper like many other newspapers appearing all over the world depends heavily on sensationalism for its sales. My views were manipulated, quoted out of context and blown up with provocative headlines. The powers

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Website for a list of links to other articles of the case in the print media.
Source: http://www.nawalsaadawi.net/news.htm.

> that be which have always been unhappy with my views seized the occasion of a deteriorating cultural atmosphere coupled with a rebound of fundamentalist tendencies in Egypt. The Mufti of Egypt issued a declaration to the same newspaper accusing me of having strayed out of the bounds of Islam. A few days after a lawyer raised a case against me for separation between me and my husband on the grounds of apostasy.[340]

El Saadawi has spent much time writing about the oppression of women within Islam. She claims that under pre-Islamic society, women enjoyed a greater degree of liberty and independence, due to the fact that both male and female goddesses played important roles in Arab tribal society. Women participated in "economic activity then, side by side with men, they acquired independent personalities both inside and outside the home and were often free to choose their husbands."[341] El Saadawi also writes that women continued to have important roles in early Islam. She claims that Khadijah, Prophet Muhammad's first wife was prominent, in that she was both socially and economically independent, and free to choose Muhammad as her husband. She further states that Aishah, the youngest wife of the Prophet, was also a significant example of a strong woman, who did not hesitate to oppose or contradict the Prophet, and displayed her prowess in several wars and battles. The fact that women became less independent was not a sudden event, but a slow process which was related to socioeconomic changes taking place: "the fundamental principles of social justice, freedom and equality were buried under the growing authority of men over women, and the growing prosperity of the new

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[340]Found in the "Statements" section on the Dr. Nawal El Saadawi Official Website. Source: http://www.nawalsaadawi.net/.

[341] Nawal El Saadawi, *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p.74.

ruling classes over the poor majority."[342] And so, even though Islam as a religion was just, equal and free, it became overruled by male domination and feudal oppression:

> Thus it came about that, from the time of `Usman Ibn 'Affan (the third caliph to the Muslims) in the eighth century AD, history was to plunge the Arab women into a long night of feudal oppression and foreign domination in which women were condemned to toil, to hide behind the veil, to quiver in the prison of a harem fenced in by high walls, iron bars, windowless rooms and the ever-present eunuchs on guard with their swords.[343]

When discussing the veil, El Saadawi states that the wearing of the veil is often commonly thought as an imposition of the Qur'ān, but in fact it does not exist: it is rather a historical inheritance. El Saadawi refers to a historical study[344] which states the veil in fact began with Judaism as a religion and with the "myth" of Adam and Eve: Eve was looked upon as a source of evil and sin, and therefore had to cover her head and face in order to refrain from exposing any part of it. This, she claims, inspired the idea that "Eve (woman) is a body without head and that Adam (her spouse and man) is her head."[345] El Saadawi continues by asserting that although Arab women continue to suffer oppression in the form of national, class and sexual oppression, Islam is not the original cause of the situation, but rather that it derives from the patriarchal class system which has established itself in the feudal and capitalist classes of Third World countries. Emancipation from this cruel

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[342]Ibid., p.79.

[343]Ibid., p.79.

[344]El Saadawi criticizes Arab societies for not critically examining and thinking over the values that have been inherited from past generations, particularly those relating to women, sex and love. See Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980), p.74.

[345] Nawal El Saadawi, *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p.85.

oppression and exploitation can only be found in the struggle for political power in order to change society and "abolish the structures which keep women victims."[346]

El Saadawi rejects any notion of the veil's utility for women: it is an emblem of sexuality and men's desire. For El Saadawi, "the woman who wears a veil is drawing attention to her body as much as the woman who wanders the streets naked. The covered woman is so obsessed by the dangers of her body that she can think of nothing else and she might as well have veiled her mind."[347] As well as being a primitive tool of slavery, El Saadawi also claims that the veil is also evidence of Islamic men's commodification of the women they 'own'.[348]

El Saadawi reasons that strong patriarchal Arab relations, coupled with hierarchical class nature, have caused women to suffer discrimination and made them victims of suppression. Women's bodies, which are considered signs of honour, purity and good morals, are at the same time deemed undesirable and shameful. "Arab girls are brought up in an environment of darkness and silence concerning everything related to the body and its functions."[349] As she is brought up in an atmosphere of ignorance, the girl is made to feel different from the boy beginning in early childhood. She must remain indoors, her body is something that must be hidden and unseen. "Newspapers, magazines and the

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[346] Ibid., p.91. See also "Women and Islam," in *Women and Islam*, ed. Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), pp.193-206.

[347]Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 133.

[348]Ibid.

[349]Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980), p.45.

mass media instil religious conceptions that portray the female body as an obscenity that should be hidden carefully. Only the face and palms of the hand should appear, and for this reason, many girls take to the wearing of veils."[350]

At the same time, Arab countries are copying Western trends, which creates a moral dichotomy for women. She is given a double moral standard. The economic exploitation imposed on Arab countries, which had led to the pillaging of resources, imposes a standard of commercial values based on capitalism, while at the same time, religious values inherited to "maintain tradition" push women towards social and cultural backwardness.

> Woman is made to suffer, as a result of these double standards, more than anyone else in society. Her body had to be undressed to draw the attention of people and provoke them sexually through advertisements, films, etc. so that commodities may be more rapidly disposed of on the market. Sex must be instilled into every song, dance or play so that it can be sold, and be more and more attuned to the game where women are the pawn, and their naked bodies the prize. Nakedness is therefore a daily requirement. Yet the religious morals which are propagated just as widely insist that her body is profane and must be covered completely, so as to ensure that only the face and hands are showing.[351]

Thus, El Saadawi sees the underdevelopment of women's equality in Arab countries as an effect of economic and political factors. The patriarchal class system has caused women to suffer. They are now treated as tools, and mere instruments. Commercial advertising uses them as objects. At the same time, the backwardness of a society emphasizes the economic, sexual and moral oppression of women: a poor woman will be treated more harshly because she does not have the money to protect herself. Although El Saadawi

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[350]Ibid., p.46.

[351]Ibid., p.87.

claims that Arab women are not deficient in their mental capacities, she states that men and the history they have written assert the weakness and passivity of women. Unfortunately, many Arab women today have been moulded from an early age into "superficial and shallow beings."[352]

Even though women have been oppressed, and therefore have become passive, El Saadawi believes that it is possible for them to struggle against this oppression without falling into the trap of "modernization" offered by Western society: one cannot find progress by imitating the women of Europe or the United States. Western culture and Christianity have also subjected women and transformed them into a commodity.

> The emancipation of women can only result from the struggle of the Arab women themselves, once they become an effective political force. This necessitates the formation of politically conscious, disciplined and well organized women's movements, and a clear definition of their objectives and methods of struggle as well as the rights for which women must fight.[353]

Thus foreign exploitation is seen as the root of women's oppression, while at the same time, the Islamist movement is seen as continuing to keep women passive and oppressed. Women are caught in this position of oppression, from both Western "modernity" and from Islamist thought. Muslim women must continue to see the equality and justice of a "true" Islam while at the same time rebelling against Islamist notions of "tradition" and retaliating against Western pressure to see themselves as oppressed and passive. Orientalism, the

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[352]Ibid., p.88.

[353]Ibid., p.211.

Western imperialist perception of the East, and Western economic exploitation, continue to keep women oppressed.[354]

El Saadawi, through her writings, continues the Orientalist and Islamist notion of reducing the veiled Muslim woman as an object of oppression. She does not recognize that independent identities can exist within the context of Islam and Islamic dress. By demanding emancipation for the veiled woman, she herself sees Islam as a tool of subjugation, eliminating the voices of women who are veiled. By telling Muslim women what they must do, El Saadawi silences the Muslim woman and in effect, makes her invisible.

Fatima Mernissi (An Eastern Voice)

So let us raise the sails and lift the veils - the sails of the memory-ship. But first let us lift the veils with which our contemporaries disguise the past in order to dim our present. (Fatima Mernissi)

Fatima Mernissi was born in 1940 into a harem in Fez, Morocco. She studied Political Science and Sociology at the Mohammad V University, where she eventually became professor of Sociology at the Institut Universitaire de Recherche Scientifique. She has written numerous articles and books on issues fundamental to the status of Muslim women

Mernissi's writings focus on women's lives in Islamic society and how their rights have been taken away because they conflict with the interests of the male elite. "The elite faction is trying to convince us that their egotistic, highly selective, and mediocre view of

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[354]Ibid.

culture and society has a sacred basis."[355] Through her examination of women's rights in Islam, Mernissi states that although Islam is considered by Westerners to be the sole religion that blocks the way to women's rights, Islam is in fact no more repressive than Judaism or Christianity. By understanding Islam's history one can fully understand one's true religious heritage and cultural identity, which includes the quest for dignity, democracy, human rights, and full participation in the political and social affairs of one's country, because this is "a true part of the Muslim tradition."[356]

Outraged by interpretations of Islamic Tradition[357], Mernissi begins her examination of Islamic history but examining the Hādīth collections (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad). Mernissi sees these collections, along with the Qur'ān, as the sources of Islamic law, and the creators of Muslim ethics and values. The Hādīth distinguish between what is right and wrong, what is true and false, what is permitted and forbidden.

By undertaking a historical investigation through the Hādīth into the Prophet's life, Mernissi discovers that the sacred texts have always been manipulated, based on the structural characteristic of the practice of power in Muslim societies from the seventh century onwards. After the Prophet's death, there were more than a half a million Hādīth,

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[355]Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), p. ix. Please note that the following book by Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991) is the same book in its entirety as the above mentioned book.

[356]Ibid., p. viii.

[357]Otherwise known as Hādīth, they are conversations of the Prophet which were transmitted by personal witnesses, the Companions of the Prophet, who became the authorities of the Prophet's sayings.

without sufficient verification. A noted scholar, Abu Bakra[358], collected and selected Traditions which he believed were "sound." These laws and norms became the foundational source for Muslims regarding the sayings of the Prophet. Mernissi questions the reliability of Abu Bakra as an authoritative source for Hādīths used by such authorities as the imams and mullahs. It is through the Hādīth that practiced Islam changed from an egalitarian religion to one with a distinct gender hierarchy. By looking into Islamic history, Mernissi finds that women were in fact first elevated by Islam, but after the death of the Prophet[359], women's power became threatened by males.

Although Mernissi argues that men's fear influenced the Hādīth, the Qur'ān itself, although more accurate, has also been twisted by male dominated society. There are in the Qur'ān hundreds of verses which support women's rights but only four or five that do not. Fundamentalists constantly appropriate these few verses and disregard the others.

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[358]Mernissi also questions the background of Abu Bakra, to determine if he was qualified to speak on Hādīth. Intellectual, moral people were considered reliable, not those who had lied. Mernissi demonstrates that Abu Bakra should have been eliminated as a narrator of Hādīth because "he was convicted of and flogged for false testimony." Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), p. 60.

[359]Mernissi claims that after the death of the Prophet, and without a successor, Muslims were plunged into a systematic collection of Hādīth in order to protect themselves from political terror and violence. They included all the "pertinent" information attributed to the Prophet. His opinions, reactions to events, everything that he was supposed to have said and done were recorded in "order to distinguish what is right from what is wrong, whether it be with regard to the practice of power or something else...the Hādīth sayings are in fact a veritable panorama of daily life in the seventh century, a vivid panorama, extremely varied because there are various versions of the same event." Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), pp. 34-35.

One must not just have access to the Hādīth collection, insists Mernissi, but the believing readers should also have at their disposal information about the informants of the Hādīth sayings so that with the pertinent information, the reader can judge whether they are worthy of belief or not.

By appraising the Hādīth collection, Mernissi comes to the conclusion that there were in fact false, or fabricated Hādīth, and after the death of the Prophet, the Muslim world was torn by dissension (between the Sunnis, those who follow the Sunna, the tradition and the Shi'a who created a schism in Islam) and this led to an increase of false Hādīth. The *hijab* would also be an element created by the civil war at the time of the Prophet's death.

Mernissi defines *hijab* to literally mean "curtain", which descended to create barriers between men, not women. Citing Sūrah 33 Al Ahzāb (The Confederates), Verse 53, which states:

> O ye who Believe!/ Enter not the Prophet's houses - / Until leave is given you - / For a meal, (and then)/ Not (so early as) to wait/ For its preparation: but when/ Ye are invited, enter;/ And when ye have taken/ Your meal, disperse,/ Without seeking familiar talk.
>
> Such (behaviour) annoys/ The Prophet: he is ashamed/ To dismiss you, but/ Allah is not ashamed/ (To tell you) the truth.
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> And when ye/ Ask (his ladies)/ For anything ye want/ Ask them before/ A screen; that makes/ For greater purity for/ Your hearts and for theirs.[360]

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[360] *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary.* Translation and commentary by 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1989), pp. 1074-1075. On p. 1075, 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī offers this commentary (footnote 3756) for the verse stating that: "The actual manner of showing respect to ladies may be different in different circumstances. But it is an essential principle of good society to show the greatest deference to them. To the 'Mothers of the Believers' this respect was due in an exceptional degree."

This screen, or curtain, was also used as a material object which the Prophet would have placed between himself and another man at the entrance of his bedroom. Mernissi also claims that the concept of the word *hijab* is three-sided: it means "to hide", to separate spatially (by creating a border or threshold), as well as something forbidden (in an ethical fashion). Also, the Qur'ān uses the word *hijab* in other verses to mean a veil that hides God from men. Sūrah 41 Fussilat (Expounded), Verses 2-5 state:

> A revelation from (Allah),/ Most Gracious, Most Merciful
>
> A Book, whereof the verses/ Are explained in detail - / A Qur'ān in Arabic,/ for people who understand -
>
> Giving Good News/ And Admonition; yet most/ Of them turn away,/ And so they hear not.
>
> They say: 'Our hearts are/ Under veils, (concealed)/ From that to which thou/ Dost invite us, and/ In our ears is a deafness,/ And between us and thee/ Is a screen: so do/ Thou (what thou wilt);/ for us, we shall do/ (What we will!)'.[361]

This *hijab* suggests a distance which diminishes human intelligence. The Quraysh had chosen a different religion to follow, the worship of idols, thus creating a *hijab* between them and Allah. Thus Mernissi sees the negative connotation of the word *hijab* to be a modern concept to exclude women from the spiritual grace of Islam.

By understanding the historical beginnings of the word *hijab*, Mernissi shows how it has changed perspective. Once used to separate the Prophet from other men in his private space, it has now become a way of shutting out the world and closing off the Islamic community from the West. Its resurgence today is based on the fact that Muslims are in search of identity and women's bodies are now symbolic representations of Islamic

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[361]Ibid., pp. 1230-1231.

community. By "shutting them out of the world" *hijab* is used to separate public from private space, changing the "historical, social and religious reality of the *hijab.*"[362]

Mernissi asserts that Muslims today can "revolutionize their societies by acknowledging the transformative role of women."[363] Although Mernissi regards the West as an enemy that has destroyed the infrastructure of Islamic societies, she considers it a model of tolerance which recognizes women's rights within a secular humanism. She fears the Islamist fundamental movements even though they offers "a sense of identity and the power to struggle,"[364] because these movements within the New World Order have become dependent on the profits of oil, which will turn the true identity of Islam into "tele-petro-Islam."

Mernissi further states that the assertion "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,"[365] an accepted Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is in contrast to the hijab and the reasoning behind it. The very social architecture of Islam does not permit women to have access to space, or territory, imposed by the boundary of the hijab. Women who transgress this boundary are linked with fitna, which describes chaos,

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[362]Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), p. 101.

[363]Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 74.

[364]Fatima Mernissi, "Arab Women's Rights and the Muslim State in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on Islam as Religion and State, in *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*, ed., Mahnaz Afkhami (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p. 59.

[365]Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, translated by Mary Jo Lakeland (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993).

disorder and destruction. This enclosed space, to Mernissi, is "the ultimate locus of female oppression and subordination, thus reducing a complex sociological structure purely to gender and sexuality."[366] Mernissi argues that there is indeed gender equality in Islam, yet she removes the agency of the women who choose to veil and create spaces for themselves. Mernissi acknowledges that colonialism "had the unintended effect of retarding the legitimate struggle of women by subsuming it in an uncritical Islamic ideology of resistance"[367] but then she continues by stating the Orientalist idea that only secular modernity can lift Arabs out of their deadly paralysis. Although Mernissi condemns the West for essentializing Muslim women, she herself reduces women's agency by claiming that Islam is male-constructed.

Synopsis

Although the above Islamic feminist authors seem to follow a more Western ideology in terms of Women's rights and freedoms in Islam, they also demonstrate that the face of Islam is not essential or monolithic. As Muslim women themselves, they have demonstrated through their writings that they are not passive victims of their religion and culture. Their writings have inspired debates upon the assumptions of Islamist movements, Orientalism and Feminism. Their writings, along with other Muslim women who have entered into these debates, pose challenges to the construction of Muslim

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[366]Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 25.

[367]Anouar Majid, "The Politics of Feminism in Islam," in *Gender, Politics, and Islam*, eds., Therese Saliba, Carolyn Allen and Judith A. Howard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 61.

woman, the role of modernity and capitalism within Islam, and Muslim women's agency within Islamic cultures. They offer ways in which to negotiate identity and politics, which has in fact broadened the emerging field of discourse. Islamic feminists have expanded the boundaries of global feminism by reconceptualizing new possibilities. This has in turn opened the doors for many other women within Islam to participate within this dialogue, be it to contradict these concepts, or to find their own feminist agency.

Diverse Voices of Islamic Women

Homa Hoodfar illustrates how the myth and images of the veil in Canada have hindered the understanding of "the social significance of the veil from the point of view of the women who live with it."[368] Fatima Mernissi asserts that the intensity with which the veil has become heightened is directly linked to the identity crisis which Muslims are enduring.[369] Mona Eltahawy is an American Muslim living in America. She herself states, "I feel at times like I fail to live up to my stereotype. When I appeared on "The O'Reilly Factor" a few weeks ago, two people I had never met before sent me messages telling me I didn't 'look like a Muslim'."[370] In a post-9/11 world, many Muslims living in North America are finding it hard to find themselves and their stories reflected in contemporary society.

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[368]Homa Hoodfar, "The Veil in Their Minds and On Our Heads: the Persistence of Colonial Images of Muslim Women," *Resources for Feminist Research* 22, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 1993): pp. 5-18.

[369]Fatima Mernissi, "Muslim Women and Fundamentalism," *Middle East Report* (July/August 1988): pp. 8-11.

[370]Mona Eltahawy, "Many Faces of Islam," *The Washington Post* (March 9, 2002), p. A9.

Television coverage, American films and books being written reflect the fear and anxiety of America towards Islam and its terrorists. Muslim women have begun fighting stereotypes that place an identity upon them, that of the covered, silenced, invisible woman. Although not mainstream, these women have found ways to have their voices heard. Below are three samples that permit women to offer their points of view and use their agency in placing themselves within the world today.

Marianne Alireza's Saudi Arabia

In the *National Geographic*[371] of October 1987, Marianne Alireza wrote an article about Saudi Arabian women; she wrote as an insider, an American who had married a Saudi in the 1940s. She writes how in the 1940s city women (like her) had few activities: they lived communally within an extended family, and they would leave their harem quarters to visit other women in theirs. Men and women had specific gender roles to fulfill. But the oil boom revenues of the 1950s ushered in development, modernization and industrialization: the one thing that did not change was Islam:

> it is the state, the moral and civil code; it is all matters big and small, ever imbued with an awareness of God's will and word. Now, though, the big and small changes unloosed over the Saudis have created a need to rethink how God's will and word apply in their world today and invent ingenious ways to make it all fit together.[372]

Although Alireza acknowledges that women were considered, under Islam, independent legal personalities, the man-made traditions and practices of Saudi Arabia denied women

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[371]Marianne Alireza, "Women of Saudi Arabia," *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (October 1987): pp. 423-453.

[372]Ibid., p. 432.

their rights. She then continues by quoting Ibtissam Lufty, a Saudi woman who stated that Saudi Arabia had indeed lived through narrow days but that things had now changed. "We women have stretched our boundaries to the limit"![373] Alireza notes some changes: in the streets she saw men, women (even though they must remain covered), and children together and compared it to the "days" when only men were seen publicly and women were in the homes. She also notes that rural and nomadic women, who have always enjoyed a greater amount of public freedom than city women (see Appendices 6.5 and 6.6), continue to do so: the Bedouin women "are still the only Saudi women driving, far from the crowds and the morals police, with pickup trucks and water rigs replacing the camels and treks to the wells on foot."[374] But Bedouin women, she asserts, veil their faces more strictly than the women who live within the cities even though they have greater freedoms publicly and with their varieties in dress (see Appendices 6.8 and 6.13).

When experiencing a group of schoolgirls (see Appendix 6.7) in the Eastern Province of Qatif, Alireza stated that she was shocked to see such young girls wearing cloaks (although the text continues that this region is home to a Shi'a community which is known for its conservatism). Alireza then gives an account of meeting an old woman in a village outside Abha: she is invited into the home of an elderly village woman and notices that she does not wear a veil; as well, two male strangers to the elderly woman (Ibrahim Ahmad al-Sayed, a member of the Asir governor's staff and the director of the provincial tourism department, and his driver) also enter her house. Alireza states that such a thing

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[373]Ibid., p. 430.

[374]Ibid., p. 435.

would never have happened in Jiddah or in Riyadh. By stating this point, we become clearly aware that there are multiple groups of women, and each do not act in a homogenous fashion. Then Alizera changes her approach to women's roles in Saudi Arabia by claiming that:

> Today's educated woman might still wear the veil, might still be the wives and mothers they have always been, but they have become other things too. In their ranks are teachers, computer technicians, social workers, laboratory technicians, physical-fitness instructors (see figure 6.9), physicists, engineers, bankers, filmmakers. All this when the first public schools for girls weren't approved by the government until 1960![375]

Alireza claims that women who had a need and a desire to work (see Appendix 6.4) succeeded in receiving educations because of their protests. Fatima Yamani, chief of personnel at the King Abd al-Aziz University Hospital claims that situations for women entering the field of nursing differ. Some came from traditional homes who had families that objected to their working "not because they were not open-minded men or too strict, but out of fear that society would look down on them."[376] Others were pushed by their uneducated mothers to achieve what the mothers were never allowed to receive; while others received full family support.

Through this article, Marianne Alireza gives the reader a diverse understanding of Saudi Arabia and how it has evolved. She offers us divergent voices and identities, women who have lived under harsh times and in liberal times. Saudi Arabia is not considered one homogenous religious culture, but a nation filled with contradictions and oppositions, where

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[375]Ibid., p. 442.

[376]Ibid., p. 443.

women live multiple determinations. Alireza's description of Saudi Arabia gives the reader alternate meanings that depict the experiences of the women who live there.

One of the alternate voices that Alireza offers within her article is that of Mai Yamani, the daughter of a former Saudi oil minister (Ahmad Zaki Yamani). Yamani does not attend school in Saudi Arabia but attends Oxford University, where she is pursuing a doctorate in anthropology focusing on Arab customs and traditional practices. Although having the opportunity to live in both countries, Yamani states that if given a choice, she would rather be in Jiddah (Saudi Arabia) than in London (see Appendices 6.9, 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12). She asserts: "I'm a Saudi woman, I like my veil."[377] This image of the Islamic woman confronts the Western perception of the oppressed, silent woman. Alireza has shown the reader that Muslim women can be educated, live in Islamic cultures freely, and wear the veil proudly, not out of fear of punishment or reprisal.

Alireza then continues the article by discussing the different activities that women perform: they attend university, they are newscasters, they make art and embroider, they go to fitness centers (see Appendix 6.9) and participate in events such as the Lady's Night gala at the King Faisal Foundation opening. Women are waiting longer to get married, and are creating circles of friends to replace extended families. She claims that Saudi Arabian women have become worldly as their lives have been "opened by education and fresh opportunities."[378] Women are also willing to accept the veil because of the privacy and protection it offers from male harassment: she then adds that they "cling to a tradition that

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[377]Ibid., p. 445.

[378]Ibid., p. 453.

defies Western understanding" (see Appendices 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). Alireza hopes that change for women in aspects where they have no authority (boarding airline flights without written permission and the right to drive) will come to this society eventually. Although Alireza contends that Saudi Arabia is still oppressive to women in some aspects, she has also endeavored to demonstrate the true lives of women living in this Islamic country. Her research has added depth and identity to the Muslim women who live "under the veil." They are not silent, and they are not invisible.

Shirin Neshat, Photographer and Film Maker

Shirin Neshat, photographer and film maker, is by origin Iranian. She left the country in 1974 to continue her studies in the United States. She completed a masters degree in Fine Arts at Berkeley in 1983, and then returned to Iran in 1990, after the revolution. Her art focuses on the identity of the Islamic woman - which includes the reflection of her power, her space, the separation between masculine public space and feminine private space (see Appendix 7.5), her sexuality and the wearing of the chador.[379] The object of her work lies in the apparent paradoxical conjunction between the identity displacement of the Islamic woman and the fixed identity of the Western/Occidental spectator. She maintains the Eastern-Western dualism in order to cause the contrary effect: the Western viewers must reflect on their own cultures which then becomes subversive (see Appendices 7.1 and 7.2). Through these images, Neshat confronts the

[379]Christine Ross, "Occidentaliser le spectateur: Shirin Neshat, la différence de la différence," *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd quarter, 2001), pp. 27-30.

viewer with opposition: the perpetual image of the veiled Muslim woman, yet somehow a woman with agency.

After one of her trips to Iran (1994-1997) Neshat began a photographic series of women in diverse poses, wearing the chador and pointing a gun in different directions (see Appendix 7.4). In most of these photos, an inscription written in farsi covers the exposed parts of the women (such as their faces, hands and feet): this writing acts much like a veil or tattoo (see Appendix 7.6). She states that human beings are trapped by all kinds of iconographies and social codes (see appendix 7.3). Her photography allows her to convey this sense of human crisis and emotion. By creating this crisis, the viewer must displace common suppositions about the Muslim woman in order to see the whole picture.

The Iranian Revolution, which exiled Neshat from her country, dramatically transformed her homeland, and personally affected her identity by creating a feeling of "dislocation."[380]

> When I went back everything seemed changed. There seemed to be very little color. Everyone was black or white. All the women wearing the black chadors. It was immediately shocking. Street names had changed from old Persian names to Arabic and Muslim names...this whole shift of the Persian identity toward a more Islamic one created a kind of crisis. I think to this day there's a great sense of grief that goes with that.[381]

She states that Iranian women, during the revolution, rebelled against the "Oriental" stereotypes, and in doing so, the veil became a form of political protest, an identification of Islamic values, as well as a form of protest. In order to enter the public space, which is

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[380]Susan Horsburgh, "No Place Like Home," *TIME Europe: Middle East* (Monday August 14, 2000).
Source: http://www.time.com/time/europe/webonly/mideast/2000/08/neshat.html

[381]Ibid.

male space, the Muslim woman had to respect male codes of conduct: she had to be contained, silent and invisible. She had to be veiled.

The 1978 revolution changed the images of Iran created for Western consumption. During the reign of the Shah, images of the Westernizing process were put forward. During the revolution, the image of proud militant Muslim women, carrying machine guns, was distributed (see Appendix 5.17): they shattered the classical image of the Muslim woman as weak and subordinate. By showing the veiled woman within a dichotomy, Neshat feels that she is illustrating the stereotype and breaking it down at the same time. "There's the stereotype about the women - they're all victims and submissive - and they're not. Slowly I subvert that image by showing in the most subtle and candid way how strong these women are."[382]

Neshat, in her desire to locate her own identity, and to deal with her sense of isolation ("I will forever be in a state of in-between")[383] by living "between" cultures, has created a way to negotiate the difference and conflict felt by Iranian women today; a way to reconcile with a past and with current culture. The idea of an Islamic Ideology crumbles when faced with her images; women are hidden, veiled, silenced, strong, armed, and visible all at the same time. She further dissolves the notion that there is indeed a hegemony of women living within a totalizing Islam. The viewer is forced to confront the woman in the photographs and to see her: she is not invisible, but confrontational.

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[382]Ibid.

[383]Ibid.

Canadian Women's Perspectives

In 1998, the Afghan Women's Association in Canada conducted a community based analysis by reviewing research, local activism and community perspectives regarding the portrayal of Muslim women in Canadian mainstream media. They also provided a forum where Muslim women's views could be offered within focus group discussions.

The Afghan Women's Association decided to undertake this project in response to pressing needs of members of the Muslim community who were disturbed by media misrepresentations of their faith. Their literature pointed to a prevalence of Orientalist images of Islam which shaped current media portrayals. A predominant aspect of the imagery of Muslim women was to depict them as passive, as victims, as different and as veiled.[384] The portrayal of Islam as a whole was depicted as violent. A majority of the participants were aware of the targeted "terminology[385] used in the coverage, of the subjectivity of the journalists covering the stories, and the limited knowledge of Islam in leading to what most felt was negative coverage."[386] Many of the comments by the Muslim women in the focus groups revealed that the coverage frequently resulted in feelings of insecurity and less confidence of their identity as Muslims and as Canadians. After

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[384]Gul Joya Jafri, "The Portrayal of Muslim Women in Canadian Mainstream Media: A Community Based Analysis," *Afghan Women's Association* (1998). Unpublished. This report was funded by the Status of Women Canada and the Multiculturalism Program, Department of Canadian Heritage. I would like to thank Gul Joya Jafri for sharing her work with me, and for providing some very important resources for this thesis.

[385]Terminology such as "terrorist" and "fundamentalist" were considered problematic.

[386]Gul Joya Jafri, "The Portrayal of Muslim Women in Canadian Mainstream Media: A Community Based Analysis," *Afghan Women's Association* (1998), p. 4.

conducting a quantitative and systematic analysis of an examination of academic literature,[387] Jafri concluded that much of this literature, while using a geographic or ethnic focus, had "only begun to look more generally at the portrayal of Muslims as a group. In this context, Muslim women are either invisible behind the images of a violent Islam, or are present as both veiled and violent themselves."[388]

The focus groups consisted of twenty-five women in total, split into four sessions. They were recruited from the Muslim community in Toronto, Canada and diversity of age,[389] sect and cultural background[390] were taken into consideration. Although many of the comments were directed towards the portrayal of Islam in the media, much of the dialogue focused on identity and how these women felt that there was, in a way, no space for representing them. When asked to discuss coverage of Muslim women in media, and its accurateness, one of the participants commented that:

> the forms that [media] use to objectify women, like using metaphors, like the veil, becomes a metaphor that is used to stand in for the woman's identity, because that embodies all sorts of negative meanings, that they are

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[387]The first objective of the report was to "review all available literature pertaining to or relevant to the portrayal of Muslim women in the maintstream media." This research provided an analytical framework and understanding on appropriate strategies for change. The review used available materials such as Master's and Doctoral theses, books, articles and internet sources. The latter were used as indicators of popular thinking on the topic within the Muslim community. Gul Joya Jafri, "The Portrayal of Muslim Women in Canadian Mainstream Media: A Community Based Analysis," *Afghan Women's Association* (1998), p. 5.

[388]Gul Joya Jafri, "The Portrayal of Muslim Women in Canadian Mainstream Media: A Community Based Analysis," *Afghan Women's Association* (1998), p. 13.

[389]The majority of the participants were between the ages of 25-44, with the remainder split between 16-24 and 45-64.

[390]One third of the women were South Asian, while the remainder were of various backgrounds including West Indian and East African.

> oppressed, backward, living in a misogynist society. So you, therefore, erase the reality of these women, and replace it with this metaphor that is embodied in the veil, for example. So there is a lot of what I call 'literary violence,' in the way we are portrayed...And we really need to start to attend to just even the style - how you talk about travel, for example, you see these wonderful exotic things, you are framed in this exotic context, you are not seen as agents existing in modern society, and working and having a life. You are seen as this very exotic component or something foreign.[391]

The participants also acknowledged that coverage by Islamic-identified authors does not always benefit the image that is portrayed in the media. One participant, quoting an article on Muslim women in *Eye* magazine claimed that even though the article was written in a "progressive magazine" and that a Muslim woman had actually written one of the articles, this woman offered a Western perspective by being anti-hijab, and therefore supported the stereotype[392] of the "Muslim woman." The majority of the participants did not feel that they could relate to the images being portrayed in mainstream media. Some participants discussed the issue of feeling marginalized because of a lack of understanding about Islam by the journalist or reporter: "Islam is not just one thing, you can't take the situation of women living in one country, where they might be living under an oppressive government and generalize it for all Muslim women in the entire world."[393]

When the participants were asked if they could identify with images in media reports, most could not identify very deeply with most of the coverage they had seen, either because of the issue of the veil or because of cultural differences. They also found that

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[391]Gul Joya Jafri, "The Portrayal of Muslim Women in Canadian Mainstream Media: A Community Based Analysis," *Afghan Women's Association* (1998), Appendix A, p. 4.

[392]Ibid., Appendix A, p. 6.

[393]Ibid., Appendix A, p. 6.

they were evaluated by Western Canadian society on the basis of how the media portrayed the Muslim woman. One woman stated that when she began wearing hijab, the way people experienced her changed.

At a local public forum where Taslima Nasreen was speaking (a Muslim writer who has received death threats for her writings about Muslim women), this participant had been one of three veiled women present. Following that event, a local Toronto writer for the *Toronto Star* newspaper (Michelle Landsberg) wrote an article about the event and labeled the participant a fanatic, although she had not directly spoken with the participant. She was also startled by the fact that people would no longer approach her out of fear: people had cursed her and spit on her out of what she considered fear that she was a fanatic. Other participants found that people expected them to be demure and shy; some received low expectations from teachers because of reports[394] that they had been denied education in their home countries.[395] Some women found that the media portrayals even affected their own perception of Muslims: "(when the Gulf War started) everything I was reading was so negative, that in a way you start to question your own people, you go, 'Oh Muslim people, are they really like that? How can they not feel, and just kill people?"[396] Another woman stated that she considered herself "unusual" because of her faith. Thus, impact on self-image was expressed, even though it was not specifically addressed.

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[394]For example, the Taliban were known for closing down schools for women, and therefore Islam somehow devalued education for women.

[395]Gul Joya Jafri, "The Portrayal of Muslim Women in Canadian Mainstream Media: A Community Based Analysis," *Afghan Women's Association* (1998), Appendix A, p. 14.

[396]Ibid., Appendix A, p. 16.

The analysis of the focus groups obtained direct input of members of the Muslim community of women in Canada. These discussions added, Jafri stated, a necessary aspect of the project because it sought to speak for a community, and therefore needed to hear from a diverse group of Muslim women about their own views about their portrayal and its impact.

During these focus groups, the women participants stated that they felt that the diversity of their lives and activities were not represented adequately within the media coverage. They also discussed the idea that the mis-portrayal of Islam was based on the depiction of cultural practices.[397] In the end, they acknowledged that the attitudes of others, influenced my media portrayals, had in fact hurt them and they had now come to expect discrimination, rudeness and intolerance. As a Muslim, I encountered the same discrimination and intolerance. The stereotypes of Muslim women in contemporary society did not include my "reflection." There is currently no space in North American popular media for a diverse understanding of the Muslim woman. These spaces have been found amongst the voices of Muslim women in alternative forums: the writers, the artists, and the Islamic women's grass-roots movements have risen up to offer a forum for the variation, and even opposition, to the construction of the Muslim woman as it is understood in North American culture.

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[397]Ibid., p. 15.

Synopsis

Western influence in the production of individual identity consistently devalues the colonial implant. Homi Bhabha describes this phenomenon as the "exercise of colonial power through discourse"[398] because this discourse contains within it the notions of racial and sexual differences, and then produces ambivalence in those who are constructed. We see ourselves through the rhetoric of the colonizer. These Western stereotypes and cliches have become embedded in social formations, and these ambivalences have influenced the identity image of Muslim women. Bhabha asserts that:

> It is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. The absence of such a perspective has its own history of political expediency. To recognize the stereotypes as an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power demands a theoretical and political response that challenges deterministic or functionalist modes of conceiving of the relationship between discourse and politics, and questions dogmatic and moralistic positions on the meaning of oppression and discrimination.[399]

The contradictory discourses that arise from ambivalence (a structural condition) allows for the possibility of differing modes of knowledge. But the problem of being caught in this ambivalence causes the "subject" to find and recognize itself in the image while at the same time finding the image alienating and confrontational. For Bhabha, these two forms of "identification" encompass the dominant strategy of colonial power: while offering

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[398]Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 67.

[399]Ibid., p. 80.

knowledge and difference, it at the same time disavows or masks it.[400] Thus, the colonial subject becomes alienated: these Muslim women have rejected the stereotypes of media and the discourses of self as a Muslim woman and have turned to the colonizer or Islamism for affirmation; while at same time, the colonizer fears or is disgusted by the colonized. Thus again, the Muslim woman is reduced to a symbol or icons (from Western discourse or Islamism). Both dominant discourses are alienating, leaving no space for female agency and multiplicity.

These discourses do not take into consideration that Muslim women have multiple determinations. They are affected and live within differing socio-economic, cultural and geographical regions which create a different reality in how they understand Islam and how they practice Islam. Although, for these women, the construct is not the reality, they are confronted by it and the contradictions which are inherent in it.

As a conscious retaliation to perceived Western influences, Islamic societies may be reaffirming old values more insistently in order to safeguard them from these Western influences. In a way, it's difficult to ascertain whether the continual oppression of Islam from the West keeps women oppressed and therefore secluded behind veils as El Sadaawi states, or whether the veil is actually the affirmation of female autonomy and subjectivity as Ahmed claims. I would contend that both are true to some extent.

As long as wearing the veil remains a contemporary political act, the historical cultural significance of wearing the veil remains occluded. As long as the West is felt to exert power over Islam, Muslim women will continue to be caught between fundamentalist

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[400]Ibid.

pressures within Islam trying to fight the influences of the West, and the perception of inferiority they experience within Islam because the West considers them oppressed.

It has to be remembered that the writers I have mentioned, and others like them, are fighting for women's rights within Islamic traditions. Through the Qur'ān, we see historically that women were given rights, and it is from this viewpoint that women of today fight for rights.[401] Absolutist and bipolar constructions regarding East/West, Orientalist/Islamist are a major problem because they are reductive strategies. They are all unable to accommodate those who do not fit into their neat categories. By polarizing the "Other" one continues to repeat the construction of "Other", removing historical and political context, while at the same time taking agency away from the "Other". By Orientalizing the other side, one removes the ability to identify in multiple ways and one becomes locked in assumptions and biases about each other. One holds to preconceived notions that are sometimes predicated on appearance alone.

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[401]Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

Conclusion

Current North American perception considers the Middle East, and by association Islam, as a threat to Western interests. The negative stereotype of the Muslim as a fundamentalist, terrorist or fanatic is perpetuated by mass media. Western struggles, both economic and military, such as the Gulf war with the Middle East have led to the official depiction of the contemporary conflicts as a battle between good and evil. While by no means universal, even in North America, this type of discourse is widely publicized if not given official status in high administrative circles. It must be acknowledged that this type of discourse is not new and has deep historical roots.

The Colonial process, as felt by Middle Eastern countries, and the ensuing Colonialism discourse resulted in a strong desire for the "East" to define itself against the West, in response to the West's attempts to position itself as a superior society against Islamic countries. Orientalism, as practiced by the West, compounded the cultural difference between Eastern societies, reduced to a generic Orient and the West. In this context, a number of traits came to signify this abstract and largely mythical Orient. Western Orientalism is very much a male discourse where women are defined as subjects to the men. As the veil and the veiled woman became both a sign of difference between the East and the West, and an enticing fantasy for the Western male, it also became a political tool for the East.

In that context, the notion of "national identity" shifts in that identity is not built on a recognition of one's historic past, but rather the recreation of an "authentic" religious past, as Middle Eastern countries which have had to create their national identity by opposition to both Colonialism as a historical fact and Westernization as a process are now facing the

growing ideology of a universal Islam, swallowing up all "national" identities. Islamic women may choose to wear the veil, or may be forced to wear the veil to bolster a "national identity" which is now equated with "Islamic society." When independent Islamic states are created, the veil ceases being available to women as a sign of participation to a resistance movement (the Iranian revolution is a good example of how the chador was used for resistance and then became enforced) to become a sign of their submission to the Islamic state norms.

It is argued here that rising Islamist groups use oppositional discourse to the West to define their actions and use women and women's behaviour as part of that discourse to show their non-compliance to Western standards; and their "purity" as a marker of an authentic Islam. The West is invoked as the colonial power from which Islamic societies have to free themselves, as the immoral agent against which Islam has to defend itself, as the "other" against which one has to define oneself. Women are seen as an easy prey for the West - they have to be protected and controlled so that the honour of the community can be protected and affirmed. Since the West insists on unveiling women, women have to be doubly veiled as a symbol of resistance...for their communities more often than for themselves. Societies which do not veil their women are seen as corrupt.

To enforce "authentic Islam," Islamists create an ideology of Islam counteracting not only Western influences but also the pre-existent cultural heterogeneity of Islamic societies by insisting on a single version of Islam - wiping out all linguistic, ethnic and tribal differences, that is all cultural specificity. In this "universal Islam," a dualistic perception emerges which sharply divides the sexes further by building on the distinctions between private space and public space, between silent domesticity and vocal public politics,

reinforced by a general moral code to be enforced on both sides under the jurisdiction of religious - including state - authorities. Both the East and the West are therefore revealed as participants in the silencing of Muslim women.

The new element brought here is the rapid evolution in the presentation of the women's physical selves, and more precisely their dressed bodies, of which veils are a vital component. In a not too distant past, dresses - that is costumes, jewelry, head dresses, body markings, and veils - exhibited an extraordinary variety using an exuberant array of colour and forms. The constructed image of the Muslim woman as it is known today does not correspond to past realities: there were geographic, ethnic and class differentiations exhibited within the individual identity of the Muslim woman, as seen through dress. This awareness still exists with women today, though not with men. In this ethnically marked context, even the veils could be and were used to celebrate ethnic and class identity as well as individual personality and skills. Whether scarf, melia (Tunisia), chador (Iran), galibiya (Egypt)[402] or burqa (Afghanistan), they were embroidered, arranged, dyed, and draped in a multiplicity of ways. These images presented here illustrate how this diversity has been steadily reduced to a more and more austere, constraining, de-individualized pattern. The women have to give up at the same time their individuality as persons and their ethnic/cultural heritage.

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[402]For example, in Egypt different forms of dress serve to distinguish gradations of social class and wealth. Dress differs when performing house or field work, for formal occasions, and for leisure activities. "Increasingly since 1967, a new Islamic style of dress has appeared on the streets of major cities in Egypt." Andrea B. Rugh, *Reveal and Conceal: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987), p. 149.

Edward Said, one of the intellectual pillars in the construction of the debate about the Eastern/Western uneasy relationship, re-defined and exposed Orientalism, describing for example how the West reduces the Orient to one single entity. Yet Said himself has reduced the West into one homogenous whole; furthermore, he also talks about the East as one entity where Islam, Arab and Middle East are never really distinguished. Moreover, within his critique of the discourse of Orientalism, Said has no place for women: they appear irrelevant to the debate and to his discourse. He therefore offers no relief from the very perspective he critiques.

In the West, representations of Muslim - Oriental - women reinforce the same clichés. Early Colonial images and descriptions of the Oriental woman combine women as erotic objects on the one hand and as passive victims on the other hand. This in turn contributes to the construction of a fantastic image of the Oriental "other," embedded in the idea of an exotic but hegemonic Islam. The early images of Muslim women marketed to Westerners sustain the idea of Western cultural superiority, and the images of oppressed Muslim woman were used to justify this difference. Early Feminist Orientalism plays a large part in how Muslim women are portrayed, through literature and diaries. Western women were given access to Muslim women, but the writings of these women continued the Orientalizing gaze, focusing on the veil and the treatment of the female body as a sign of oppression both by Islam and by Muslim men.

Contemporary American cinematic representations have perpetuated this stereotype of the Arab Muslim and extended it to present both the Muslim male individual and Islamic societies as dangerous threats to the Western world. These stereotypes have ramifications for women, as they are again reduced to a single universal, truncated

stereotype in relation to these male images. The news media have already enforced the image of the Muslim woman as oppressed, veiled, silent and invisible; a victim of her religion and of Muslim men. The blockbuster movie reiterates the same message. Her fate is displayed as representative of the whole culture of Islam, a religion that is considered "other," antagonistic to Western values of democracy and social solidarity. Within this patriarchal tradition, the Muslim woman's proper place is under the control of men.

Contrary to Western expectations and in spite of the obstacles, Islamic women do speak, and as seen in Chapter Five, the discourses of Islamic women are varied: within Islamic women's voices, different points of view are expressed, different stances are taken. Islamist women, in favour of the Islamist movements, are very few - there seems to be a contradiction between espousing Islamist views and speaking publicly. Yet these women exist. They are fiercely poised against Muslim feminists: the Islamist women promote the Islamist code and values, while the feminists attempt to reclaim or assert a Muslim identity, claiming the right to create their own identity and the location of their identity.

If Islamic feminists were able to locate themselves locally in a pragmatic mode independent from Western references, other women could follow. But whether or not Islamic feminists can do so is problematic. What they tend to do is to become reformists who perform historical enquiries and reformulations. While they are not homogenous in their writings, they often reach the same re-interpretations of the Qur'ān, strengthening their theoretical position but not necessarily their social influence.

Islamic feminists identify several themes which are directly relevant here: they speak about how the body and especially the female body is controlled, both as a marker of

religious identity and a contested space for male authority. They uncover how Islamic dress codes are used to both fight the West and control the women wearing them. The veil then plays a central role in their discourses. Paradoxically, Islamic feminists are not shy of criticizing Western feminists for being "veil-centric," focusing on the veil instead of the persons. Some Islamic feminists are pro-veil; the veil emphasizes for them the role of women in the resistance against the West. The ambiguity inherent to veiling remains in that two contradictory messages are inscribed in the dress code, one about the affirmation of (active) participation to a national (religious) identity, the other about submitting to silence and invisibility. "We veil because we don't want to be Westernized" or "we veil because we have no choice."

The writings of three prominent Islamic feminist writers, among others, brings this ambiguity into focus, as well as the role played by the ever present "Western" influence, whether as Colonialism or Western fashions (Westernization) or Orientalism. Leila Ahmed focuses attention on women's place in Muslim societies, and how the veil emerged into modern thinking. She illustrates how, through Colonialism, the West created a new colonial discourse toward Islam centered on women. Thus, the discourse of the veil was determined by the West and gave it new meaning in Middle Eastern society. She sees positive aspects for the veil because it allows Muslim women to enter public space, and redefine it, allowing for more sexual integration. But at the same time, by wearing the veil, these women are also supporting the Islamist cause, which she considers a negative impact on women. She claims that Muslim women are capable of asserting their own roles within Islam, and that they can do so by understanding the "essential" themes of faith in the Qur'ān. For her, it is this essentialness which gives them their true identity, not

nationalism or Islamism. Yet Ahmed herself, by claiming to have found the truth of the Qur'ān, assumes the passivity of the Muslim woman by speaking for her and constructing an identity for her rather than allowing her her own agency.

Nawal El Saadawi focuses on the oppression of Muslim women in Islamic societies. Looking into the past, El Saadawi claims that women had more power and independence at the beginning of the rise of Islam, but the authority of men over women, as well as the growing economic disparity between the ruling class and the poor have led to male domination and feudal oppression where women suffer. The veil, to El Saadawi, is a sexual emblem for male desire, and is not rooted in Islam. She blames women's suffering in Islamic countries on economic, including Western economic interests, and political factors; women are caught between Western commodification and Islamist domination. She advocates for them to rebuild a base for political power.

Fatima Mernissi argues that Islam, as a religion defined by the Qur'ān, is not a repressive society; by examining Islamic history, Mernissi finds that Islam, at its beginning, in fact elevated the role of women, but society became male dominated after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and women were more and more excluded from public life. By re-examining the meanings of the word *hijab*, Mernissi finds that what was once used by men to separate men, has now become a tool for keeping the West out of Islamic communities; women's bodies now symbolize Islamic communities. The transformative role of women would have to be acknowledged before changes can occur. It is noticeable that all these writers are still speaking - like Edward Said, whom they quote - of a generic Islamic woman, a generic Islam, and of a generic veil.

The diversity and ethnicity of Muslim women's dress discussed in the second chapter was erased to create a general Islamic identity for Muslim women. This homogenous image of Islam and Muslim woman is dispelled by the images constructed by Muslim women themselves, as seen in Chapter Five. I have used three distinctive discourses (Marianne Alireza, Shirin Neshat and the report by the Afghan Women's Association) to provide different perspectives of women living in Islam; to show the "backlash" of voices towards the perpetuated stereotype of the Muslim woman construct. These discourses illustrate how complex their lives and identities are, as well as how Islamic societies have changed, making it difficult to find a place within it that fits their own perceptions. Through their discourse and imagery, they offer an oppositional stance to the stereotype that Muslim women are silent and invisible.

In the introduction of this thesis, the question of the veil was framed in a triangle abstracted through dominant themes; that is Islam, Women and the West. The previous chapters have shown how these three positions correspond to perspectives or social choices poised in counter-relations to each other.

But it has become obvious that this triangle is much more complex than the terms usually proposed to deal with the "question of the veil" that is "to veil or not to veil" - indeed, each term of this triangle appears to re-cover a multilayered reality. For the purpose of the argument, these layers can be reduced to two or three basic oppositions within each term.

Because Islamic women are defined by the Islamists as non-participants in the social (public), political and religious life of the community, even though they are involved in the resulting life experience, they are in a unique position to unveil ambiguities and contradictions contained in such terms as Islam, Woman, West or even Veil.

The "Islamic Woman" quickly reveals herself to be a plural notion when one looks beyond the texts. Women in Islamic countries still carry at least the traces of their historic ethnic and linguistic diversity. Different Islamic states have granted them different status. They exhibit in their behaviour and dress different interpretations of their religious codes, and different theological choices. Some women are feminists. Some women are involved in theological debates. Some women are social activists, many of them are survivors.

Those who are located in their community of origin have to confront different realities than those who find themselves in North America and Europe. In any case they are far from being passive, even in those situations where they are silenced and isolated by their society.

The most glaring opposition is between the Islamist's Islam, a centripetal force, and Islam as a religion shared by different people and cultural communities as developed from the Qur'ān with its diversity of theological commentaries. On the one side, the veil is only one of different expressions of modesty in the dress code, and sometimes only a reflection of preceding cultural norms; on the other side, the veil is a religious injunction. Between non-Islamist Islam and the Islamist's views, there is a sometimes violent struggle and an enormous gap which is rarely acknowledged publicly, though Islamic feminist writers are directly positioned in this struggle when they insist on going back to the Qur'ānic texts to justify their re-interpretations of the norms imposed on Islamic women.

The fact that the struggle is political as well as theological, pitting ethnic group against ethnic group, and state against state, and each nation against the ideology of a universal Islamic community, does not lessen the intensity of the process. Women are still seized as pawns in these struggles.

The opposition between Islamists and non-Islamists is constructed concretely on the relationship Islamic societies entertain with the West. In spite of Edward Said's interpretation of the West, however, the West is not a homogenous whole. Orientalism, as exposed and defined by Edward Said, is taken as corresponding to and abiding to the colonialization process. Yet, from a Western perspective Orientalism and Colonialization are two distinct enterprises. Even as the abstract "other" in the debate, the West appears as Orientalism, a European, then Euro-American de-humanizing gaze, and as Westernization, a process by which Colonialization is still at work. The Islamic feminists end up being perceived - no matter what they say - as agents of Westernization. The presence of Islamic feminism is thus interpreted by Islamists as the demonstration of a Western process inside the Islamic community.

From the point of view of the women describing their experiences, or presenting themselves as individuals, the veil itself is not one object or even one notion. The notion itself certainly used to be divided into a wide array of types of head covering - that being the one basic cultural or religious injunction. This formerly highly visible diversity has been more and more obscured by the simultaneous rise of the veil as a central notion and symbol, and the rapid rejection of the actual individualized veils in favour of a generic all encompassing, all dissimulating, all uniformizing veil covering the whole woman, and all the women in the same kind of vestment. This is especially striking when one looks at the final product: a uniform black shapeless cover.[403]

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[403]The Taliban in Afghanistan considered the shapeless black cover of the hijab a foreign import (it did not cover the whole face). But in July 1996, after Gulbuddin Hekmatyer became Prime Minister, he warned women that they would have to wear the black hijab if the continued to work. Nancy Hatch Dupree, "Afghan Women Under the

The opposition between the former veils and the generic Islamist Veil has been ignored by feminists, Islamic or Western. It was not ignored by the Islamists who relentlessly forbade the older styles of veiling. From this new perspective of a complex reality always to be redefined according to opposing perspectives, several paradoxes emerge which are concretized in the strictures imposed on women's dress and on women's behaviour.

First, at an individual level, an Islamic woman who has to choose between veiling herself or not, if she decides to affirm her non-colonial status, her faith, or her belonging to a community, finds herself using a symbol which has a different meaning for the males of her community depending on their own religious stance - she may affirm her ability to choose, only to find herself in many cases choosing a behaviour which may be imposed on her by law.

A larger paradox looms within the arguments presented by the Islamist community: constructing a generic Islam (according to their own principles) and searching for purity and morality. Whether Islam as a religion is co-opted in justifying limiting women to a domestic life or whether this belongs within Islamic teaching does not matter. According to Islamists, Islam is a religion that veils women. The conjunction between cultural norms and fundamentalist religious views results in women's behaviour being the test for insiders and the symbol for outsiders of the authenticity of religion.

Veiling women is supported by and confirms an anti-colonial stance. Because the colonial powers attempted to unveil women, one is justified in re-affirming Middle Eastern

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Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed. William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 152.

socio-religious norms. Because Western feminism considers Islamic women in general and veiled women in particular as oppressed, the Western values of autonomy, especially female autonomy, and self-identity are perceived as threats to the cultural and religious norms. One is thus justified in imposing a stronger norm, emphasizing one's belonging to, and serving, the community - in the case of women, one's paternal or husband's family - and one's devotion of God as religious authorities.

Veiling ones' women means that one opposes the West, and reinforces Islamic identity by taking an image, "The Veil," that has become a rallying cry in the West, and sending it back as a counter-message.

The Islamists use a rhetoric similar to that of Edward Said and protest the Orientalist perspective as part of the Colonial discourse, and as proof of the immorality of the West. Yet, and this is the paradox, they find themselves strongly reinforcing the main tenets of Orientalism as described by Edward Said. As far as the veil is concerned, this is expressed in at least two ways. One, Orientalism did not seek to free women from the veil and did not protest against their possible oppression. It seemed quite disposed to take the veil as a symbol of both exoticism and eroticism. The insistence of the Islamists on the danger posed by unveiled women to the purity of the mind - and sexual conduct - of the male simply confirms the Orientalist perspective. The present day Orientalist manifestations find indeed a great deal of material in the very pictures projected by the Islamist societies. From veiled women with guns to veiled women being stoned to death to veiled women behind bars, the Islamist images echo uncomfortably closely some of the Orientalist's fantasies.

Two, one of the main accusations levied against the Orientalists by Edward Said is that they reduced the multiple faces of the East to a single entity. One can read a similar process at work in the Islamist insistence on getting rid of all social and cultural differences within the larger - generic - Islamic international community, defined in Islamist terms. Sectarian differences are denounced; expressions of ethnicity, of ethnic identities, are hardly tolerated. Arabic replaces local languages. Artistic creativity is curtailed in the name of modesty and adherence to the letter of religious law. This applies to the veil - and other articles of clothing - as well. Ideally colours are replaced by black, silk and embroideries are replaced by polyester or cotton, drapes are replaced by shapeless covers. This process of homogenization fits directly into the construction of the "East" by the Orientalists. One cannot, therefore, perceive Islamist preoccupation with the veil, and therefore with women, as being antithetical to Orientalist views. One can only conclude that they feed upon and support each other. However, whereas the Orientalists were defining the Arab woman as a mythical object and applying their effort to their own esthetic or erotic dreams, the Islamists are dealing daily with concrete bodies and actual women.

It is not my intention to disparage the gains that may be derived from the writings of Islamic feminist writers. But the question of the veil continues to remain first and foremost in the majority of the writings about Muslim women by Muslim women. The question of the veil must be put aside, so that the Muslim woman behind the veil can be seen and understood. Issues of individuality must be focused upon: freedoms to access an education, to earn a living, to participate in society to the fullest. Although Western feminists also focus on the veil, their writings are irrelevant within this research, as they do not have access to the voices behind the veil. Their focus on the veil does not give them

access to the oppression of Muslim women within their religion, and prevents them from listening to the women themselves. Coming from a different set of experiences, Islamic feminist writers are conscious of their position within Islam, and their voices as Muslim women are important to the discussion and debate of the Muslim female identity. In order to move forward, the power of the veil within Eastern and Western discourse must be extinguished: this can only be done if the discussion moves away from the invisibility of women to the women themselves. Women's agency needs to be understood from a local, family, community and state level. Muslim women, through their writings and lived experiences, can undertake such an examination in order to contest the universal, truncated, stereotypical notion of the Muslim woman, as well as expanding the agendas of Muslim women. The constructed, veiled, silent and invisible Muslim woman hidden in occultation must be revealed, so that the image can be destroyed. This apocalyptic revealing will allow the woman behind the veil to be seen and heard.

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Appendix One

Diversity and Evolution of Dress in Morocco

1.1 Child
Caption: Fatima of Imilchil: a small girl bundled in another of the handwoven cloaks, called hnader, worn by the Âït Yazz people in the High Atlas Mountains
Source: Ahmed Sefrioui, "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco." Translated by Adrienne Foulke. *VOGUE* 158, no. 10 (December 1971), p. 123.

1.2a Dancers I
Caption: Blue women of Goulimine, a Saharan frontier post: four guedra dancers who speak with their bodies - until their veils fall, leaving them stripped, swooning
Source: Ahmed Sefrioui, "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco." Translated by Adrienne Foulke. *VOGUE* 158, no. 10 (December 1971), p. 119.

1.2b Dancers II
Blue woman of Goulimine. Dancing the "Guedra" at the Marrakesh Folk Festival.
Source: Moroccan Tourism Photo (mid 1980s). From the DuFresne Archives.

1.3 Girls
Caption: Veiled Morocco Berber woman with her child in the souk (the marketplace) at Boumalne du Dadès, a village between two mountain ranges
Source: Ahmed Sefrioui, "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco." Translated by Adrienne Foulke. *VOGUE* 158, no. 10 (December 1971), p. 120.

1.4 Ziz
Caption: Mysterious as sculptured pillars, women in the desert valley of the Ziz river expose only feet, hands, and one eye each
Source: Ahmed Sefrioui, "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco." Translated by Adrienne Foulke. *VOGUE* 158, no. 10 (December 1971), p. 121.

1.5 Wedding
Caption: Veiled Morocco: An Âït Yazza bride, delicate and barbaric in her long handwoven cloak, chained silver disks lighting the red veil worn for her wedding in the town of Imilchil
Source: Ahmed Sefrioui, "The Veiled Mystery of Morocco." Translated by Adrienne Foulke. *VOGUE* 158, no. 10 (December 1971), p. 122.

1.6 Fortune Teller
Caption: Intent on his future, a man in Jemaa el Fna square, the Marrakech market-place, hears a prediction from a card-reading fortuneteller.
Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Morocco: Land of the Farthest West." *National Geographic* 139, no. 6 (June 1971), p. 850.

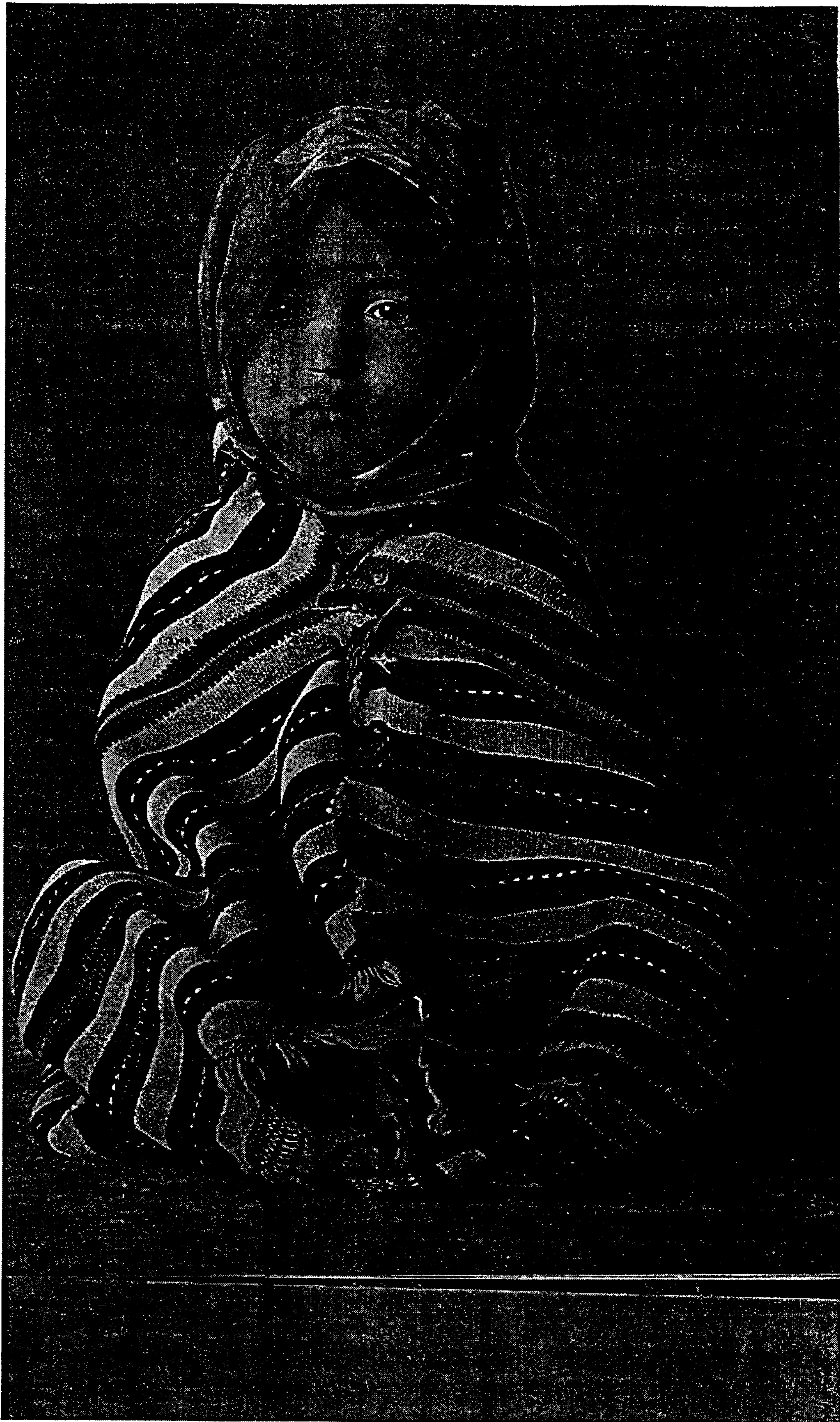
1.7 Berber Woman at a Wedding
Caption: Desert custom survives in the oasis village of Akka at the foot of the Anti Atlas range. This Berber woman wears prized silver jewelry, coins, and amber beads at a friend's wedding.
Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Morocco: Land of the Farthest West." *National Geographic* 139, no. 6 (June 1971), p. 844.

1.8 Children
Caption: "Bonjour, bonjour! - Good morning, good morning!" In joyous French, children welcome the author to Zemmour. Their families still till the soil, but increasing numbers of countryfolk flock to the cities in search of jobs. The result: overcrowded urban areas with inadequate housing.
Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Morocco: Land of the Farthest West." *National Geographic* 139, no. 6 (June 1971), p. 863.

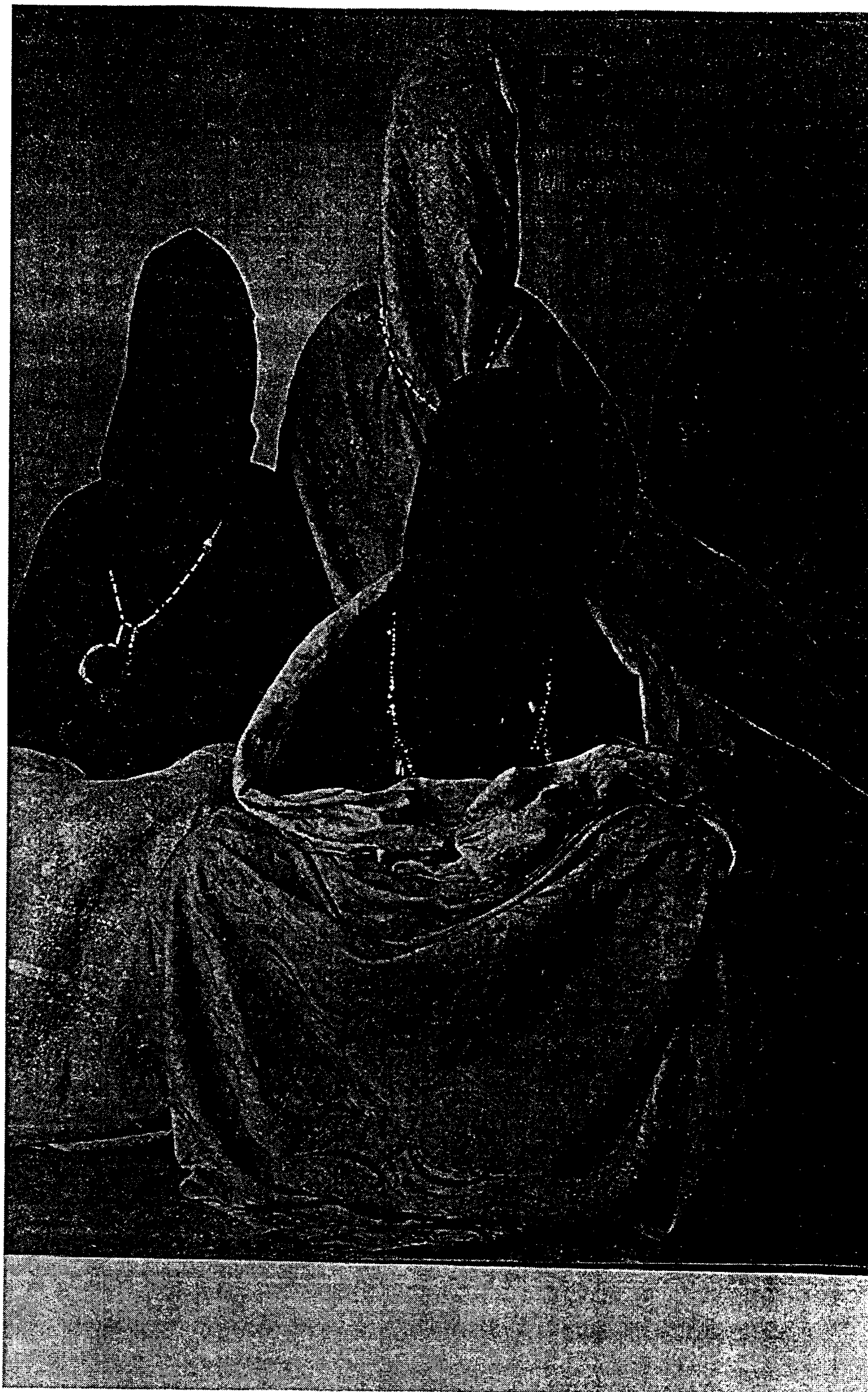
1.9 Fashion
Caption: N/A
Source: June Weir, editor. "Vogues' View." Vogue (August 1979), p. 172.

1.10 Three Moroccan Women
Caption: Three Moroccan Women of the Ayt Brahim Group
Source: "African Textiles." *Natural History* (June, 1983), p. 72.

Appendix 1.1 Child

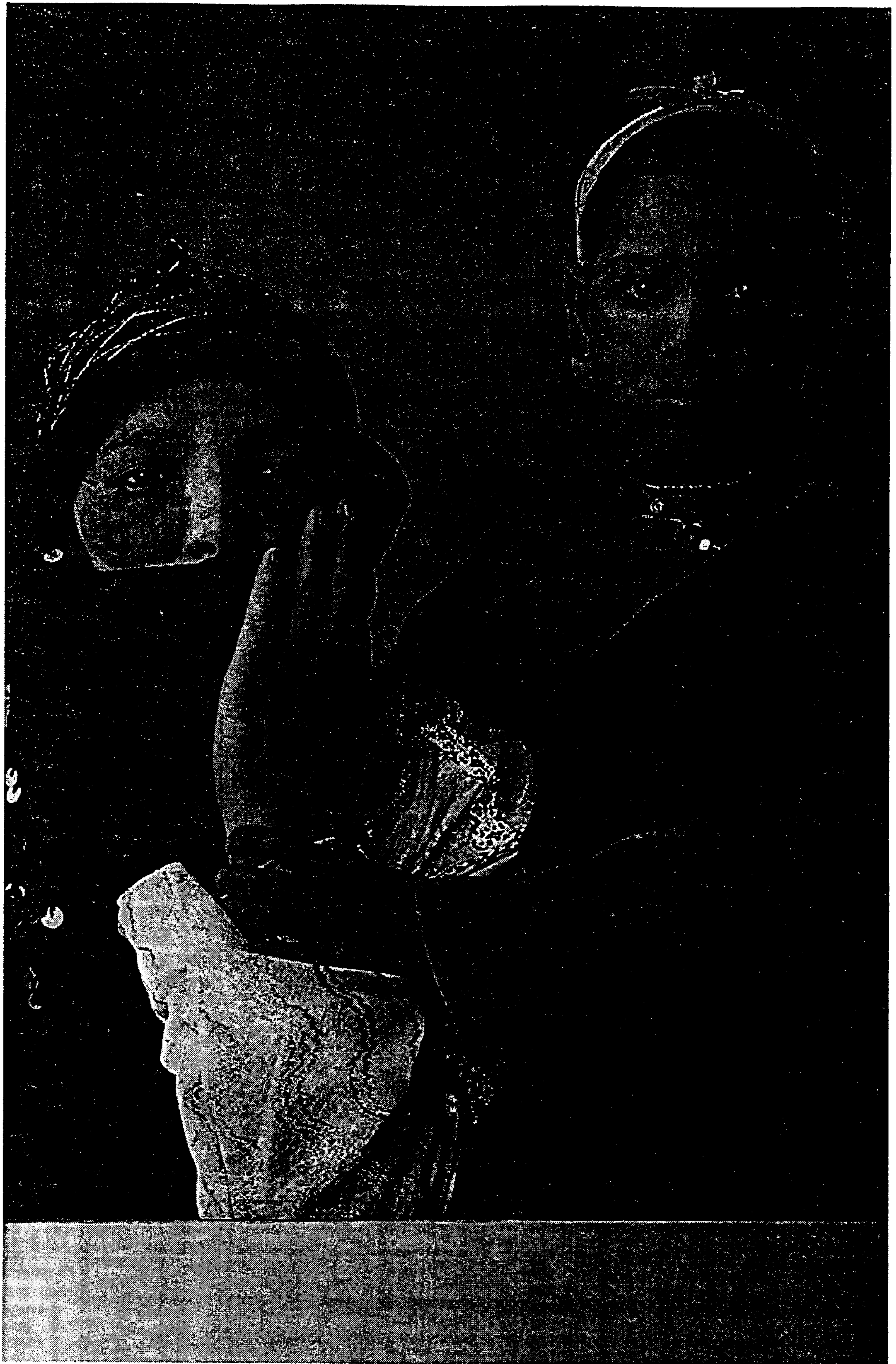


Appendix 1.2a Dancers I

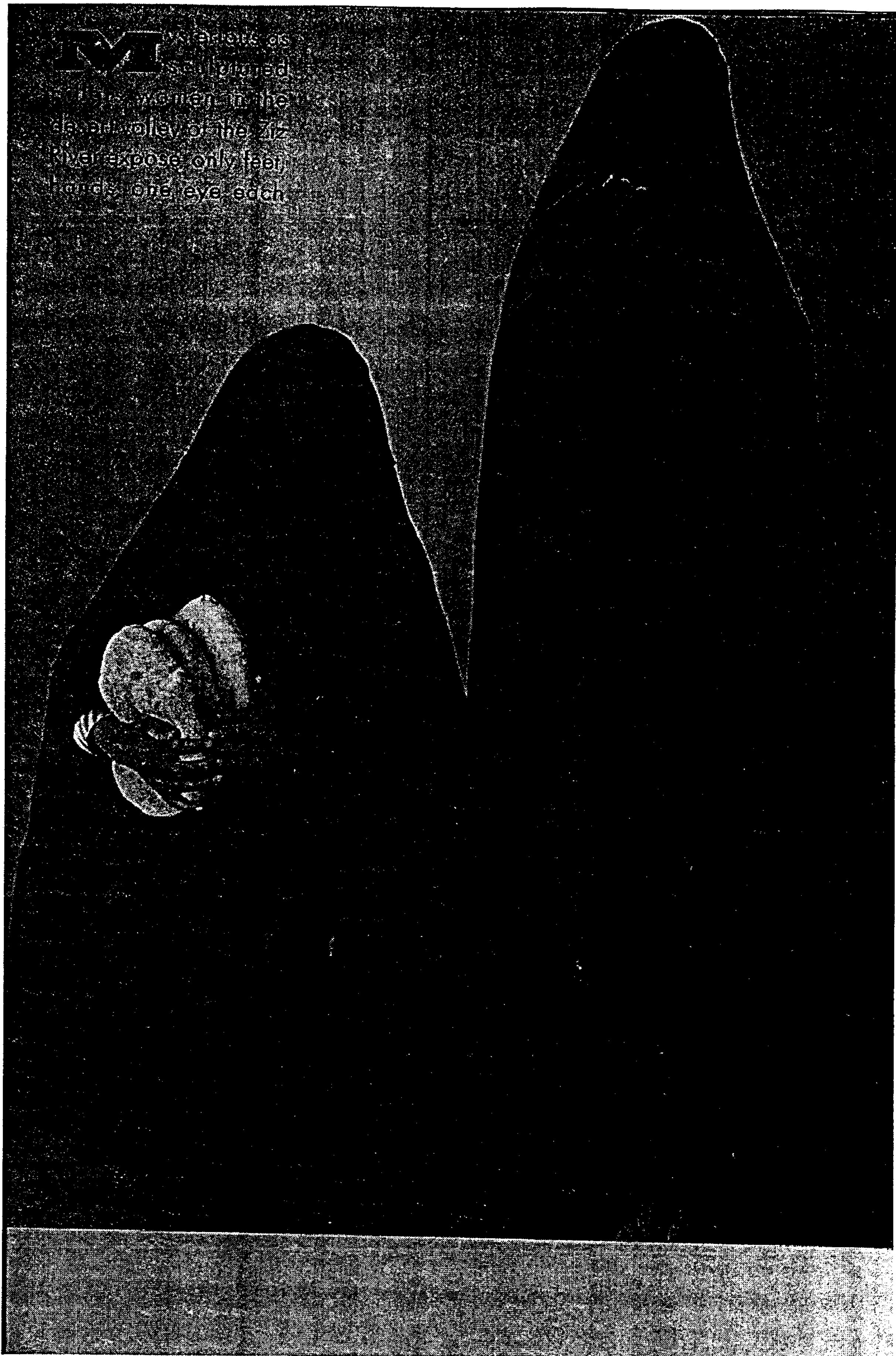


Appendix 1.2b Dancers II

Appendix 1.3 Girls



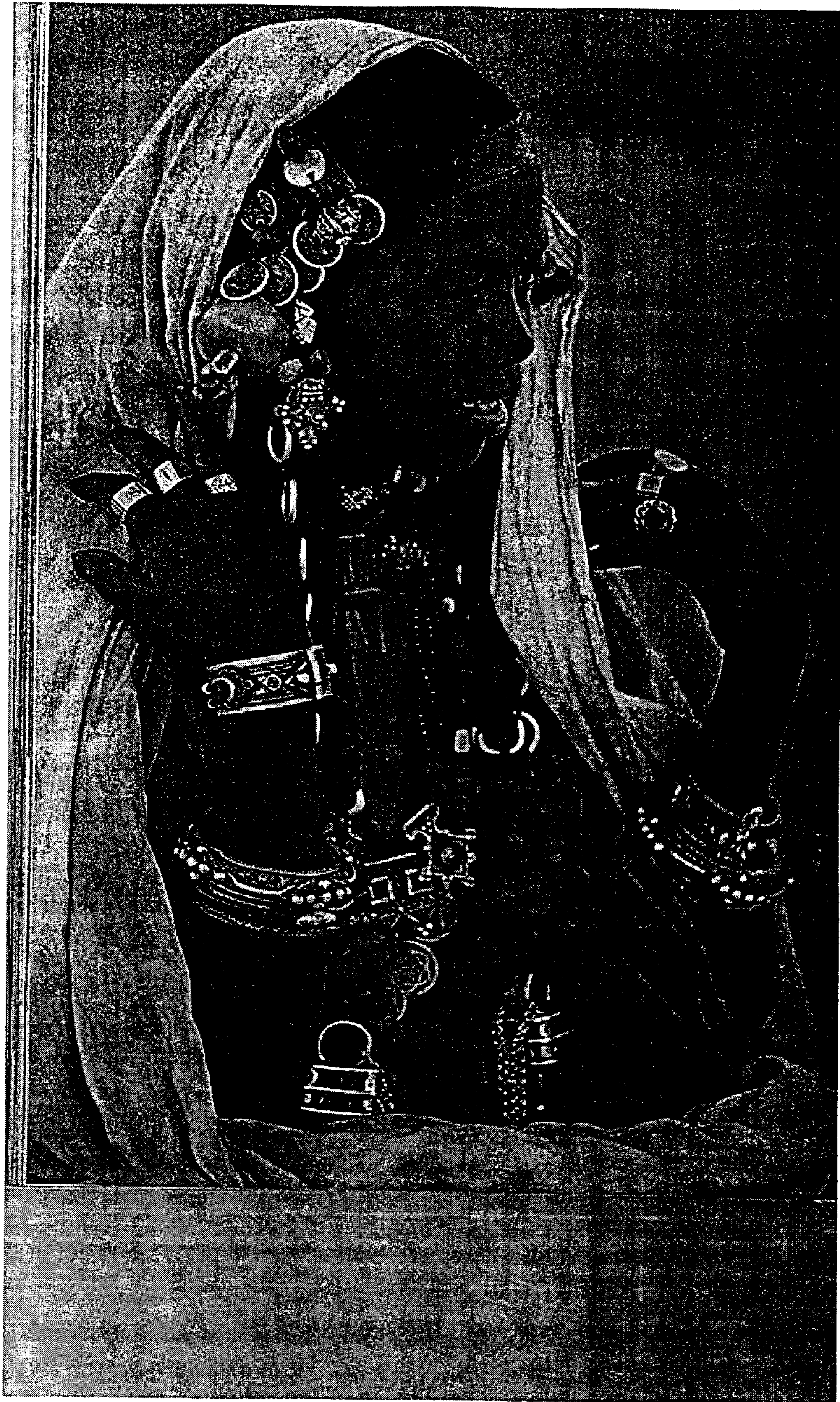
Appendix 1.4 Ziz



Appendix 1.5 Wedding

Appendix 1.6 Fortune Teller

Appendix 1.7 Berber Woman at a Wedding



Appendix 1.8 Children

"Bonjour, bonjour!—Good morning, good morning!" In joyous French, children welcome the author to Zemmour. Their families still till the soil, but increasing numbers of countryfolk flock to the cities in search of jobs. The result: overcrowded urban areas with inadequate housing.

Appendix 1.9 Fashion

Sanchez' Sahara

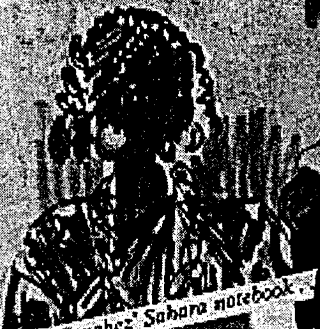
"It's the ultimate hideaway," said Fernando Sanchez, on returning from his recent trip to the Sahara. A real travel buff, who has made five trips a year to North Africa for twelve years, Sanchez admits the influence of the Moorish world on his thinking. "I learned how to mix colors freely, often three or four together. I discovered the joy of clothes that could be layered and worn in all types of weather, both indoors and out. And, of course, I share their feeling for wonderful cotton fabrics." From his recent trip to the Sahara, Sanchez interprets the beauty of the desert in his fall lingerie and at-home clothes; he features the Tuareg people's favorite colors—black, indigo blue, and white—and their comfortable, fluid shapes.

On a twenty-day trip with seven friends, seven African guides, in four Land Rovers, Sanchez kept a sketch and photo book of his Sahara impressions.

- "The desert is my ideal bedroom. The starry sky is over you as you sleep in one corner of the enormous space. Temperatures drop from over one hundred degrees in the day to below thirty at night.
- "We live in a world of throwaways. We are based on consuming. In the Sahara—it is survival. Everything becomes essential. From the water you drink to the way you dress.
- "All around you is organic architecture built by the wind. The dunes look like a sea immobilized by the wind. It's perfection in landscape."

(Continued on page 174)

Ricardo Bofill and Fernando Sanchez



From Sanchez' Sahara notebook

Young Tuareg woman

The regal attitude of the Tuareg people (above), nomads who live in the mountainous central region of the Sahara, where conditions are at their harshest, made a strong impression on Sanchez. Their clothes—pieces of draped fabric—are almost Biblical in form and inspired Sanchez' recent robes and caftans (left). The Tuaregs are often called "the blue men" because their favorite cottons are dyed an indigo-blue color that rubs off on their skin. As Sanchez observed, "People born in this space are really aristocratic. You cannot imagine their beauty." Sanchez finds that the Sahara "cleanses your eyes an[illegible]

The silhouette of the Sahara, desert colors inspire Sanchez' robe (above)

Appendix 1.10 Three Moroccan Women

Three Moroccan women of the Ayt Brahim group — James Dymon, courtesy of the British Museum

Appendix Two

Diversity and Evolution of Dress in Afghanistan

2.1 Examples of Costume

Caption: Examples of Costume Variation Within Circle C.

Source: Doreen Yarwood. *Encyclopaedia of World Costume* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1986). From the DuFresne Archives.

2.2 Woman in Red Burka with Bird Cage

Caption: Denied face and form by age-old custom, a woman of Kabul secludes herself in a sleeveless silk *chadri*: a pari of Old World goldfinches rides home from market on her head. Reflecting the forces of change at work in the land, Afghan law no longer requires the chadri, whose pleats echo a style of centuries ago. Women increasingly appear completely unveiled or hidden at most by a scarf or dark glasses.

Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerers." *National Geographic* 134, no. 3 (September 1968), p. 303.

2.3 Women in Cave

Caption: Smoke-hole spotlight brightens the gloom of a cavelike home at Sargaz, a village 10,000 feet high in the Wakhan valley. With their fire crackling, the women prepare to bake nan, an unleavened bread of rough-milled flour that serves as an Afghan mainstay. At night the family - grandparents, parents and children - sleep on an earthen ledge against a shadowy wall.

Source: Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerers." *National Geographic* 134, no. 3 (September 1968), p. 321.

2.4 Modern Woman

Caption: Unveiled daughter of today, attending the festivities, asserting woman's freedom (at an eight day August celebration honouring Afghan independence in Kabul's Ghazi Stadium).

Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerers." *National Geographic* 134, no. 3 (September 1968), p. 308.

2.5 Women at Mosque

Caption: Resplendent in turquoise, the domed mosque and mausoleum at Mazar-i-Sharif honours Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law and one of his successors.

Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerers." *National Geographic* 134, no. 3 (September 1968), p. 340.

2.6 Women at Work
Caption: N/A

Source: Thomas J. Abercrombie, "Afghanistan: Crossroad of Conquerers." *National Geographic* 134, no. 3 (September 1968), p. 343.

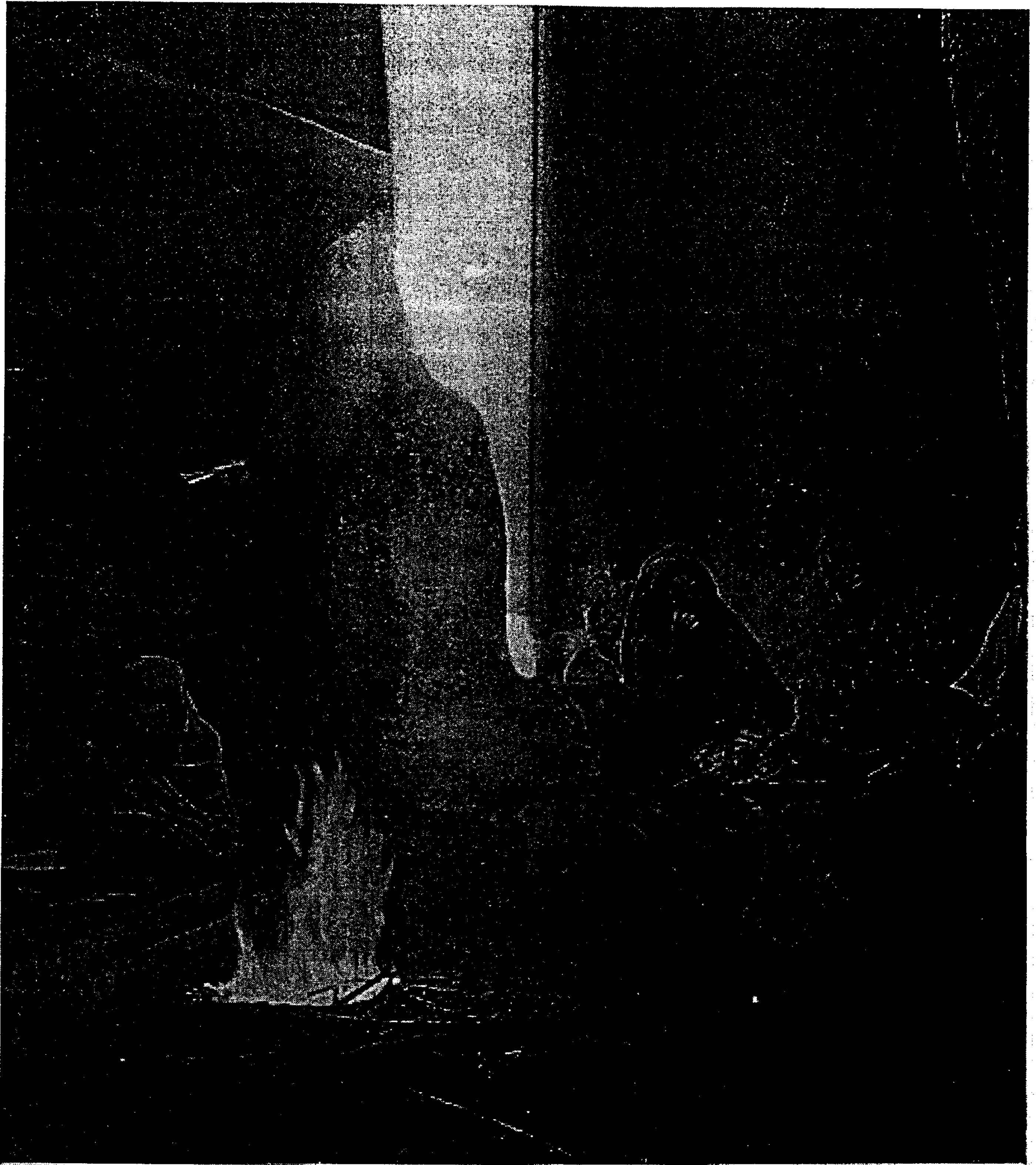
Appendix 2.1 Examples of Costume

EXAMPLES OF COSTUME VARIATION WITHIN CIRCLE C:

1. Afghan man from Kabul
2. Afghan woman from Kabul
3. Baluch man from southern Afghanistan
4. Pathan woman from Afghanistan
5. Uzbek man from northern Afghanistan
6. Pathan man from Afghanistan
7. Pushtin jacket from Afghanistan
8. Mullah from Herat-Meshed area
9. Traditional Iranian woman
10. Iranian woman from Caspian region
11. Central Iranian man
12. Kashgai man from western Iran
13. Traditional Iranian turban

Appendix 2.2 Woman in Red Burka with Bird Cage

Appendix 2.3 Women in Cave



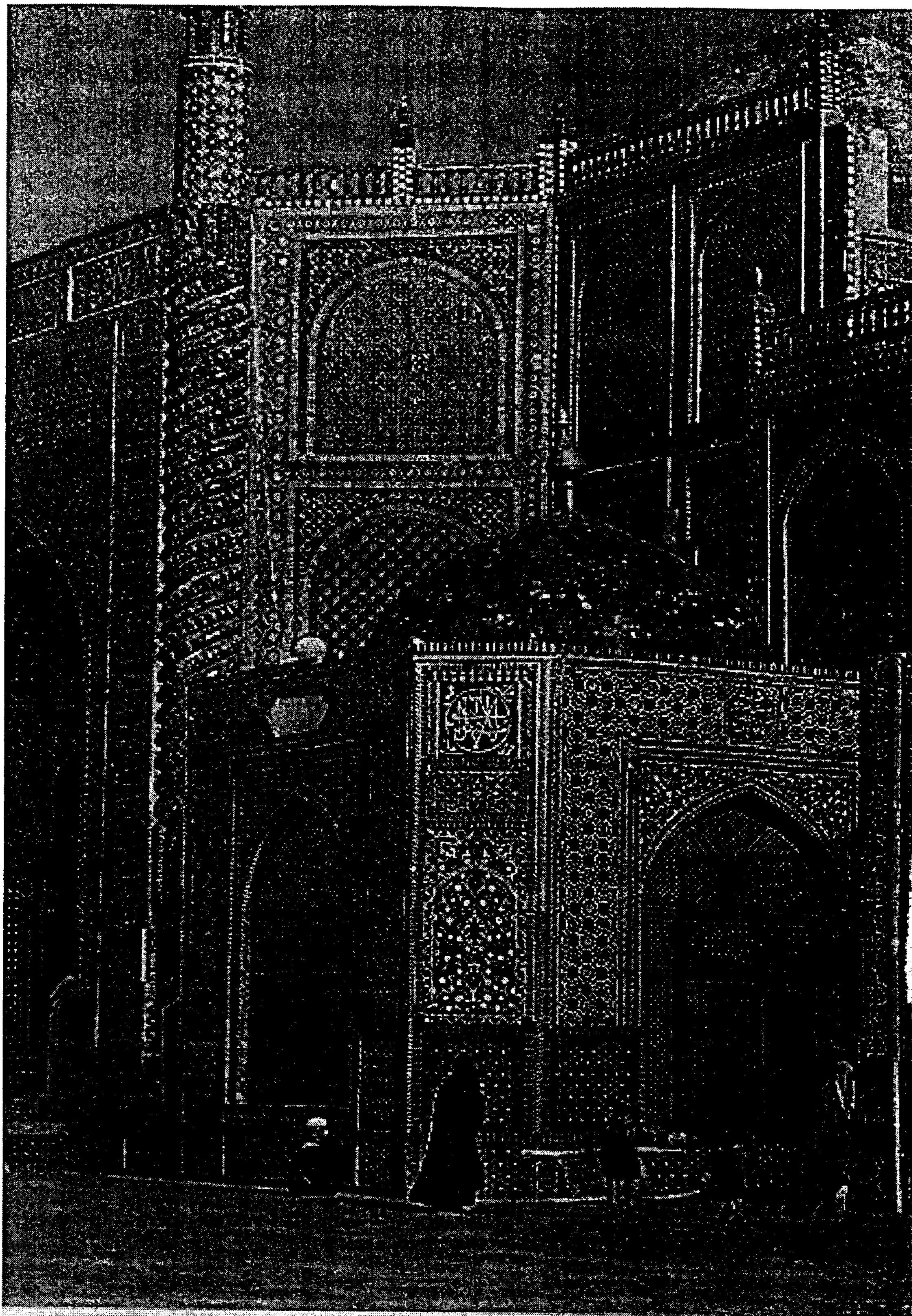
Appendix 2.4 Modern Woman

Like parts of a giant machine, wheels of gymnasts perform in Kabul's Ghazi Stadium during an annual eight-day August celebration honoring Afghan independence. Across the field, cheering-section cards spell out "Homeland" in Pushtu, one of two official languages (the other is Persian) in a nation of many tribal tongues.

For Britain—its last invader—Afghanistan stood as a buffer state between Russia and India. The nation won independence in 1919. Wary of foreign involvement, it kept its borders closed for decades, then slowly opened them to the outside world. Today, still fiercely independent, Afghans tread a neutral course between East and West, accepting military and economic aid from both.

Unveiled daughter of today, attending the festivities, asserts woman's freedom.

Appendix 2.5 Women at Mosque



Resplendent in turquoise, the domed mosque and mausoleum at Mazar-i-Sharif honors Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law and one of his successors. Moslems dispute Ali's

Appendix 2.6 Women at Work

Appendix Three

Diversity and Evolution of Dress in Egypt

3.1 Woman from Upper Egypt
Caption: A Woman of A Southern Province of Upper Egypt - (Sketched at Thebes).
Source: Edward Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: East-West Publications Ltd., 1836). From the DuFresne Archives.

3.2 Veils of Egyptian Women
Caption: Ornamented Black Veils
Source: Edward Lane, *The Life and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (Dover, 1836). From the DuFresne Archives.

3.3 Different head coverings
Caption: Waisted dress (Galabiya bi wist), right figure. Yoked granny dress (Galabiya bi suffra), left figure
Source: Andrea B. Rugh, *Revealing and Concealing: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 20.

3.4 Melaya liff
Caption: Melaya liff predates moda overdress. It is a slinky large rectangle of shiny nylon, silk, or other thin, clinging material. Although associated with the city, it has spread through the Delta and among the Upper Egyptians.
Source: Andrea B. Rugh, *Revealing and Concealing: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 111.

3.5 Poor bedouin near Arish in everyday dress
Caption: N/A
Source: Andrea B. Rugh, *Revealing and Concealing: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 86.

3.6 North Sinai bedouin dress and modesty outfit with face veil
Caption: N/A
Source: Andrea B. Rugh, *Revealing and Concealing: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 87.

3.7 Islamic dress, fundamentalist styles and pious styles
Caption: N/A
Source: Andrea B. Rugh, *Revealing and Concealing: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 150.

3.8 Fascinating Women of Egypt
Caption: N/A
Source: Selwa Roosevelt, "The Fascinating Women of Egypt." Town & Country 132, no. 4983 (November 1978), p. 171.

3.9 Out in the Western Desert
Caption: N/A
Source: Selwa Roosevelt, "The Fascinating Women of Egypt." Town & Country 132, no. 4983 (November 1978), p. 178.

Appendix 3.1 Woman From Upper Egypt

A Woman of the Southern Province of Upper Egypt.—(Sketched at Tahta.)

From: Edward Lane's "Modern Egyptians"

Appendix 3.2 Veils of Egyptian Women

small gold coins, and other little flat ornaments of the same metal (called "bark"); sometimes with a coral bead, and a gold coin

Ornamented black Veils.—*Only one of these (that to the right) is represented in its whole length.*

beneath; also with some coins of base silver; and more commonly with a pair of chain tassels, of brass or silver (called "'oyoon"), attached

The 'Asbeh.

to the corners. A square black silk kerchief (called "'asbeh"), with a border of red and yellow, is bound round the head, doubled

Appendix 3.3 Different Head Coverings

20 REVEAL AND CONCEAL

Waisted dress (*Galabiya bi wist*), right figure. Yoked granny dress (*Galabiya bi suffra*), left figure.

Appendix 3.4 Melaya Liff

Melaya liff.

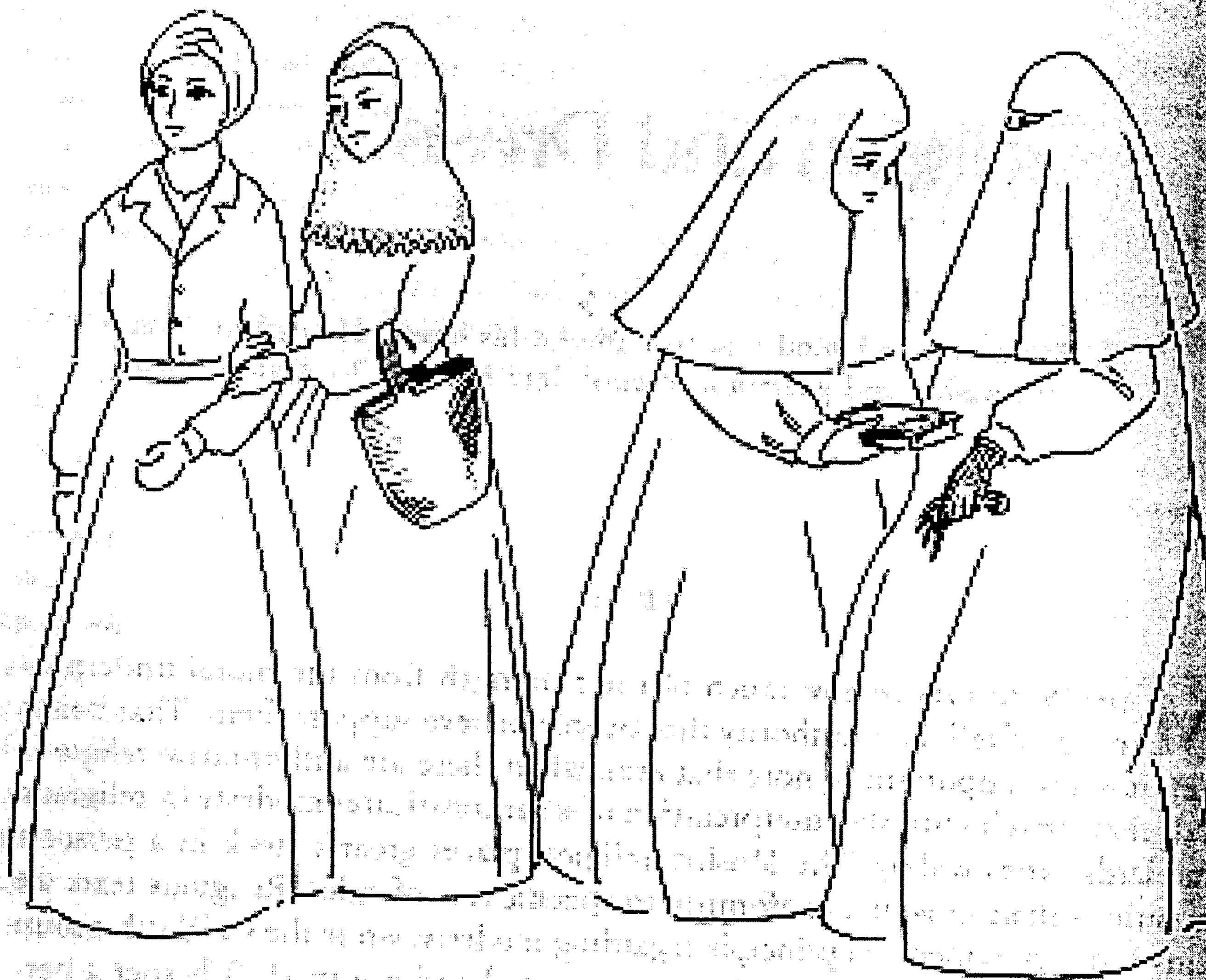
Appendix 3.5 Poor Bedouin Near Arish in Everyday Dress

Poor bedouin near Arish in everyday dress.

Appendix 3.6 North Sinai Bedouin Dress and Modesty Outfit

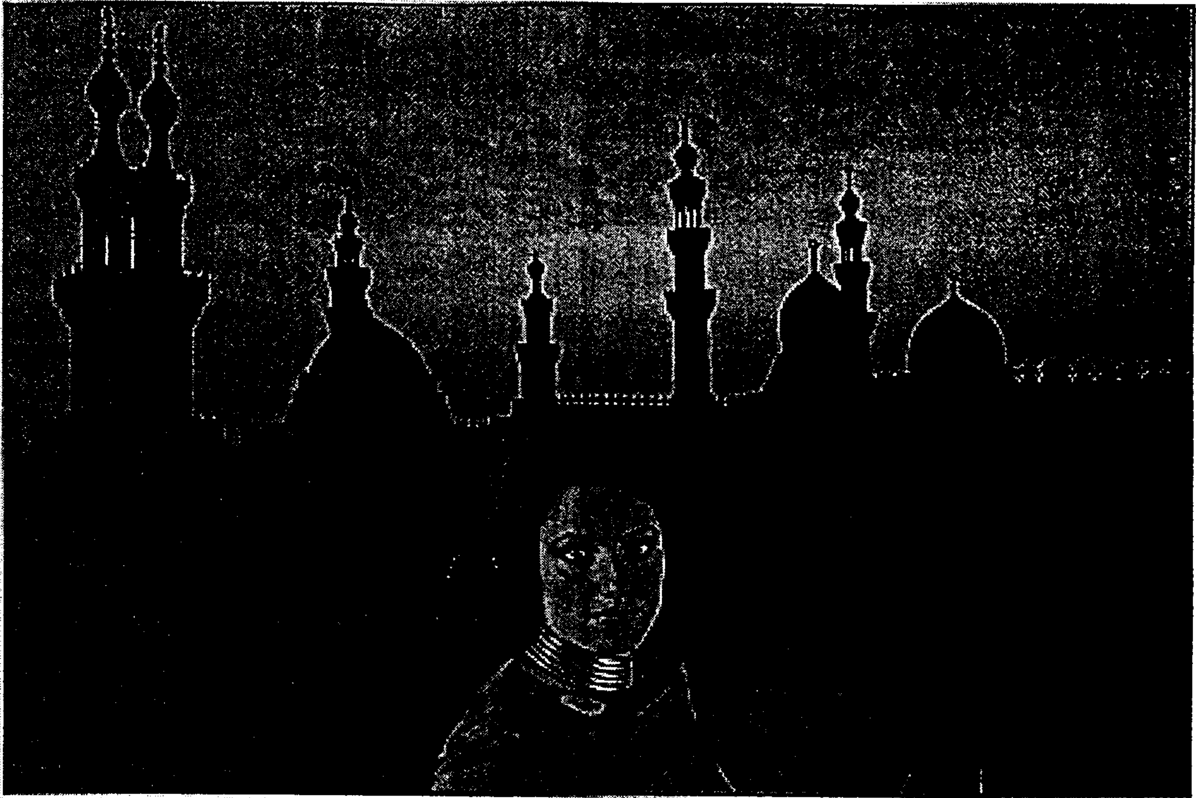
North Sinai bedouin dress and modesty outfit with face veil.

Appendix 3.7 Islamic Dress, Fundamentalist and Pious Styles



Islamic dress: Fundamentalist styles, right 2 figures; pious styles, left 2 figures.

Appendix 3.8 Fascinating Women of Egypt



The Fascinating Women of EGYPT

"I am Egypt" Cleopatra said 3,000 years ago. Then, as now, Egypt was beauty on a magnificent scale. The continuity of that ideal is still vivid in tomb paintings, the mystery of a woman's eyes and the irony of a skyscraper reflected in the eternal Nile. Now as Egypt struggles to create a modern society on the foundation of its glorious past, women again are crucial to the effort. Shahira Doss Abdelnour, a member of a prominent intellectual family, is seen here against the al Rifa'ie and Sultan Hassan Mosques. Pursuing a master's degree in economics while raising a family and working as a public relations executive, she, too, is Egypt. Make-up: Estée Lauder. Dress: Mary McFadden. Jewelry: Bulgari. All pages: make-up and hair styles by Sara McBandy.

Photographs by Fred J. Maroon/Text by Selwa Roosevelt

Appendix 3.9 Out in the Western Desert

Out in the Western Desert an often unseen Egypt exists, the Egypt of the Christian Coptic Age. The Christian Church of the Copts (a Greek word for ancient Egyptians) was founded by the Apostle Mark, and today there are 3.5 million Copts—7 percent of Egypt's predominantly Islamic population—thriving under the spiritual leadership of Pope Shenouda III. Four of the original 400 monasteries that flourished in the fifth century still stand in the oasis of Wadi el-Natroun. Against a background of the ancient walls of St. Bishoy monastery, Paris-trained Egyptian artist Amal Malouk clearly puts the stereotyped image of the veiled Egyptian woman to rest. Dress: Mary McFadden. Jewelry: David Webb.

Boucha Ghussain el-Azzouni, opposite, an international hostess, strikes a pose mirroring the frescoes in the tomb of Sen-nedjen in the Valley of the Nobles near Luxor. These frescoes, still clean and pure in line and color though painted in 1292 B.C., are, like Egypt's women, symbols of the timeless strength of Egypt as it moves forward to regain the eminence of the past. Make-up: Alexandra de Markoff. Dress: Jim Jasmer. Jewelry: Bulgari.

Appendix Four

Algerian Postcards

4.1 Slave Market
Caption: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Slave Market*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 84.3 x 63 cm. Stirling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Source: Reina Lewis. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), plate 11.

4.2 Turkish Bath
Caption: Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Bain Turq, The Turkish Bath*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 108 cm diameter. Clichés des Musées Nationaux - Paris.

Source: Source: Reina Lewis. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), plate 18.

4.3 Dance of the Almeh
Caption: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Dance of the Almeh*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 50.2 x 81.3 cm. The Dayton Art Institute, gift of Mr. Robert Badenhop.

Source: Source: Reina Lewis. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996), plate 34.

4.4 Veiled for Public Space
Caption: 19. ALGÉRIE. Mauresque - Costume de Ville.

Source: Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem*. Translation by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 13.

4.5 Prisoners
Caption: Scènes et Types - Aicha et Zorah

Source: Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem*. Translation by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 22.

4.6 The Harem
Caption: Femme Mauresque

Source: Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem*. Translation by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 80.

4.7 Scènes et Types - Jeune Mauresque
Source: Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem*. Translation by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 107.

4.8 Scènes et Types - Femme Arabe avec le Yachmak

Source: Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem.* Translation by Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 126.

Appendix 4.1 Slave Market

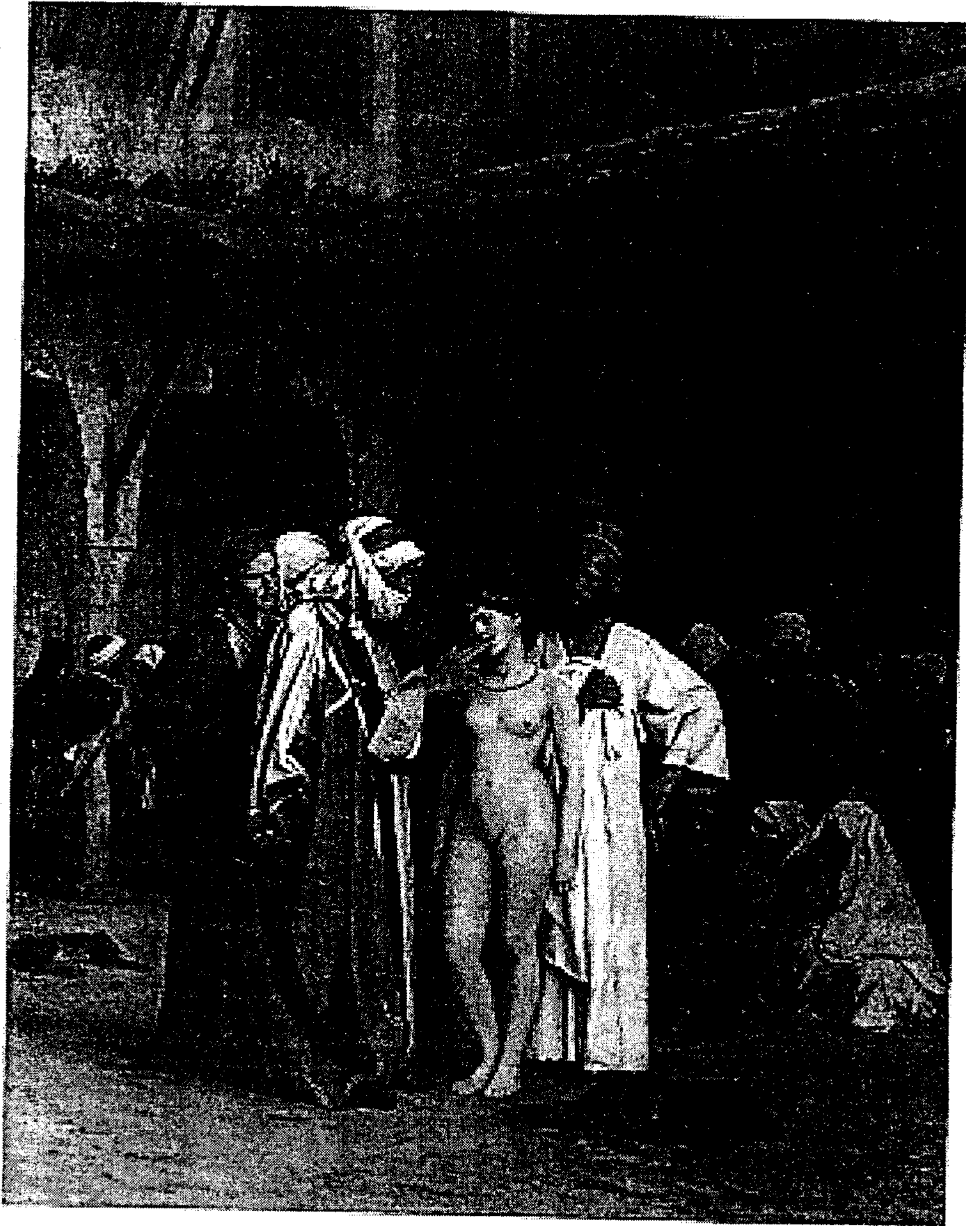


Plate 11 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Slave Market*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 84.3 × 63cm. Stirling and Francine Clarke Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Appendix 4.2 Turkish Bath

Plate 18 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Bain Turq, The Turkish Bath*, 1862. Oil on canvas. 108cm diameter. Clichés des Musées Nationaux – Paris. © Photo R.M.N.

Appendix 4.3 Dance of the Almeh

Plate 34 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Dance of the Almeh*, 1863. Oil on canvas. 50.2 × 81.3cm. The Dayton Art Institute, gift of M Robert Badenhop.

Appendix 4.4 Veiled for Public Space

Algeria. Moorish woman in city attire.

Appendix 4.5 Prisoners

SCÈNES et TYPES. — „Aïcha et Zorah"

Appendix 4.6 The Harem

? A Femme Mauresque

woman.

Appendix 4.7 Jeune Mauresque

Appendix Five

Islamic Women as Depicted in North American Media

5.1 Times Changing
Source: Anon. "Times Changing for Muslim Women." *The Toronto Sun* (Monday, April 13, 1998).

5.2 Unlock the Straight Jackets
Source: Michele Lemon. "Understanding Does Not Lead to Tolerance." *The Globe and Mail* (Tuesday, January 31, 1995).

5.3 My Hijab
Source: Rahat Kurd. "My Hijab is an Act of Worship - and None of Your business." *The Globe and Mail* (Wednesday, February 15, 1995).

5.4 Mourning at the Cemetery
Source: James Nachtwey, Photographer. "Kabul, Afghanistan, 1996." In *American Photo: Editor's Choice 2000* XI, no. 4 (July/August 2000), p. 28.

5.5 Lifting the Veil of Silence: Afghanistan
Source: Geraldine Byrne, Janice Eisenhauer, and Carolyn Reicher. "Lifting the Veil of Silence - Afghanistan: An Information Bulletin to help Canadians Learn More About Human Rights Issues in Afghanistan." *Calgary Chapter of Women for Women in Afghanistan* (Canada): n.d.

5.6 Let the World See My Face (same image as 5.5)
Source: Stephen Farrell, "Let the World See My Face." *The Ottawa Citizen* (Saturday, June 16, 2001), p. A10.

5.7 Honour's Victims
Source: Sally Armstrong, "Honour's Victims." *Chatelaine* (March 2000), p. 54.

5.8 Fashion
Source: Richard Drew, Robert Mecea, Ray Stubblebine, Photographers. "When Fashion Goes Over the Edge." *The Ottawa Citizen* (Saturday, February 17, 2001), p. A9.

5.9 Girl at Hajj
Source: Anon. "Haj Ends with Symbolic Stoning of Devil." *The Globe and Mail* (Monday, March 29, 1999), p. A7.

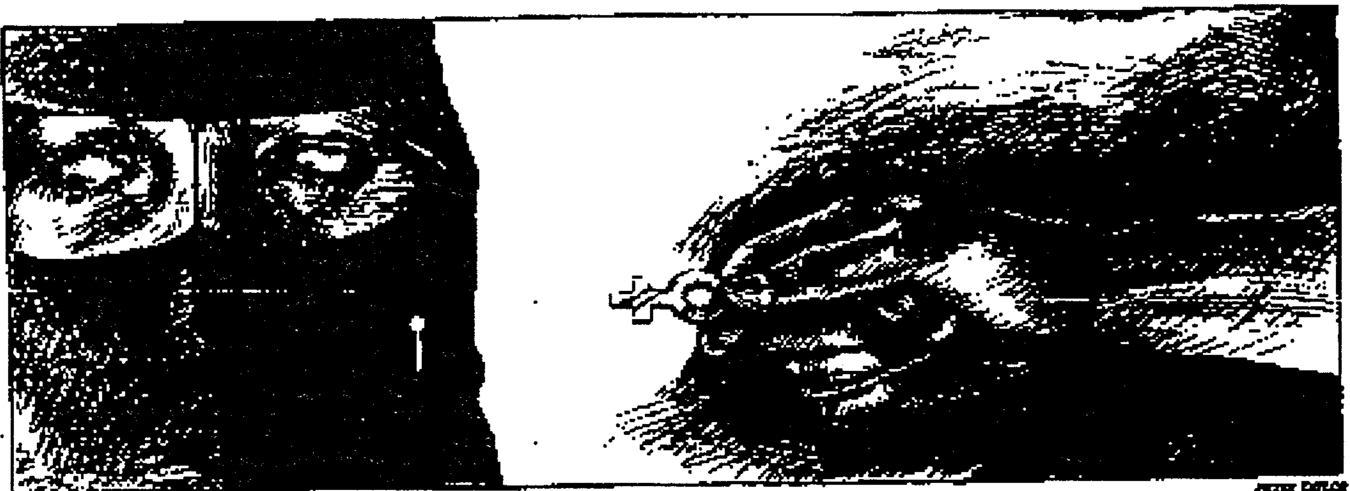
5.10 The Vote
Source: Geoffrey York. "Iranian Women Fight to be Heard in Vote." *The Globe and Mail* (Friday, February 18, 2000), p. A10.

Appendix 5.1 Times Changing

—CP

OUT AND ABOUT ... A veiled Moroccan woman walks with her daughter in Essaouira, Morocco. The former French colony is one of the most Westernized Mulsim nations.

Appendix 5.2 Unlock the Straight Jackets



UNLOCK THE STRAITJACKETS / *I say that people who want to promenade in this country as slaves should not be allowed to do so. It is an affront to the rest of us; to human dignity and self-respect*

Appendix 5.3 My Hijab

Dismissing Muslim women's ability to speak and act for ourselves is a profound arrogance of which some fundamentalists and some feminists are equally guilty. I don't cover to please any man, and I'm not going to uncover to please any woman.

SUE TRUMAN

... fundamentalists and

Appendix 5.4 Mourning at the Cemetery

"Kabul, Afghanistan, 1996," by Infinity Award-winner James Nachtwey.

SANTIAGO LYON, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A young girl peers out from a group of Afghan women shrouded in burqas, the body-covering dress all women in Afghanistan must wear. The Taliban regime forces women to cover their entire bodies when in public, and those who show a glimpse of skin can be beaten.

Let the world see my face

The burqa: The hated dress is a symbol of the stifling control the Taliban has over Afghanistan. But, as **Stephen Farrell** reports, opposition is only voiced in secret.

Kabul, Afghanistan lim women in Afghanistan

hardened in recent weeks as tensions between the regime and the outside world have escalated.

Events such as the destruction of the ancient Bamiyan Buddhas bear the fingerprints of a more hardline tendency in government after the death of

where armed gangs descend on homes robbing them with impunity in broad daylight.

It is a society where opposites exist side by side. Walk through the markets and half the stalls, with roofs fashioned from flattened tin cans of ghee, are closed because traders have

Appendix 5.7 Honour's Victims

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN FEATURES SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2001 A9

When fashion goes over the edge

RICHARD DREW, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROBERT MECEA, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

When Sephora showed off its new makeup by using it to create a corset on a topless model, far left, it was widely applauded. However, the dirty look fell flat for designer Miguel Adrover, left, as did his Mideast theme, right.

[illegible] STUBBLEBINE, REUTERS

Appendix 5.9 Girl at Hajj

WORLD REPORT

A young Indonesia girl accompanies her mother during an Eid-Adha prayer in Banda Aceh yesterday. The Muslim feast of Eid-Adha coincides with the high point of the haj pilgrimage to Mecca, and commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.

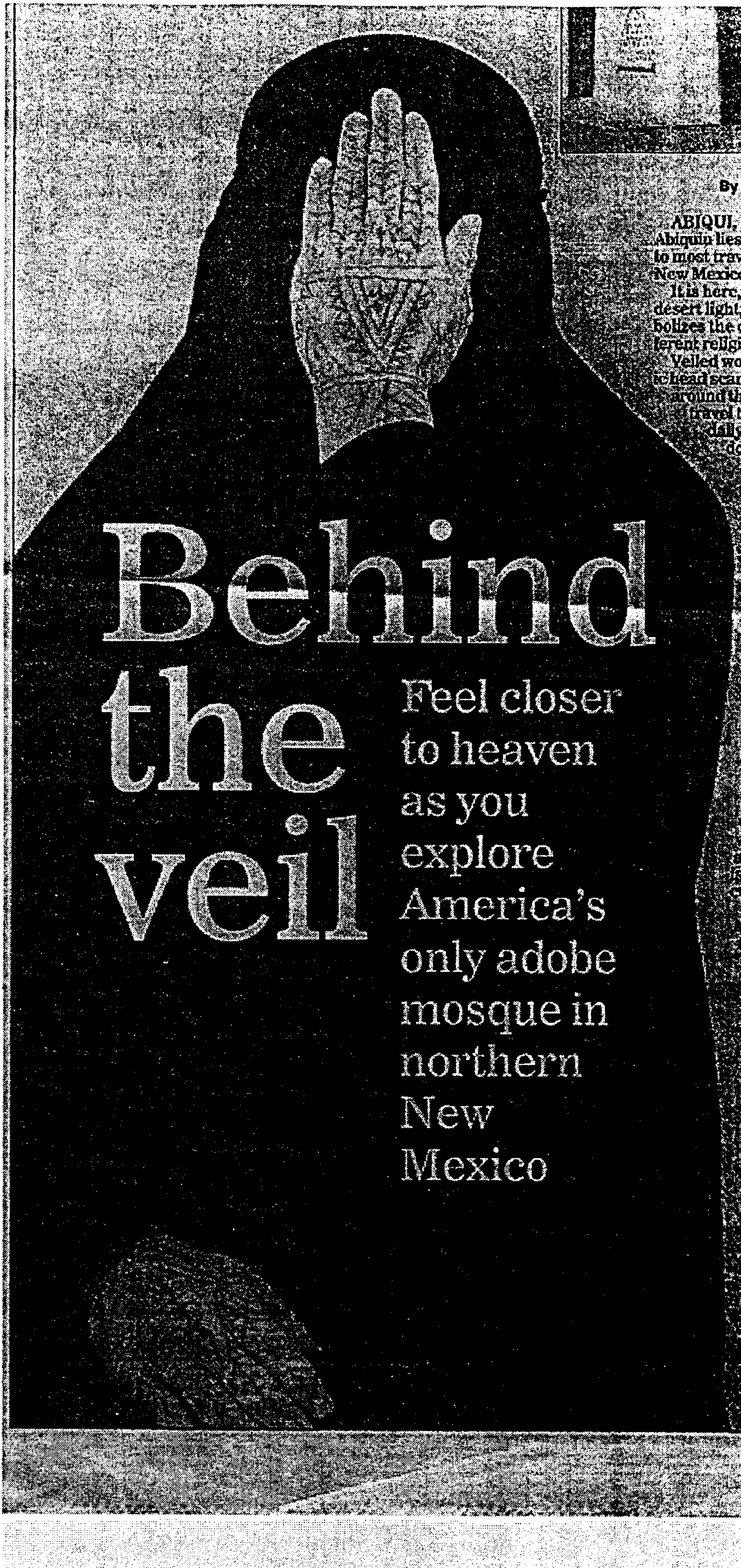
BEAWIHARTA/Reuters

Haj ends with symbolic stoning of devil

MINA, Saudi Arabia. Muslim pil-

Appendix 5.10 The Vote

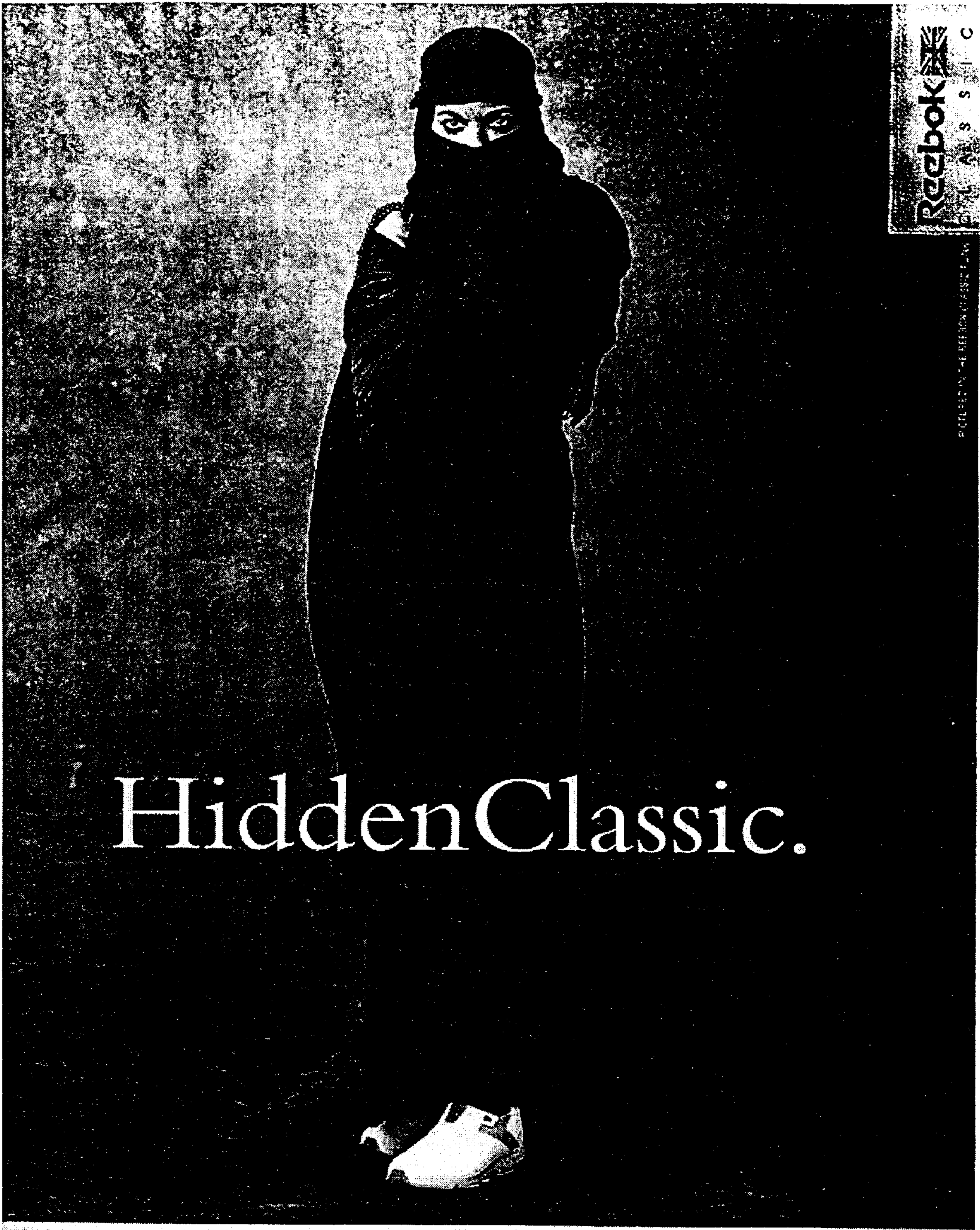
Appendix 5.11 Behind the Veil



Behind the veil

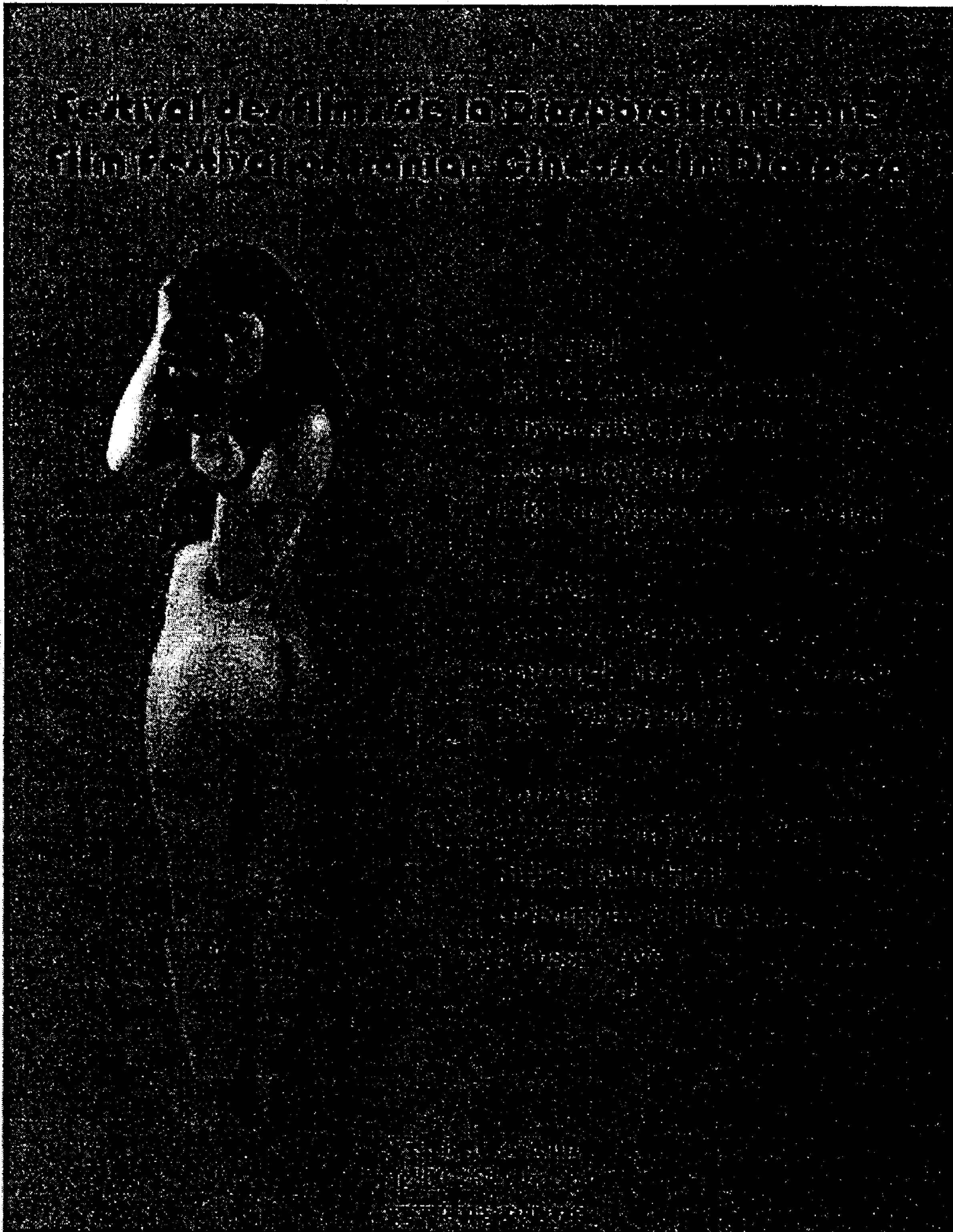
Feel closer to heaven as you explore America's only adobe mosque in northern New Mexico

Appendix 5.13 Reebok



Appendix 5.14 Film Festival Poster

PORTFOLIOS FOR ACTORS AND MODELS
PAM35 IS YOUR ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO
FOR MOR INFORMATION CLICK HERE



THE GLOBE AND MAIL INTERNATIONAL NEWS THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1998 A5A

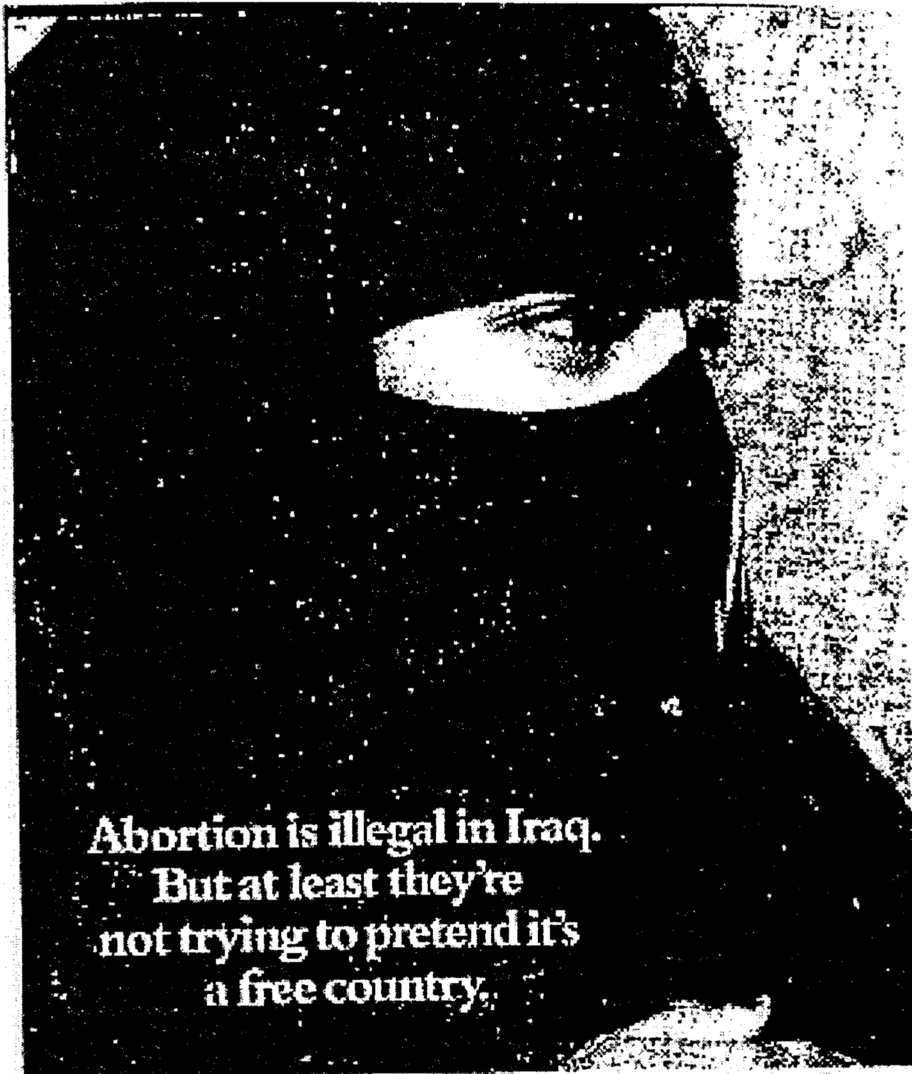
Women suffering under Taliban edicts

Harsh conditions believed responsible for rumoured rise in suicide rate among Afghan females

KATHY GANNON
Associated Press, Kabul

An Afghan woman clad in the traditional face-concealing burqa asks for money while two others wait. It's estimated that 30,000 widows in Afghanistan have been forced into begging for the survival of their families since the hard-line Taliban government tightened rules against them. KATHY GANNON/Associated Press

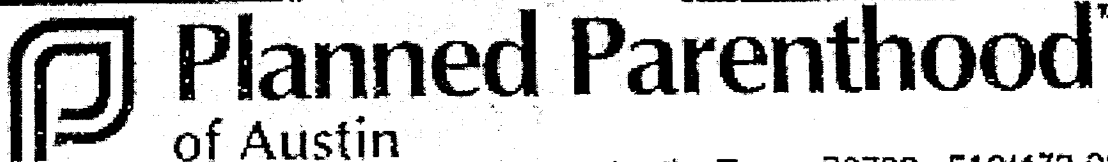
Appendix 5.16 Abortion Ad



If we lived in Iraq, we wouldn't expect to have equality, freedom of religion, or freedom of choice. But since we live in the greatest democracy on earth, we tend to take these things for granted. Meanwhile, abortion rights are threatened in twenty-six states. We have a President who wants to ban abortion completely. And we have a vast Pro Choice majority too lazy or too busy to even find out where their elected officials stand on this critical issue. The people of Iraq never had a chance to fight for their rights.

What's your excuse?

IT'S PRO CHOICE OR NO CHOICE



Administration Center 1209 Rosewood Avanue Austin, Texas 78702 512/472-0868

The juxtaposition of Arab women and western women. (Austin Chronicle, *Fall 1991)*

Appendix 5.17 Threats

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

WORLD

KARIM SAHIB, AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Female members of Iraq's militia, carrying AK-47 assault rifles, march in Baghdad yesterday, amid rising speculation of a U.S. attack on Iraq. In a TV address to the nation, President Saddam Hussein said a U.S. attack is doomed to failure.

'Threats don't scare us,' Iraqis say

Citizens ready

Appendix 5.18

Listing of Newspaper Articles on Muslim Women (1993 - 1997)

Source: Canadian Business and Current Affairs (CBCA) index
CH= Calgary Herald
GM= Globe and Mail
MG= Montreal Gazette
TS= Toronto Star
VS= Vancouver Sun
WFP=Winnipeg Free Press

Muslim veil threat to harmony in French schools, minister says/VS 09/15/94/A18
Clerics flog rape complainant/WFP 12/19/94/B4
A veil of tears in Algeria/WFP/04/06/94/A6
Western eyes see Iran in different light/TS/03/18/95/PG#
An act of faith or a veiled threat to society?/TS/05/14/95/F5
Shrouded in black, women rendered invisible, voiceless/TS/09/25/95/A19
Struggling to hold the middle ground/TS 08/13/95/F7
Egyptian feminists battle fundamentalist backlash/TS/12/18/93/J8
A peek at private lives behind the veil of Islam/TS/02/26/95/C3
Muslim scarf ban discriminatory, commission rules/TS/02/15/95/A22
When the law comes to a head/GM/03/11/95/PG#
Nasrin shakes up UN/GM/03/11/95/C3
What everyone's talking, and talking about/GM/003/03/95/PG#
Hijab in schools supported/GM/02/15/95/A4
2 unveiled women murdered, Muslim extremists suspected/VS/03/31/94/A16
Koran distorted by "terrorists", woman claims/VS/05/04/94/A7
Saudi women denied keys to the kingdom/GM/001/11/95/A11
Brooks opens gender curtain in Mideast/GM/01/28/95/PG#
Understanding does not always lead to tolerance/GM/01/31/95/PG#
My hijab is an act of worship - and none of your business/GM/02/15/95/PG#
A cry to the world from under the veil: "Algerian women are alone"/VS/04/06/94/A11
Afghans told to screen women in the home/TS/03/20/97/PG#
Protesters demand woman die/CH/08/06/94/A9
Feminists fighting for equality in Iran/CH/07/02/94/A11
Wives divorced from justice in male-dominated Iran/GM/11/18/94/A13
"Not a fashion fad but a way of life"/GM/08/27/94/D7
Their Canada includes hijab/GM/08/22/94/A1/
Being Canadian can include head scarf/GM/08/22/94/A2
Western women target of Saudi religious police/GM/05/09/94/A5
Pair's wishes ignored in divorce row/GM/11/27/93/A21
Three little words/GM/10/02/93/D2
Arabian women unveiled at Donna Karan boutique/GM/09/02/93/D2
Militants kill two women without veils in Algeria/GM/03/31/94/A15
Throwing away the circumcision knife/GM/01/15/94/D2

Secret sanctuary/GM/02/26/94/D3
Time to debate headgear issue, minister says/GM/10/26/94/A4
Kashmiris protest Indian rule/TS/10/25/97 (PHOTO)
Egyptian court overturns ban on female circumcision/GM/06/25/97/A17
Behind the veils/12/15/96/F1/F4
Call to prayer on Yonge St./TS/02/02/97/A16
Solidarity for Afghanistan/TS/05/24/97/L26
Silent pain/TS/03/08/97/L1
Women's legacy of pain/TS/06/26/97/C5, C6
Stoning reveals mistreatment of women in Iran/MG/03/05/94/I5
Model contracts/MG/09/04/94/B5
Egyptian actress drops show biz for the veil/GM/08/27/93/C10
Keeping women in the back seat/MG/12/02/93/B3
Muslim woman expelled by judge for wearing head scarf in court/MG/12/02/93/A1-2
Quebec won't support hijabs in public schools, Landry says/MG/10/26/94/A6
Forcing hijab on teachers unacceptable: Houda-Pepin/MG/10/24/94/A3
The new law: Wear the veil and stay alive/MG/04/11/94/B3????
Sudan's Islam under the gun/TS/04/19/97/C1,19
Love, marriage and Islam/TS/10/30/97/E4,
Iranians seek to ease fundamentalist grip/TS/12/29/97/A1, A4
Traditions differ but faith remains/TS/12/29/97/E1,E2
Bangladeshi defies Muslim edicts/GM/11/02/96/A12
China, Islamic Conference threaten feminist UN agenda/VS/06/23/93/A12
Student files rights complaint over school's ban on hijab/MG/12/16/94/A4
New code constricts Kabul's girls, women/WFP/09/29/96/A3
Men banned from viewing sports event/CH/02/16/93/A3
Behind the veils/TS/12/15/96/F1, F4
Bengali feminist honored/TS/10/26/96/A4
Many Egyptian Women return to concealing body/TS/07/30/96/E3
Canadian teenager wears veil against an immodest world/TS/07/30/96/E3
Lifting the veil of ignorance/TS/07/30/96/E1,E3
Undercover lessons in being `different'/TS/07/30/96/E1
Islam's cruel `justice'/VS/10/14/95/B3
Women's role in Islam shrouded in controversy/TS/04/18/93/F2
Slowly, Islamic women trade the veil for white collars/TS/04/07/93/A15
Islamic women creating momentum for real change/GM/05/18/96/E11
A stoning in Iran: Refusing to let the horror die/GM/04/02/94/C17
Bhutto feud chips away at family/GM/10/26/96/A14
Muslim women ignored, forum told/GM/10/16/96/E11
Malaysia seeks liberal role/GM/10/12/96/E11
Quebec cannot copy solutions from France/CH/02/17/95/A5
Where Islam takes a vacation/GM/08/29/95/A13
Bhutto attacks Muslims who deny women's rights/GM/09/05/95/A1, A12
Women pushed out of UN jobs/GM/11/09/95/E5
A walk on the repressive side of the Islamic movement/GM/04/02/94/C17
My body is my own business/GM/06/29/93/A26

Wearing a uniform of oppression/GM/07/05/93/A12
Proud of hijab/GM/07/17/93/D7
Home life in Syria tough for women/GM/08/21/93/A7
Breaking barriers/MG/04/07/97/E3
Mon Coeur is window on world of Muslim women/MG/04/03/97/C10
Cairo under cover/MG/04/25/97/B1
I'll ignore hijab ruling:MCSC chairman/MG/02/16/95/A1,A12
Made-in-France controversy/MG/02/16/95/B3
Hijab ban wrong, study finds/02/15/95/A1,A5
Algeria's dirty war/MG/06/25/96/A1,A6
Egypt bans long veil at school/05/23/96/B1
Islam's women: what would Prophet say?/MG/03/11/95/H2
Militants attack Iranian cyclists/GM/05/03/96/A12
Veils issue pits parents against Egyptian government/MG/10/01/94/B3
Gunmen in Algeria kill two young women who were not wearing veil/MG/03/31/94/A13
Manual details women's rights/GM/12/30/96/A7

Appendix Six

Marianne Alireza Displays the Women of Saudi Arabia

6.1 Popularized by the Elite (facial veil)
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 429 and front cover.

6.2 Veiled to All Men
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 422-423.

6.3 An Iron Fist
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 433.

6.4 Pioneers in Any Profession
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 435.

6.5 Motorized Nomads
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 437

6.6 Bedouin Women
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 436.

6.7 I was Shocked to See Girls This Young Wearing the Cloak
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 439.

6.8 Better Than a Bank Account
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 441.

6.9 Dancing to a New Tune
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 443.

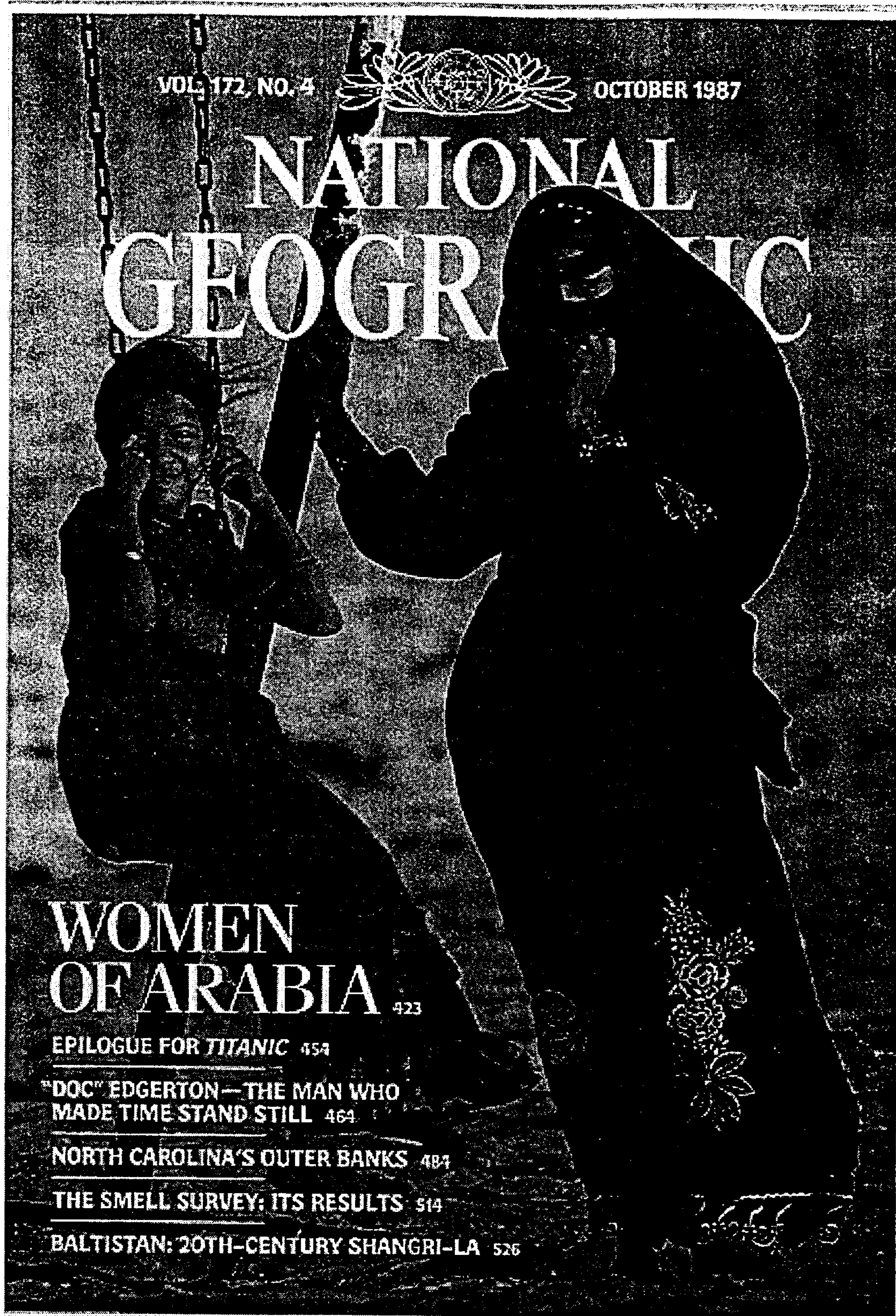
6.10 At Home in Two Worlds I
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 445

6.11 At Home in Two Worlds II
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 445.

6.12 I Like My Veil
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 444.

6.13 A World of Colour
Caption: N/A
Source: Marianne Alireza. "Women of Saudi Arabia." *National Geographic* 172, no. 4 (1987), p. 449.

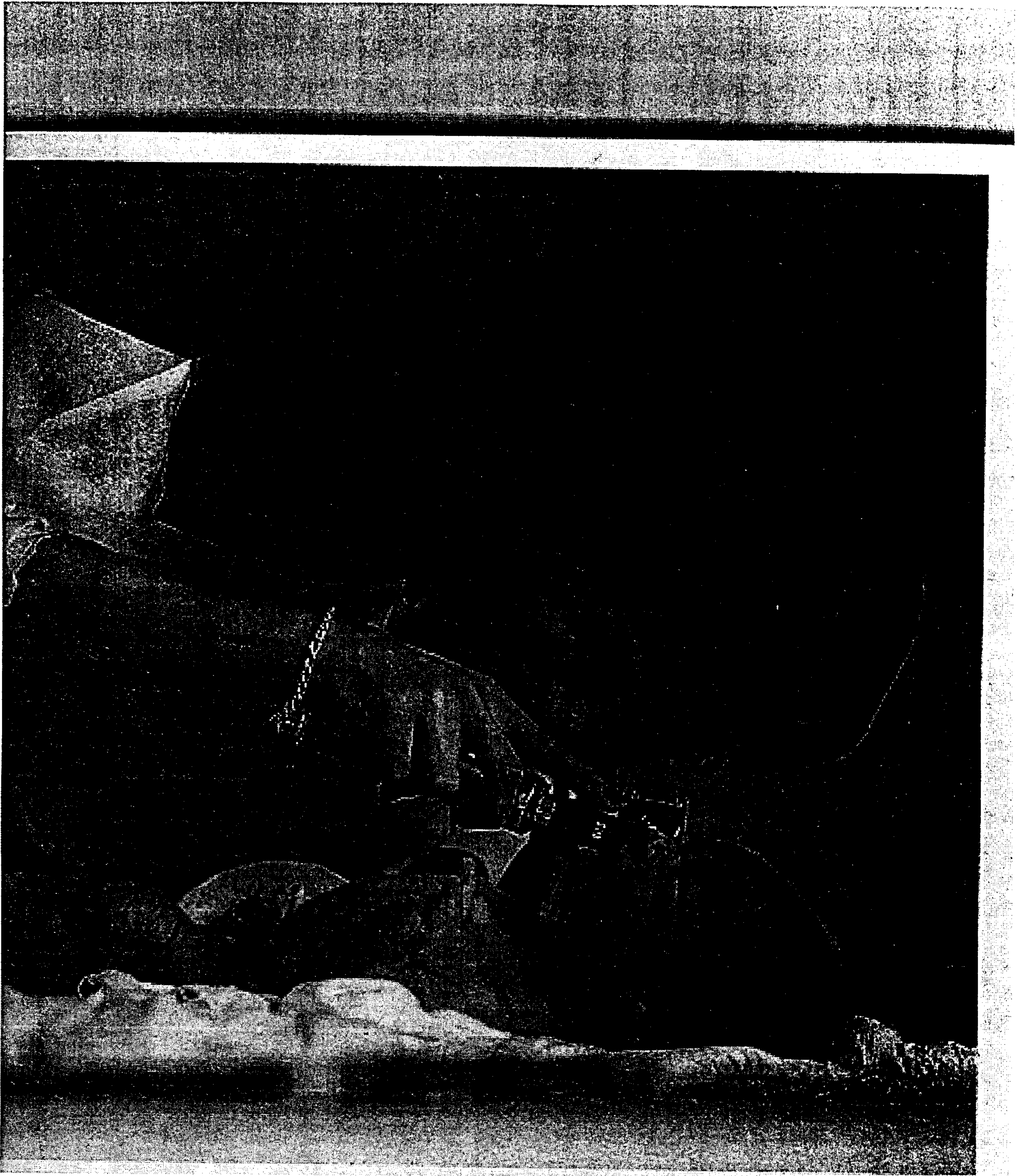
Appendix 6.1 Popularized by the Elite



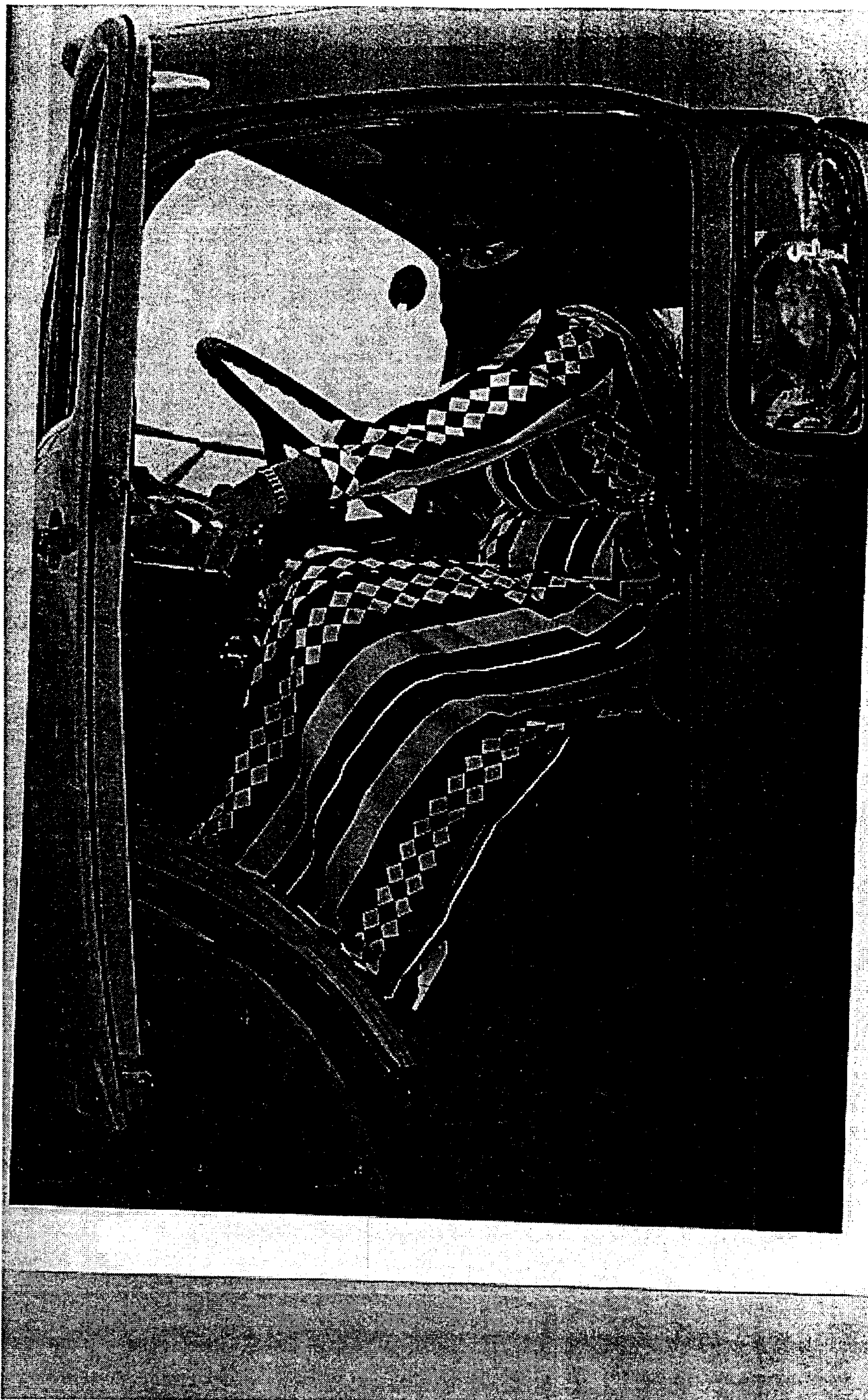
Appendix 6.3 An Iron Fist

Paid $250,000 in gold for the concession to particularly as concerns women as con definitive

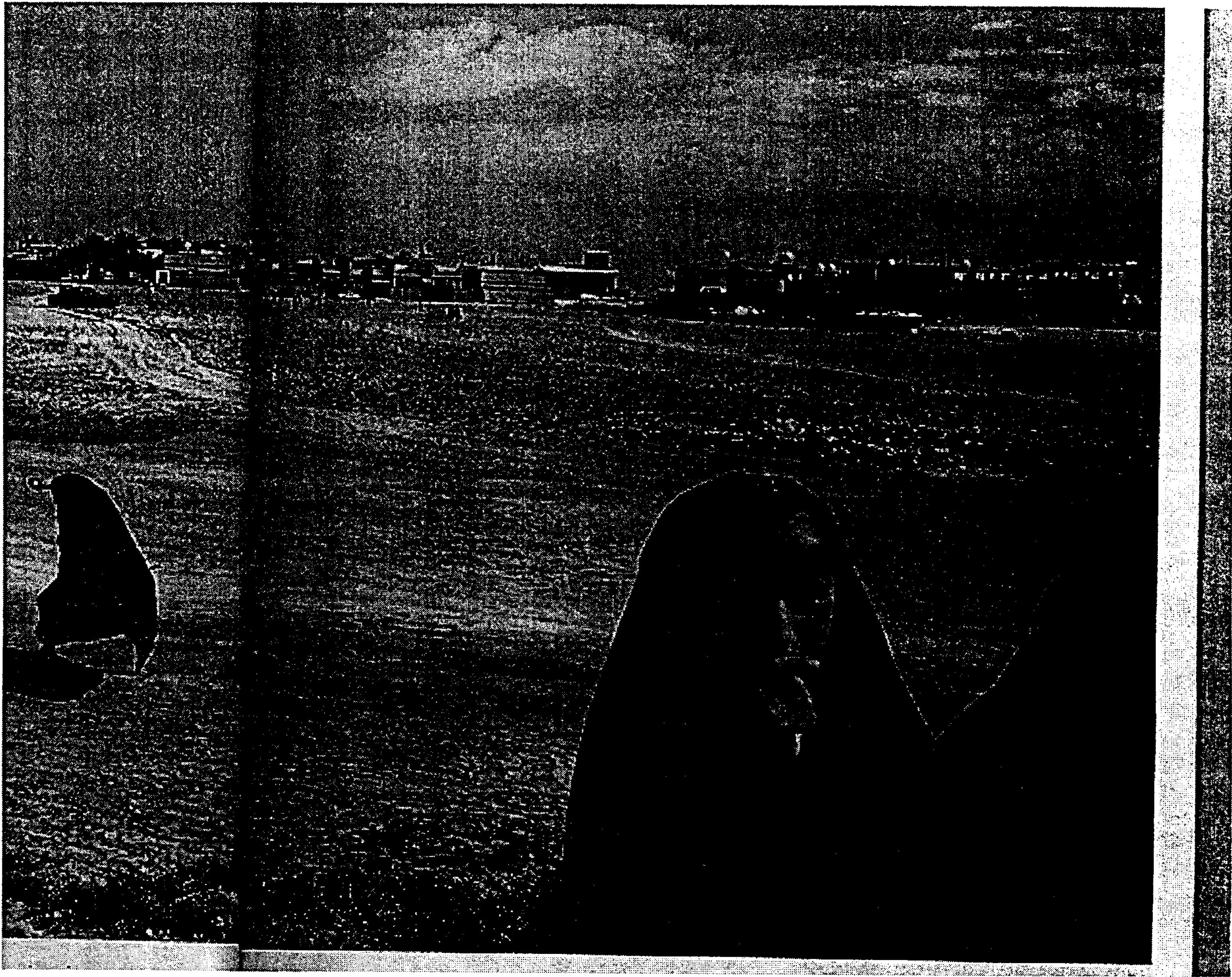
Appendix 6.4 Pioneers in Any Profession



Appendix 6.5 Motorized Nomads



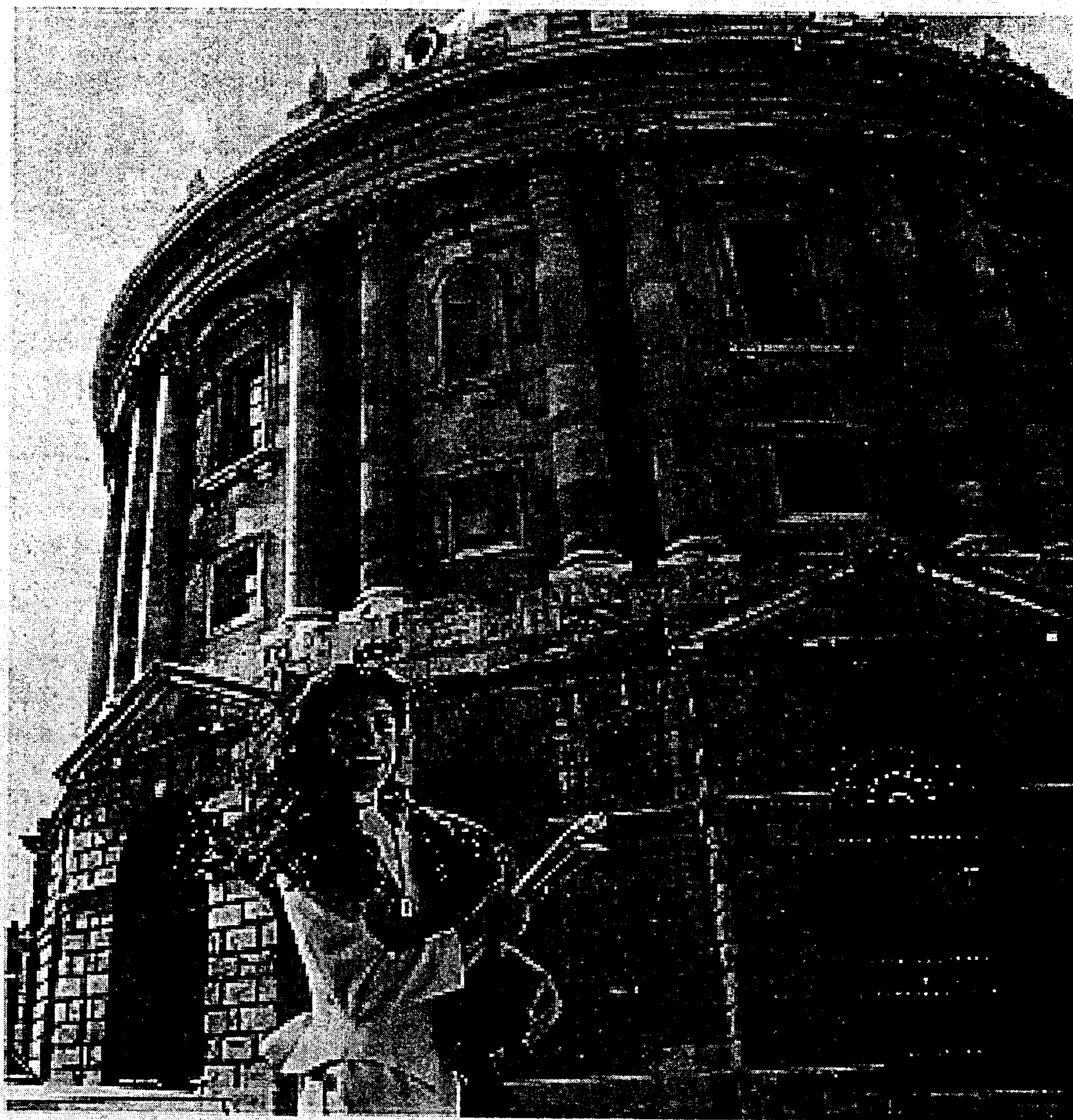
Appendix 6.7 I Was Shocked To See Girls This Young Wearing the Cloak



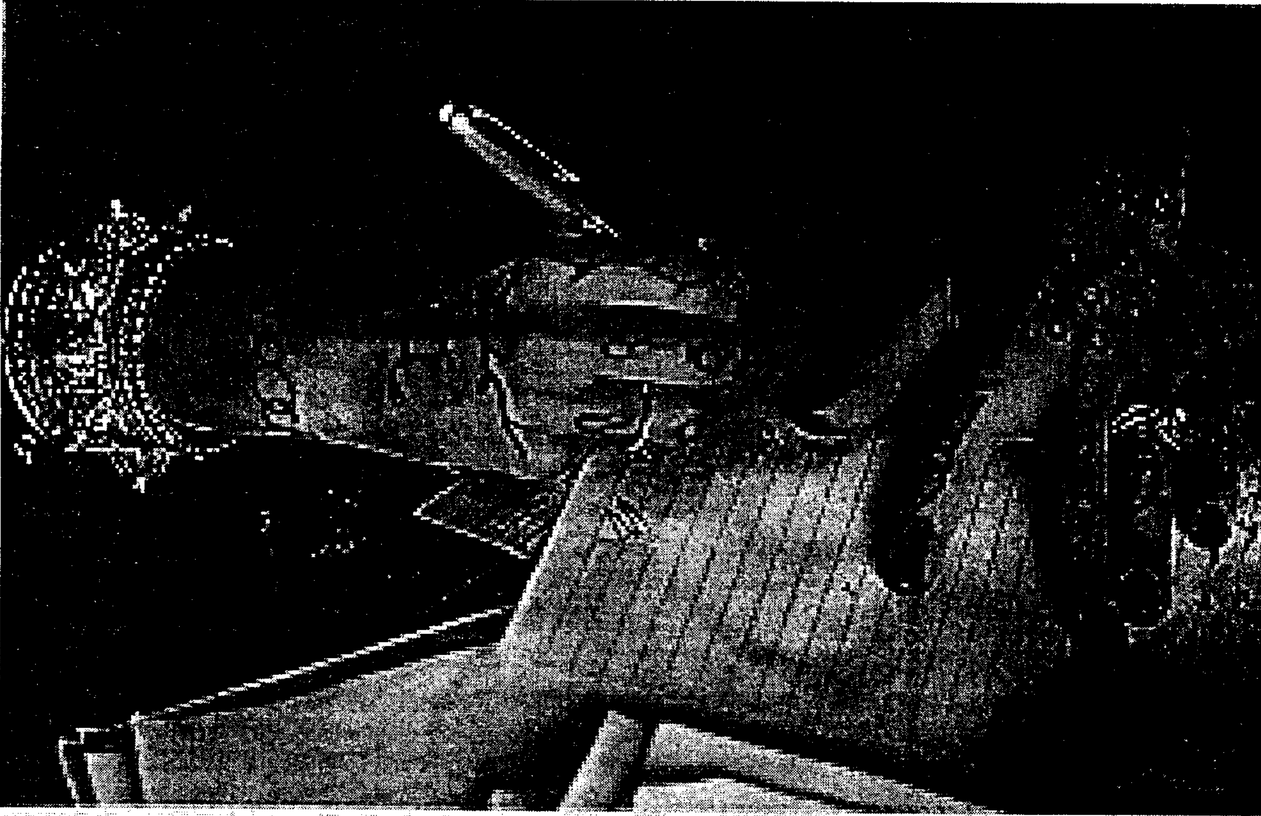
Appendix 6.9 Dancing to a New Tune

Dancing to a new tune, Maha Bukhari was all Saudi until she attended college in the United States. Now returned to Jiddah, she teaches aerobics at al-Faisaliyah, a women's welfare center. In 1980, concerned that students were being "subjected to unfavorable influences of the Western societies," the kingdom barred women from study abroad unless accompanied by a male family member.

Appendix 6.10 At Home in Two Worlds I



Appendix 6.11 At Home in Two Worlds II



At home in two worlds- Mai Yamani- daughter of former

Appendix 6.13 A World of Colour

Appendix Seven

Shirin Neshat's Oriental Woman

7.1 Passage
Caption: Passage - production still 2001
Source: Anon. "Shirin Neshat: Film, Video and Photo Works." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), p. 23.

7.2 Passage close-up
Caption: N/A
Source: Anon. "Shirin Neshat: Film, Video and Photo Works." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), p. 24.

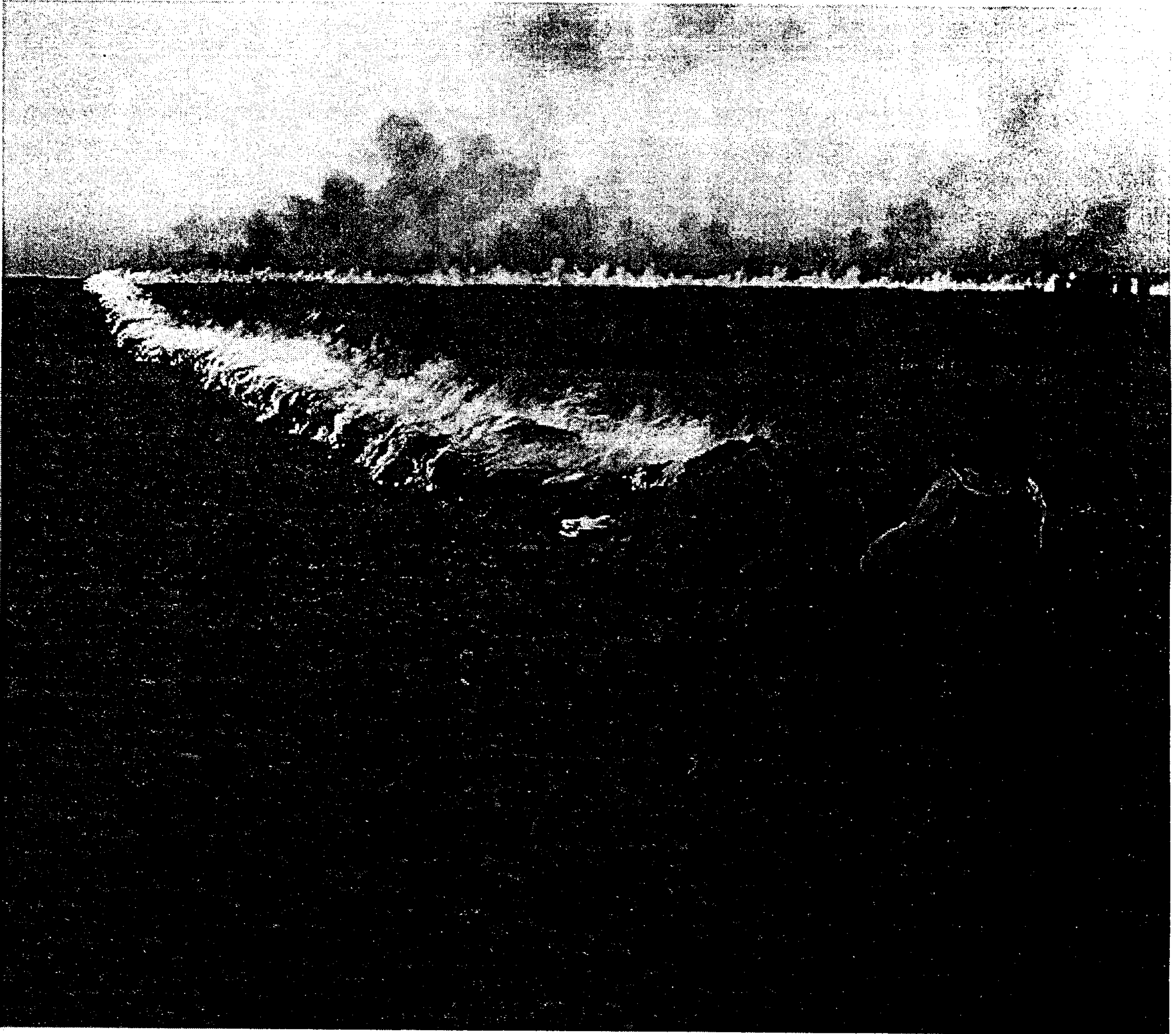
7.3 Possessed
Caption: Possessed - production still 2001
Source: Anon. "Shirin Neshat: Film, Video and Photo Works." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), p. 25.

7.4 Speechless
Caption: Speechless - silver print 119 x 84 cm, 1996
Source: Christine Ross. "Occidentaliser le spectateur: Shirin Neshat, la différence de la différence." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), p. 27.

7.5 Soliloquy
Caption: Soliloquy - production still 1999
Source: Christine Ross. "Occidentaliser le spectateur: Shirin Neshat, la différence de la différence." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), p. 29.

7.6 Soliliquy Two
Caption: N/A
Source: Anon. "Shirin Neshat: Film, Video and Photo Works." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), back cover.

Appendix 7.1 Passage

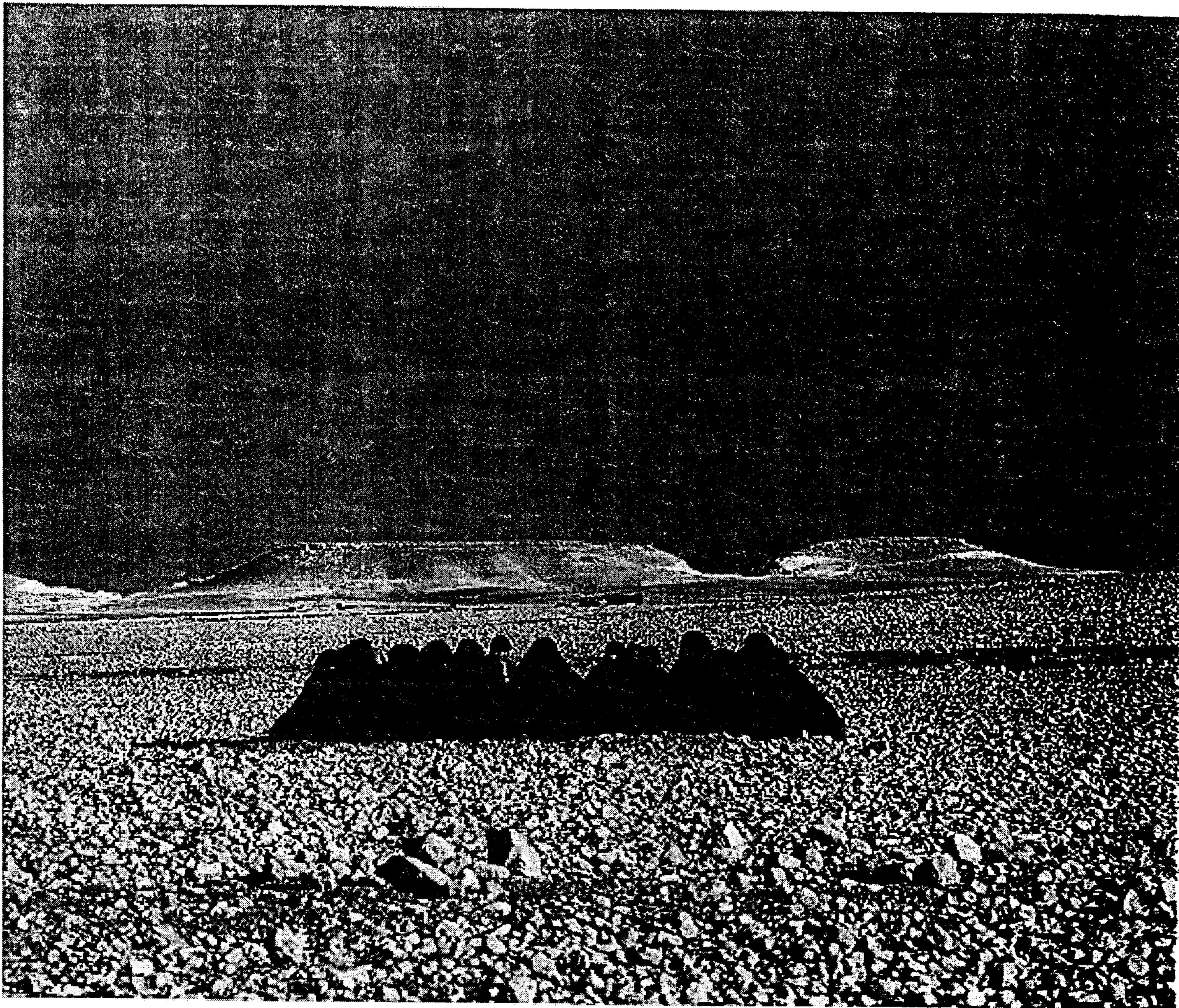


Passage
production still
2001

All photos
© Shirin Neshat

SHIRIN**NESHAT**

Appendix 7.2 Passage Close-Up



Passage
production still
2001

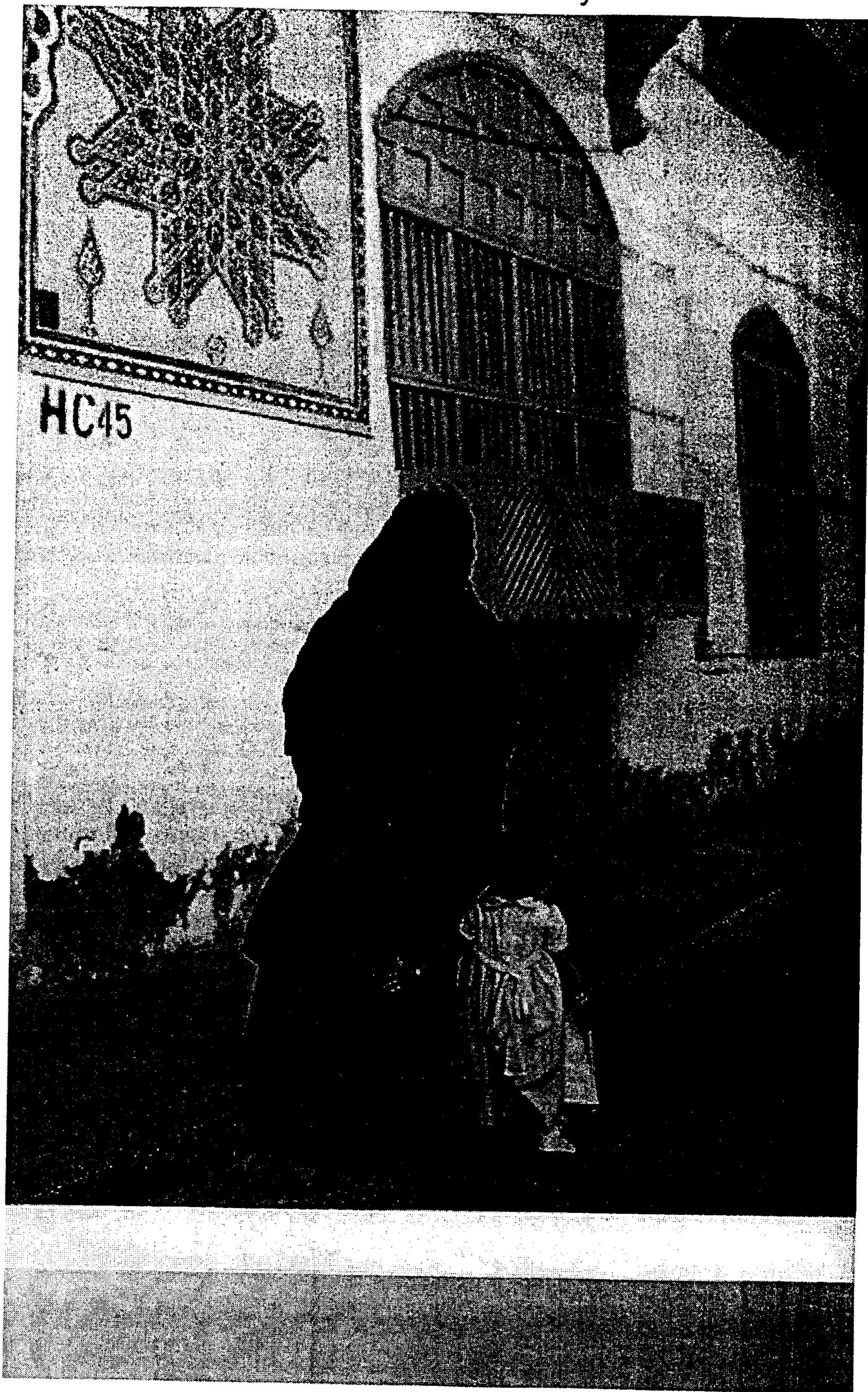
Appendix 7.3 Possessed

Possessed
production still
2001

Appendix 7.5 Soliloquy

Appendix 7.6 Soliloquy Two

Appendix 6.12 I Like My Veil



Appendix 6.13 A World of Colour

Appendix Seven

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Caption: Possessed - production still 2001
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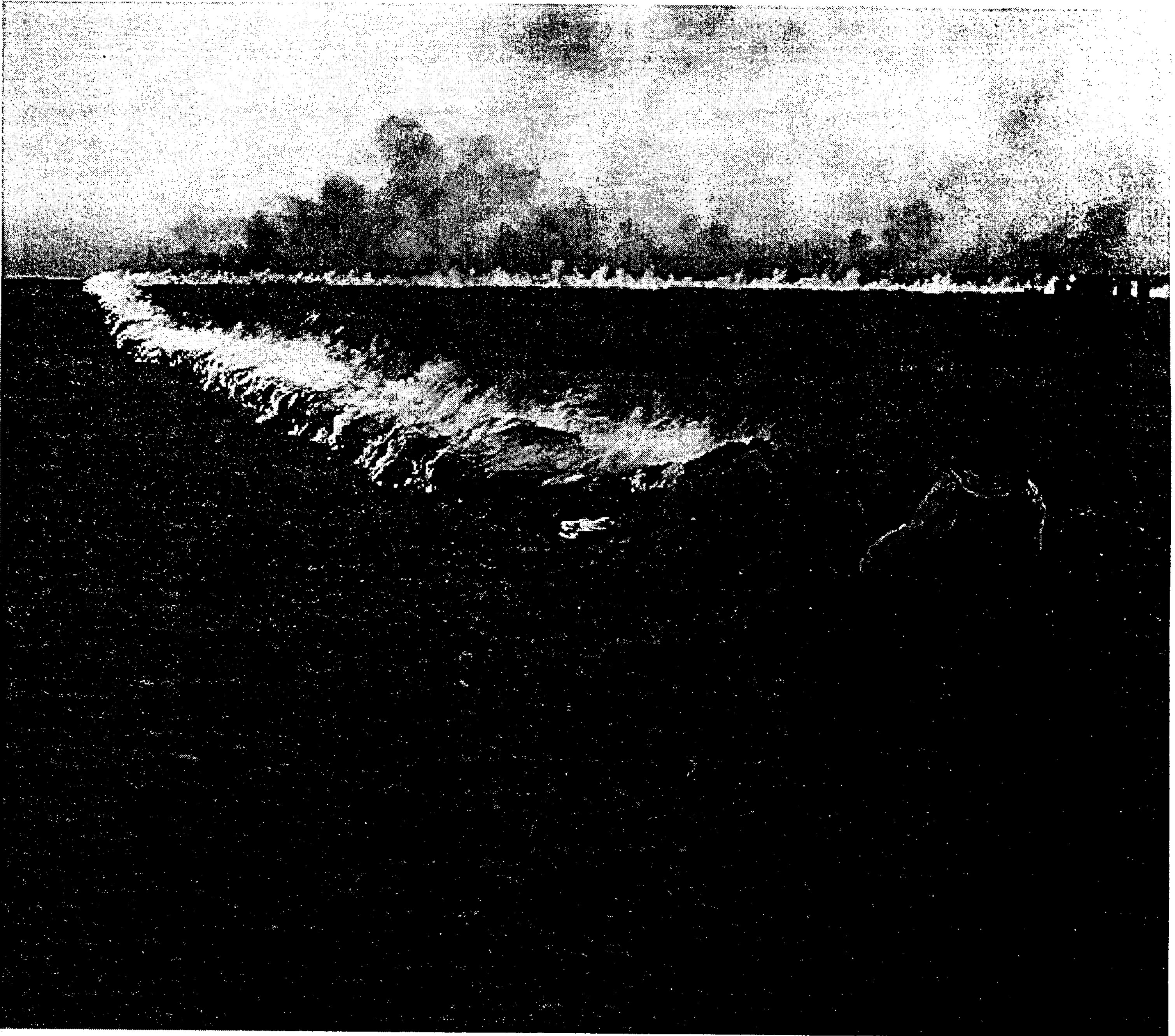
7.6 Soliliquy Two
Caption: N/A
Source: Anon. "Shirin Neshat: Film, Video and Photo Works." *CV Photo, revue de photographie contemporaine* 55 (2nd Quartier, 2001), back cover.

Appendix 7.1 Passage

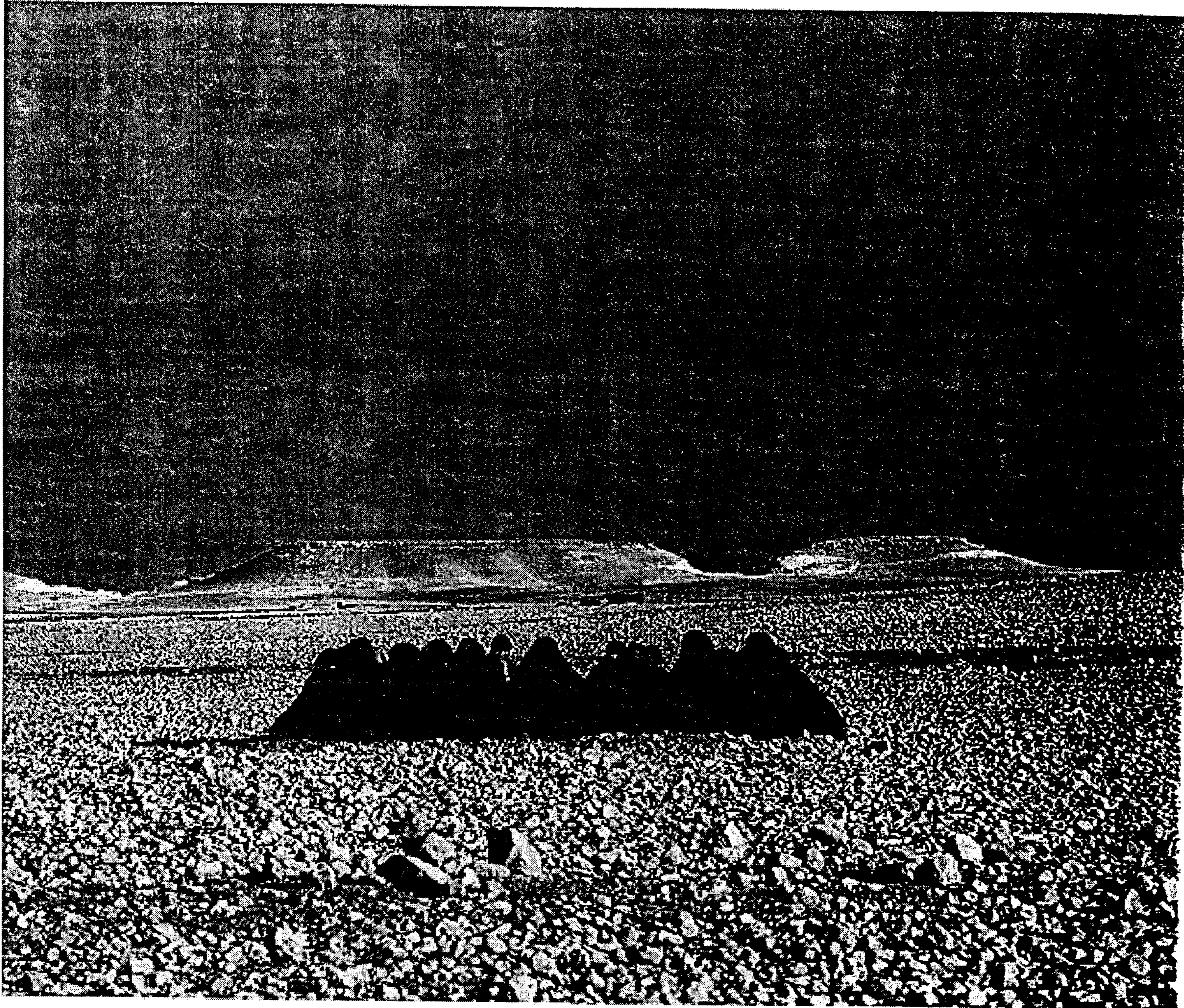


Passage
production still
2001

All photos
© Shirin Neshat

SHIRIN**NESHAT**

Appendix 7.2 Passage Close-Up



Passage
production still
2001

Appendix 7.3 Possessed

Possessed
production still
2001

Speechless
silver print
119 x 84 cm
1996

visage ne soit totalement mis à nu. Enfin, parce que le texte est écrit en perse[2] et reste par conséquent illisible au spectateur occidental qui ne connaît pas la langue, l'inscription agit comme un écran indéchiffrable qui exclut le regardeur. Non pas que ce dernier soit sou-

Appendix 7.5 Soliloquy

Appendix 7.6 Soliloquy Two