

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

UNIVERSAL MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF  
AMERICA, INC. et al,

Plaintiff,

v.

DONALD TRUMP, President of the  
United States, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:17-cv-00537-TSC

**Declaration of Professor Lila Abu-Lughod**

I, Lila Abu-Lughod, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am over the age of eighteen and competent to testify.
2. I am the Joseph L. Bittenwieser Professor of Social Science in the Department of Anthropology and the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University. I have been a professor of anthropology since 1983 and taught at a number of higher education research institutions, including Williams College, Princeton University and New York University.
3. I received my undergraduate degree in Sociology and Anthropology in 1974 from Carleton College. I earned my Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Harvard University in 1984.
4. My curriculum vitae is attached as **Exhibit 1**.
5. My research focuses, as relevant here, on three broad issues: (1) the relationship between cultural forms and power; (2) the politics of knowledge and representation; and (3) the dynamics of gender and the question of women's rights in the Middle East. I have conducted extensive ethnographic research in Egypt and elsewhere, focusing on the lived experience of women in a range of social, economic, and political circumstances.

6. I have published extensively on how Muslim women are portrayed in western society. I rely on my research and excerpts from my prior publications, including chapter 4 of *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press 2013), titled *Seductions of the “Honor Crime”* (**Exhibit 2**), and *The cross-publics of ethnography: The case of ‘the Muslimwoman’* (**Exhibit 3**), in making this declaration. This book chapter and article discuss from a scholarly perspective the origins and uses of the term “honor crime.”

7. I have also considered the other documents that are referenced or cited in this report.

### **Introduction**

8. The text of the first provision of President Trump’s January 27, 2017, entitled “Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States,” cites the practice of “honor killings” (or “honor crimes”) as justification for the exclusion of persons originating from certain Muslim-majority countries from the United States. Section 1 states that: “[T]he United States should not admit those who engage in acts of bigotry and hatred (including ‘honor killings,’ other forms of violence against women, or the persecution of those who practice religions different from their own) ....”

9. The reference to “honor killings” is repeated in section 11(iii) of President Trump’s March 6, 2017, executive order of the same name. Section 11 requires the acquisition and dissemination of “information regarding the number and types of acts of gender-based violence against women, including so-called “honor killings,” in the United States by foreign nationals.” The executive order specifies that this information is to be gathered for the purported reason of “be[ing] more transparent with the American people.”

10. These references to honor killings in both executive orders seek to justify travel restrictions by linking violence against women to the specific groups targeted by the executive

orders. My research has demonstrated that the term “honor killing,” or “honor crime,” has become a means of signaling a class of violence purportedly linked to Islam and committed by Muslim men. I have also demonstrated that invocation of “honor crimes” has become a way of stigmatizing and demeaning Islam as a faith and Muslim men as a group as uncivilized and dangerous. In this way, rhetoric about “honor killing” or “honor crime” is a means of implicitly but powerfully conjuring negative and misleading stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.

11. It bears noting here that the use of pejorative stereotypes about Muslims is not limited to the face of the two executive orders. On December 7, 2015, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” and asserted by way of justification that Islamic law authorizes “unthinkable acts that pose great harm to . . . women.”<sup>1</sup>

**The term “honor killings” is rooted in and reflects a perjorative and misleading stereotype about Muslims**

12. The terms “honor killing” and “honor crime” have been defined as “the killing of a woman by her relatives for violation of a sexual code in the name of restoring family honor.”

**Exhibit 2**, at 113. These terms demarcate a culturally specific form of violence, distinct from other forms of domestic or intimate partner violence. **Exhibit 2**, at 119-20. By contrast, violence committed by men against women in the United States, while regrettably pervasive, is rarely or never characterized in terms of the culture or religion of perpetrators. *Id.*

13. In particular, my study of the use of the term “honor killing” suggests that the news stories, reports, and political positions that invoke that term almost always link such crimes

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<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Trump, *Donald J. Trump Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration*, DONALDJTRUMP.COM (Dec. 7, 2015), <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-statement-on-preventing-muslim-immigration>.

specifically to Islam. Other scholars who have studied the manner in which the term “honor killing” is invoked find the same assumed connection to Islam and Muslim identity.<sup>2</sup>

14. Neither Islamic law nor its religious authorities, however, uniformly or consistently condone honor crimes. **Exhibit 2**, at 114. Rather, in my experience as an anthropologist in the Middle East, I have commonly seen Islam and Islamic law explicitly invoked against gender violence. **Exhibit 2**, at 139. Moreover, there is nothing characteristically “Muslim” or “Islamic” about the observed incidence of violent and abusive behavior against women. Such reprehensible conduct is observed in Christian-majority countries, such as the United States, and in many, if not all, national contexts with equally dismaying frequency.

15. Rather than conveying an accurate implication, the term “honor killing” is a way of misleadingly categorizing violence against women as a quintessentially Muslim problem. It is therefore a way of portraying Muslim communities as deficient, backward and prone to violence. As such, the term “honor crime” is commonly invoked by individuals and groups with an anti-Muslim agenda because it reinforces the stigmatization of Muslims as violent and backward.. **Exhibit 2**, at 125; see also **Exhibit 3**, at 598. It is a rhetorical strategy “that works through fantasy to attach people to a set of values they are made to associate strictly with modernity and the West.” **Exhibit 2**, at 121.

16. In my experience as an anthropologist, working in a range of Muslim societies, and listening closely to the stories and travails of Muslim women, the idea that Islam is distinctively to blame for violence against women is false. **Exhibit 2**, at 120-21.

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Leti Volpp, *Blaming Culture for Bad Behavior*, 12 Yale J.L. & Human. 89, 103 (2000) (noting how media reporting characterizes “honor crimes” as related to “Muslim mores”); Juliane Hammer, *Center Stage: Gendered Islamophobia and Muslim Women*, in *Islamophobia in America* 107-44 (Carl W. Ernst, ed. 2010).



17. As I have explained in my scholarship, the portrayal of Muslim women as oppressed, socially subordinate individuals within their society serves as a way of condemning the “dangerous Muslim man.” **Exhibit 2**, at 118-20. The term “honor killing” ignores the realities and complexities of the women themselves, who face many different challenges and many forms of violence (often as a result of state action or inaction, rather than because of culture or family).

18. The term “honor killing” is often a post hoc designation that reflects the biases and assumptions of the observer rather than the facts of specific incidences of tragic violence. In Chapter 4 of *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, I give the example of the February 2005 murder of a young woman, Hatun Sürücü, in Berlin. According to Dr. Katherine Ewing, an anthropologist and director of Columbia University’s Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life who authored a study called *Stolen Honor: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin* (Stanford University Press 2008), based on ethnographic research on Turks in Germany, Sürücü’s tragic death led to a “media frenzy” about a “spate of honor killings” and allowed politicians to “tar the Muslim community.” Yet careful investigation of Sürücü’s life suggests other causes than a concern for “honor.” That investigation revealed the so-called “spate” of killings as a post hoc classification of murders that largely did not fit the description of “honor killings.” It also exposed public blaming of Islam that ignored the fact that the Islamic Council in Berlin roundly condemned Sürücü’s murder. In this case, Professor Ewing explains that invocation of concern about honor killings has “come to stand in for Germans’ fears of an untamed parallel society in their midst.” **Exhibit 2**, at 132-34.

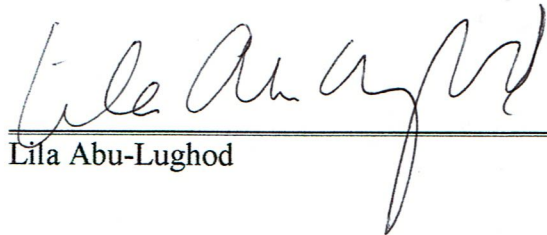
19. The invocation of the term “honor killing,” I have therefore concluded, is a way of stigmatizing Muslim (and especially Muslim men) as a backward and violent group.

20. It is therefore unsurprising that the idea of the “honor killing” or “honor crime” has been regularly invoked in national and international political debates and activities as a calculated way of putting these negative sentiments into play. In Europe, “honor crimes” are invoked in arguments about border control and the policing of immigration and immigrants by groups with anti-Muslim agendas. **Exhibit 2**, at 134. A number of scholars have noted how the stigmatization of Muslim men’s “sexual deviances” serves as a proxy to xenophobia against the group. **Exhibit 2**, at 134.

**The Executive Orders show animus toward Muslims by invoking “honor killings”**

21. The repeated invocation of “honor killings” in both the text of the first and the second executive order is a clear way of bringing to bear negative, false, and stigmatizing stereotypes about Muslims as backward and violent. Were any doubt to remain on this score, it would be dispelled by then-candidate Trump’s deployment of precisely the same rhetorical device about Muslim males’ violence against women on the campaign trail as justification for restrictions against immigration from predominantly Muslim countries.

DATED: April 10, 2017.

  
Lila Abu-Lughod

# Exhibit 1

Lila Abu-Lughod

## **LILA ABU-LUGHOD**

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### **EDUCATION**

Ph.D. Harvard University, Social Anthropology, 1984  
M.A. Harvard University, Social Anthropology, 1978  
B.A. Carleton College, *Magna cum laude*, *Distinction in Sociology-Anthropology*, 1974

### **ACADEMIC POSITIONS**

2009-present Joseph L. Battenwieser Professor of Social Science, Columbia University,  
Department of Anthropology and Institute for Research on Women, Gender and  
Sexuality  
2012--2015 Director, Middle East Institute, Columbia University  
2009--2014 Director or co-director, Center for the Critical Analysis of Social Difference,  
Columbia  
2008--2009 William B. Ransford Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies, Columbia  
University  
2004--2007 Director, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia University  
2000--2007 Professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies, Columbia University  
1998-2000 Professor of Anthropology and Middle East Studies, New York University  
1991-98 Associate Professor of Anthropology, New York University  
1995-99 Co-director, Program to Internationalize Women's Studies, New York University  
1990-91 Assistant Professor of Religion and Associated Faculty, Department of  
Anthropology, Princeton University  
1983-87 Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Williams College

### **HONORS and PRIZES**

2008 Lenfest Distinguished Faculty Award, Columbia University  
2007 American Ethnological Society Senior Book Prize (for Dramas of Nationhood)  
2007 Outstanding Senior Scholar Award, Middle East Section, American Anthropological  
Association  
2006 Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota  
1999 Alumni Award for Distinguished Achievement, Carleton College  
1994 Victor Turner Prize (for Writing Women's Worlds), Society for Humanistic Anthropology,  
American Anthropological Association.  
1988 Silver Medal for Outstanding Contributions to the Development of Anthropological and  
Ethnological Science through Publication (for Veiled Sentiments), International Union of  
Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences.

Lila Abu-Lughod

- 1987 Chicago Folklore Prize, Honorable Mention for Veiled Sentiments.
- 1984 Stirling Award for Contributions to Psychological Anthropology, Society for Psychological Anthropology and the American Anthropological Association.
- 1984 Malcolm Kerr Dissertation Prize in the Social Sciences, Middle East Studies Association of North America.
- 1974 Phi Beta Kappa, Carleton College.

## ENDOWED LECTURES

- 2019 B.N. Ganguli Memorial Lecture, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi (invited)
- 2017 Morgan Lecturer, Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues, Dickinson College
- 2015 Edward Said Memorial Lecture, American University in Cairo
- 2014 Maryse and Ramzy Mikhail Memorial Lecture, University of Toledo.
- 2012 Hawthorn Lecturer, University of British Columbia, Canada.
- 2012 Ira Wender Visitor in Cultural Understanding, Carleton College.
- 2012 Farhat Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Washington.
- 2009 Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology, the British Academy.
- 2008 Ridington Lecture, McDaniel College.
- 2007 Kareema Khoury Annual Distinguished Lecture, Georgetown University.
- 2006 Wendt Visiting Scholar, The Hackley School.
- 2003 Bella Abzug Lecture, Women's Studies, Hunter College, CUNY.
- 2001 Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, University of Rochester.
- 1996 Antonius Lecture, St Antony's College, Oxford.
- 1995 Sabbagh Lecture, Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona.
- 1995 Paul Riesman Memorial Lecture, Carleton College.
- 1994 Inaugural Yale-Maria Lecture in Middle East Studies, University of New Hampshire.

## FELLOWSHIPS AND RESEARCH GRANTS

- 2007-2009 Carnegie Scholar, Carnegie Foundation
- 2007-2008 American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship
- 1997 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship
- 1996-97 National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for University Teachers
- 1995-96 New York University Challenge Fund
- 1995 Fellow, Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan
- 1993 Presidential Fellowship, New York University
- 1991-93 SSRC Collaborative Grant for Research Planning in Transnational and Comparative Studies (with T. Mitchell): Questions of Modernity: Strategies for Post-Orientalist Scholarship on the Middle East and South Asia
- 1990-91 University Preceptorship, Princeton University
- 1989-90 American Research Center in Egypt NEH Fellowship
- 1989-90 ACLS/SSRC Near and Middle East Committee Grant for Advanced Research (project on Islam and Public Culture in Contemporary Egypt)
- 1988-89 Mellon Fellow in the Humanities, University of Pennsylvania
- 1987-88 Member, The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton
- 1987 Fulbright Award, Islamic Civilization Program (field research in Egypt, Bedouin)

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- 1986-87 National Endowment for the Humanities, Fellowship for College Teachers  
(Ethnography in a Different Voice)
- 1985 Williams College Faculty Research Grant and Travel Grant from the Program on  
African and Middle Eastern Studies
- 1981-82 American Association of University Women, Marion Talbot Dissertation Fellowship.
- 1980-83 Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship and National Resource Fellowships,  
Harvard University.
- 1977-80 National Institute of Mental Health, Predoctoral Training Grant (3 years).
- 1974 HEW Fellowship for Intensive Arabic Study in Tunis (NACAS), summer.

## INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS

- 2016-2019 Grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to the Center for the Study of Social Difference  
for the project co-directed by Lila Abu-Lughod, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Rema  
Hammami and Janet Jakobsen on “Religion and the Global Framing of Gender  
Violence.”
- 2014-2016 Grant from Carnegie Foundation to the Middle East Institute and the Department of  
Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies for mobility fellowships for Arab  
social scientists to spend 4-6 months at Columbia. \$300,000. Three Carnegie Centennial  
Fellows selected for fall 2014 and one for fall 2016.
- 2013-2014 “The Power of Women’s Islamic Education” workshop organized with Amina Tawasil  
on November 8-9, 2013; workshop on “Debating the ‘Woman Question’ in the New  
Middle East” at the Columbia Global Centers |Middle East (Amman), May 3-4. Both  
part of the project Women Creating Change on “Gender, Religion, and Law in Muslim  
Societies,” Center for the Study of Social Difference. Funding through the Luce  
Foundation’s grant to IRCPL, the Global Centers, Center for the Study of Social  
Difference, and the Blinken European Institute.
- 2012-2013 Project on “Islamic Feminists, Islamist Women, and the Women Between.”  
International working group funded by the Blinken European Institute, Columbia  
University. Co-organized with Anupama Rao and Katherine Ewing. Reid Hall,  
Columbia Global Center | Europe, January 18-19, 2013.
- 2010-2012 Project on Islam, Gender, and Law (Center for the Study of Social Difference and  
Center for Democracy, Toleration, and Religion: Columbia University). Co-organized  
with Anupama Rao an international conference at Columbia University Middle East  
Research Center, Amman, Jordan on “Religious Law, Local Practices, and the Global  
Politics of Muslim Women’s Rights: The Politics of Consent,” April 9-10, 2011.
- 2008-2010 Center for the Critical Analysis of Social Difference and Institute for the Study of  
Religion, Culture, and Public Life, Columbia University. Collaborative Project on  
“Liberalism’s Others” with Anupama Rao, Katherine Franke, Elizabeth Povinelli, and  
Neferti Tadiar. Organized workshops on “Who’s Afraid of Shari’a?” “Is Islamic  
Reform Secular?” and “Competing Legalities? Violence, Gender, Shari’a, and the  
State,” as well as an ongoing faculty seminar and occasional public lectures.

Lila Abu-Lughod

- 2005-2010 Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Columbia U. for faculty workshop on "Gender and the Global Locations of Liberalism.: With Anupama Rao.
- 1995-99 Ford Foundation grant to integrate area studies and women's studies, through the Women's Studies Program, NYU, co-directed with Marilyn Young and Mary Nolan.

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Offices:** Chair, SSRC/ACLS Joint Committee on the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies (1991-1993); co-organizer, international dissertation workshops 1990, 1991; member (1988-1993).  
Board, Society for Cultural Anthropology, 1992-1996; Program Chair, 1994 AAA Meetings.  
Board of Directors, Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1987-89; Program Chair 1989 AAA Meetings.  
Nominating Committee, Middle East Studies Association, 1994.  
Faculty Fellow, Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, Columbia 2006-
- Editorial:** Associate Editor, American Ethnologist (1991-1994)  
Consulting Editor, Feminist Studies (1992-1996; 2001-2003; 2006-)  
Editorial Collective, Public Culture: Society for Transnational Cultural Studies.  
Associate Editor, Cultural Studies (1995-1997)  
Editorial Board, Ethos (1996-2001)  
Associate Editor, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography (1995-)  
Contributing Editor, Middle East Report (1996-2003)  
Contributing Editor Cross-Cultural Poetics (1996-)  
Editorial Board, Ethnography (2000-)  
Editorial Board, Centennial (2000-)  
Editorial Board, Life Writing (2003-)  
Editorial Board, Palestinian Review of Society and History (2004-)  
Editorial Board, Journal of Middle East Women's Studies (2004-)  
Editorial Board, Journal of American Folklore (2005-)  
Editorial Review Board, Arab Studies Journal (2008-)  
Editorial Board, American Ethnologist (2012-)  
Editorial Board, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and Middle East (2012-)  
Editorial Board, Routledge Handbook of Language and Emotion (2017-)  
Editorial Board, Dutch Journal of Feminist Studies (2016-)
- Advisory:** Advisory Board, Communal/Plural: Journal for Transnational and Cross Cultural Studies (1997-2001).  
Advisory Board, Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies  
Advisory Board, Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East.  
Advisory Council, Advanced Study Center, International Institute, University of Michigan (1997)  
Associate, Research Center for Religion and Society, University of Amsterdam (1996)  
Advisory Editor, Handbook of Interviewing, ed. J. Gubrium and J. Holstein  
Advisory Editor, Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures

Lila Abu-Lughod

Advisory Editor, Ethnos (2006-)  
 Advisory Board, The Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication (2007-2016)  
 Advisory Board, Encounters: An International Journal for the Study of Culture and Society (2008-)  
 Advisory Board, Al-Raida (2011-)  
 International Advisory Board, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society (2012-)

**Consulting:** Qatar National Museum (2015-16); American Forum for Global Education: Middle East Curriculum Development (1994-96); Textbook Revision Project, Gender and the Anthropology Curriculum, American Anthropological Association (1988).

### **Reviewing:**

Manuscript Reviews: Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics; American Anthropologist; American Ethnologist; American University of Cairo Press; Arab Studies Journal; Arab Studies Quarterly; Brill; British Journal of Middle East Studies; Columbia University Press; Cultural Anthropology; Culture; Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry; Cultural Studies; Current Anthropology; Diaspora; Duke University Press; Ethnic and Racial Studies; Ethnography; Ethnos; Ethos; Feminist Studies; Harvard University Press; Identities; International Journal of Middle East Studies; Journal of Contemporary Ethnography; Journal of Social Issues; Law and Social Inquiry; Meridians; National Women's Studies Journal; Northeast Modern Language Association; Northwestern University Press; Palestinian Review of Society and History; Political and Legal Anthropology Review; Routledge; Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society; Soros Fellowships in Reproductive Health; Stanford University Press; Syracuse University Press; University of California Press; University of Minnesota Press; University of Wisconsin Press; Violence against Women; Visual Anthropology; Visual Anthropology Review.

Fellowship Reviews: American Research Center in Egypt, NIMH, NEH, NEH Media, NEH Collaborative Research Grants, NSF, Smithsonian Institution, SSRC, Wenner Gren Foundation, National Humanities Center, Palestinian American Research Center, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study; Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Social Sciences, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences; FEMMAGH Conference, Moving Gender: Conflicts, Negotiations and Redefinitions; Council for the Humanities of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

**Memberships:** American Anthropological Association; American Ethnological Society; Association for Feminist Anthropology; Society for Cultural Anthropology; Middle East Studies Association; Association of Middle East Women's Studies.

### **ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH**

Awlad `Ali Bedouin in Egypt's Western Desert, October 1978-May 1980, August 1985, December 1986-January 1987, May-September 1987, January 1989, December 2008.  
 Islam, Television and Public Culture, Cairo and Upper Egypt, October 1989-July 1990; January-July 1993; January 1996; October 1996-June 1997; January 1999.  
 Medicine and Consumption in rural Egypt, January-May 2001; Feb.-April 2004; Dec.-Jan. 2006.  
 Discourse of Women's Rights, rural and urban Egypt, January 2007; March-April 2008, March 2009; Jordan April 2009; rural Egypt December 2009, December 2010.  
 Impact of Egyptian Revolution, Upper Egypt and Western Desert, January 2012, 2013, 2014, Oct. 2015, January 2016



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## PUBLICATIONS

### Books

**Do Muslim Women Need Saving?** Harvard University Press, 2013.

*Japanese translation forthcoming*, Shoshi Shinsui.

**Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt.** Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. (American Ethnological Society Senior Book Prize, 2007)

Other English Editions: American University in Cairo Press, 2005.

*Arabic Translation* forthcoming, National Center for Translation, Egypt.

*Simplified Chinese Translation*, The Commercial Press, forthcoming.

**Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories.** University of California Press, 1993 (Victor Turner Prize, 1994). Fifteenth Anniversary Edition with new preface, 2008.

*Turkish Translation: Kadinların Dunyasi/Bedevi Oykuleri*. Istanbul: Epsilon Yayınevi, 2004.

**Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society.** University of California Press, 1986 (IUAES Silver Medal; Chicago Folklore Prize, honorable mention). Second edition, updated with a new preface, 2000. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, with a new Afterword, September 2016.

Other English Editions: American University in Cairo Press, 1987.

*Arabic Translation: Masha'ir Muhajaba*. Nour Arab Publishing, Cairo, Egypt, 1995.

*Turkish Translation: Peceli Duygular*. Istanbul: Epsilon Yayınevi, 2004

*Italian Translation: Sentimenti Velati*. Le Nuove Muse, Turin, 2007

*French Translation: Sentiments Voilé*. Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond: Editions du Seuil, Paris, 2008

### Edited Books

**Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory.** Co-edited with Ahmad H. Sa'di. Columbia University Press. The Cultures of History Series, 2007.

*Arabic Translation* forthcoming, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut

*Tamil translation* forthcoming, Ethir Veliyedu Press, India.

*Spanish Translation* forthcoming, Editorial Canaán, Argentina

**Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain.** Co-edited with Faye Ginsburg and Brian Larkin. University of California Press, 2002.

*Chinese translation* 2009. Taiwan.

**Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East.** Edited. Princeton University Press, Series in Culture/Power/History, 1998.

Other English Editions: American University in Cairo Press, 1998.

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*Arabic Translation:* Al-haraka al-nisa'iyya wa al-tatawwur fi al-sharq al-awsat. Cairo, Egypt: Supreme Council for Culture's National Translation Project, 1999.

*Spanish Translation:* Feminismo y Modernidad en Oriente Proximo. Feminismos. Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, Universitat de Valencia, Instituto de la Mujer, 2002.

*Japanese Translation*, 2010.

**Language and the Politics of Emotion**, co-edited with C. Lutz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

### **Other Edited Works**

- 2015 The Politics of Feminist Politics. Special forum: Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, 35:1, December.
- 2011 Women's Rights, Muslim Family Law, and the Politics of Consent. Co-edited with Anupama Rao. SOCIALDIFFERENCE-ONLINE, Vol. 1, December.  
<http://www.socialdifference.org/files/SocDifOnline-Vol12012.pdf>
- 2004 Guest Editor, Visual Anthropology Review Feature on "Dreams of a Nation': A Palestinian Film Festival." American Anthropologist 106 (1):150-60.
- 1993 Screening Politics in a World of Nations. Guest Editor, Public Culture 5(3): 465-604.
- 1992 First Find Your Child a Good Mother: The Construction of Self in Two African Communities by Paul Riesman (edited by David Szanton, Lila Abu-Lughod, Sharon Hutchinson, Paul Stoller, and Carol Trosset). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

### **Major Articles (minor articles, interviews, and reviews to follow in next section, p. 14)**

- n.d. In Every Village a Tahrir: Rural Youth in Moral Revolution, 2011-2012. In Public Space and Revolt: Tahrir Square 2011, ed. Elena Tzelepis and Sherene Seikely. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, in press.
- n.d. Muslim Women and the "Right to Choose Freely" (in French). Special issue on "Femmes et Subjectivation en Islam," edited by Abdelwahed Mekki-Berrada. Anthropologie & Societes, in press.
- 2016 The Cross-Publics of Ethnography: The Case of the "Muslimwoman." American Ethnologist 43 (4): 595-608. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/amet.12377/full>
- 2016 The Values of Ethnography: An Afterword. Veiled Sentiments, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. University of California Press.
- 2015 Managing Religion in the Name of National Community. **Reprint** of chapter 4 from Dramas of Nationhood in Islamism and Cultural Expression in the Arab World (Durham Modern Middle East and Islamic World Series), edited by Abir Hamdar and Lindsey Moore. Routledge, 2015,

Lila Abu-Lughod

pp. 60-86.

- 2014 Taking Back the Village: Rural Youth in a Moral Revolution. Middle East Report 272: 12-17.
- 2014 The Moral Basis of Hierarchy. In Moral Anthropology: A Critical Reader. Eds. Didier Fassin and Samuel Lézi. Routledge, pp. 173-181.
- 2013 Authorizing Moral Crusades to Save Muslim Women. The Farhat J. Ziadeh Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies, 2012. University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.
- 2012a Living the "Revolution" in an Egyptian Village: Moral Action in a National Space. AE Commentary. American Ethnologist 39 (1):16-20. **Reprinted section: The People, Place, and Space Reader**, eds. Jen Jack Gieseck, William Mangold, Cindi Katz, Setha Low, and Susan Saegert. Routledge in press.
- 2012b Pushing at the Door: My Father's Political Education, and Mine. In Seeking Palestine: New Palestinian Writing on Exile and Home, ed. Penny Johnson and Reja Shehadeh. Delhi, India: Women Unlimited, pp. 43-61.
- 2012c Forced Entry: My Father's Education into Politics. In The Engaged Intellectual, eds. Asem Khalil and Roger Heacock. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute for International Studies, Birzeit University Press. In English, Birzeit University Working Paper 2011/27 (ENG) in the Conferences & Public Events Module. <http://home.birzeit.edu/ialiis/userfiles/Forced-Entry-My-Father-Education-Into-Politics.pdf> Later published in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and the Engaged Intellectual. Birzeit University, 2011.
- 2011a A Kind of Kinship. Being There: Learning to Live Cross-Culturally, ed. Sarah Davis and Melvin Konner. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 8-21.
- 2011b Seductions of the "Honor Crime." Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 22 (1): 17-63.
- 2010 Anthropology in the Territory of Rights, Human, Islamic, and Otherwise. Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology. Proceedings of the British Academy Vol. 167: 225-62.
- 2010 Against Universals: Dialects of (Women's) Human Rights and Human Capabilities" In Rethinking the Human, ed. J. Michelle Molina, Don Swearer, and Susan Lloyd McGarry, pp. 69-93. Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School. Harvard University Press.
- 2010 The Active Social Life of "Muslim Women's Rights": A Plea for Ethnography, not Polemic, with Cases from Egypt and Palestine." Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 6 (1), Winter: 1-45. **Abridged and reprinted in** Gender and Culture at the Limit of Rights, ed. Dorothy Hodgson, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
- 2009 Dialects of Women's Empowerment: The International Circuitry of the Arab Human Development Report . International Journal of Middle East Studies 41, no. 1 (2009) February 83-103. **Abridged Arabic translation: Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi** 354, August 2008: 88-102.

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### **Minor Articles, Reviews and Interviews**

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**INVITED LECTURES AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS** (does *not* include regular and numerous presentations on panels at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association and the Middle East Studies Association, or events at my own university)

2017 Department of Anthropology, University of Oslo, Norway May 2

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- House of Literature, Oslo, Norway May 2
- House of Literature, Bergen, Norway, May 3
- Fairfield University, Religious Studies, March 2
- Morgan Lecture, Clarke Forum, Dickinson College, February 28
- Muslim Studies, Gender Studies and Anthropology, Michigan State University, February 16
  
- 2015 Edward Said Memorial Lecture, American University in Cairo, October 31
- Distinguished Visiting Professor Lecture, Department of Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology, American University in Cairo, October 29
- University of Colorado, Boulder, Distinguished Lecture, Feb. 13
- Harvard University, Middle East Center, February 26
- Tufts University, Anthropology and Arabic Studies, Feb. 25, 26
- Fordham University, Anthropology, Lincoln Center
  
- 2014 University of Michigan, Women's and Gender Studies Program Lecture, Sept. 23
- CUNY Women's Studies and Middle East American Center Lecture, October 7
- University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, Distinguished Visitor, Nov. 3
- University of Melbourne, Australia Distinguished Visitor, Nov. 4-5
- LaGuardia Community College, Queens, NY, "Islam: Gender Sacred," Nov. 19
- "Representation and the Arab City," Presentation Columbia University, Nov. 21
  
- 2013 Edward Said Conference, "In the Time of Not Yet." Centre for the Humanities, Utrecht University, The Netherlands, April 15 – 17
  
- 2012 Symposium on "The Muslim Protagonist" Columbia Muslim Student Association, Nov 10
- Hawthorn Anthropology Lecture, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Oct 3 and 4
- Annual Lecture, Centre for the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cultures, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada October 4
- Dissections: New Directions in Research on the Middle East and North Africa. Middle East American Center and Humanities Center, CUNY Graduate Center, September 14
  
- 2011 Conference on "Activism and the Academy," panel on "Building and Rebuilding Societies in Africa." Barnard Center for Research on Women, September 23
- Global and Local Discourses on Women and Islam. Sawyer Seminar on "Globalization and the New Politics of Women's Rights," University of Wisconsin, Madison, September 9
- Workshop on Debates on Gender in the Public Sphere, Makerere Institute for Social Research, Kampala, Uganda, May 16-17
- Conference on "The Engaged Intellectual," Birzeit University, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute, Ramallah, Palestine, April 12
- Seminar, Centre d'Etudes féminines et d'Etudes de Genre (Université Paris 8), Paris, France March 9
- Seminar, "Genre, politique, sexualité(s). Orient/Occident" Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, France, March 7
- Colloquium on "Human Rights in Islam." Duke University-UNC Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Keynote. Durham, N.C., February 24
- Seminar, Gender Studies Project, Mada Al- Carmel – The Arab Center for Applied Social Research, Haifa, January 21

Lila Abu-Lughod

- 2010 “Challenges of Oral History,” Qatar National Museum Authority, Doha, Qatar, November  
Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, American University in Beirut, Lebanon, October  
NCRW-UNIFEM Annual Conference, “Strategic Imperatives for Ending Violence Against  
Women,” New York, June
  
- 2009 Seminar on “Gender in Postcolonial Legal Orders,” Harvard Law School, September  
Conference on “The Practice of Human Rights,” New School University, September  
Conference on “Culture of Rights/Rights of Culture,” Rutgers University, February  
Women, Religion and Globalization Faculty Seminar, Yale University, February  
Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies Annual Distinguished Lecture, UCSB, February  
“Politics and Ethics of Muslim Women’s Rights,” with Saba Mahmood, University of  
California at Berkeley and Grace Cathedral, February
  
- 2008 Carnegie Conference on “The Faces of Contemporary Islam: Fresh Perspectives on Theory,  
Practice, and Foreign Policy,” Women’s Foreign Policy Group, Washington D.C., November  
Gender Roundtable, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, November  
Department of Anthropology, Women in Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, January  
Conference on “Gender and the Politics of 'Traditional' Muslim Practices,” Pembroke Center,  
Brown University, March  
Conference on “Rethinking the Human,” Harvard University, Center for World Religions, May
  
- 2007 Feminist Anthropology Workshop, New School University, April  
Conference on “Engaging Islam: Feminisms, Religiosities.” Keynote Speaker. U. Mass Boston,  
September  
Senior Seminar, Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge University, October  
Conference on “The Politics of Religion and Sexuality.” CUNY Graduate Center, November  
Distinguished Address, Middle East Anthropology Section, Annual Meeting of the American  
Anthropological Association, November
  
- 2006 Queens Library International Resource Center  
Laura C. Harris Symposium: “Gendered Borders,” Denison University  
Keynote Address, Resourceful Women Conference, Aquinas College  
Colloquium in ME and SA Studies, Women’s Studies, and Anthropology, University of  
California at Davis
  
- 2005 Women and Foreign Affairs, Ford Foundation Workshop, New York  
Human Rights and the Humanities. MLA Conference, CUNY, New York  
National Council for Research on Women, Conference on "Power Matters," New York
  
- 2004 Transnational Politics and the Globalization of Gender Workshop, Pembroke Center, Brown U.  
La Trobe University, Distinguished Visiting Professor, School of Social Science, Melbourne,  
Australia  
Anthropology Seminar, Melbourne University, Australia  
Anthropology Department and Women's Studies Program, Bard College  
Distinguished Annual Lecture, Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World,  
Netherlands
  
- 2003 Distinguished Lecture, General Anthropology Division, AAA Meetings, Chicago

Lila Abu-Lughod

- Distinguished Visitor, Institute for the Humanities, University of Texas at Austin
- Distinguished Lecture, Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University
- Anthropology Colloquium, London School of Economics
- Distinguished Visiting Scholar, Cultural Studies, University of California at Santa Cruz
- Center for Middle East Studies colloquium series, University of California at Berkeley
- Discussant, "Dreams of a Nation" Palestinian Film Festival, Columbia University
  
- 2002 Symposium, "Responding to War," Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia Women's Studies and Globalization Programs, Yale University
- Robert Schumann Center for Mediterranean Studies, European University, Fiesole, Italy
- Annenberg Seminar, Departments of History and Middle East Studies, University of Pennsylvania
- Commentator, Women and Society University Seminar, Columbia University
- Discussant, New York Academy of Sciences, Anthropology Section
- Center for Culture, Media, and History, New York University
  
- 2000 Turath, Arab Heritage Week, Columbia University
- Anthropology Colloquium, University of Iowa
- Middle East Institute Brown Bag Series, Columbia University
  
- 1999 Discussant, Film Festival, "Screening Identities: South Asian Documentaries," New York University
- Keynote address, Conference on "Global Culture" University of Karlsruhe, Germany
- Anthropology and Feminist Studies Colloquium, New School for Social Research
- Conference on "Nation and Cultural Perceptions of Identity." UCLA
- Distinguished Lecture Series on "Global and Local Identities," Michigan State University
  
- 1998 American University in Cairo, Gender Studies Lecture Series
- Plenary Session on "Orientalism Twenty Years After," Middle East Studies Association Annual Meetings, Chicago
- Discussant, conference "Little Stories of Love and Attraction" NYU
- Conference on "Crossing Borders: Rethinking Area Studies," Five Colleges, Amherst
- Mellon Seminar on Public Culture and Transnationalism, Duke University
- Critical Dialogues Series "Ethnographic Revisions," New Museum of Contemporary Art, NYC.
  
- 1997 Departments of Anthropology and Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University
- Scholars Lecture, New York University
- Conference on "Intellectual and Curricular Challenges in Integrating Gender and International Perspectives into Teaching and Research," National Council for Research on Women
- Conference on "Culture, Society and Economy in Rural Egypt at the End of the 20th Century," Aswan, Egypt
- Netherlands Institute for Archeology and Islamic Studies, Cairo, Egypt
- American Research Center in Egypt, Cairo
- Arab Women's Studies Regional Conference, American University in Cairo.
  
- 1996 Keynote Address, Boas-Benedict Conference, Department of Anthropology, Columbia University
- Distinguished Lecture, Department of Anthropology, Smith College



Lila Abu-Lughod

Conference on "Questions of Modernity" New York University (co-organized)  
 Workshop on "Film and Society in Egypt" Columbia University and the American Research Center in Egypt  
 Series on Arab Society, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University.

- 1995 University of Michigan, Distinguished Middle East Lecture Series  
 St. Catherine's College, Distinguished International Studies Lecturer  
 Rutgers University, Department of Anthropology and Women's Studies  
 Conference on "Media (Na)tions: Television and Nationality," Brown University  
 Symposium on "Women, Nationalism and Cultural Politics: Egyptian Moments", New York University (organized)  
 Anthropology Colloquium, University of Minnesota.
- 1994 "Women and Society Seminar," Columbia University  
 "Cultural Production Under Late Capitalism," Plenary Session, Society for Cultural Anthropology Meetings, Chicago  
 Five-College Middle East Program, Hampshire College  
 Anthropology Colloquium, Harvard University  
 Middle East Center, Columbia University  
 Departments of Women's Studies and Anthropology, University of North Carolina.
- 1993 Anthropology Society, Hunter College, CUNY  
 Anthropology Society, Queens College, CUNY  
 Society for Psychological Anthropology Meetings, Montreal, Canada  
 Association of Social Anthropologists Decennial, Oxford  
 SSRC Conference on "Questions of Modernity," Cairo, Egypt (co-organized).
- 1992 Peoples and States Seminar Series, Department of Anthropology and Center for International Studies, MIT  
 Middle East Center, Harvard University  
 Department of Performance Studies, New York University.
- 1991 Women's Studies Colloquium, University of Michigan  
 Anthropology Colloquium, New York University  
 Dixon Place, NYC  
 Religion Colloquium, Columbia University.
- 1990 American Research Center in Egypt, Cairo  
 American University in Cairo.
- 1989 Advanced Seminar, "Representing Anthropology," School of American Research, Santa Fe  
 Conference on "Lament," University of Texas at Austin  
 Middle East Colloquium, University of Texas at Austin  
 Anthropology Colloquium, Cornell University  
 Anthropology Colloquium, University of California at Davis  
 Rama Mehta Colloquium, The Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College.
- 1988 Anthropology Colloquium, University of Chicago

Lila Abu-Lughod

Department of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University  
Department of Anthropology, New School for Social Research  
Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania  
New York Academy of Sciences  
Near East Studies Program, University of Massachusetts at Amherst  
Women's Studies Program and Department of Anthropology, Princeton University  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Bryn Mawr College

- 1987 Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University  
Anthropology Colloquium, CUNY Graduate Program in Anthropology  
Women's Studies Program, Hunter College  
Women's History Colloquium, New York University  
Anthropology Colloquium, Stanford University.
- 1986 Anthropology Colloquium, New York University  
Faculty Colloquium, Williams College  
Anthropology Colloquium, Princeton University  
Anthropology Colloquium, State University of New York at Binghamton

# Exhibit 2



*Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* is an indictment of a mindset that has justified all manner of foreign interference, including military invasion, in the name of rescuing women from Islam—as well as a moving portrait of women’s actual experiences, and of the contingencies with which they live.

“Every page contains a fresh riposte to easy cultural or religious explanations for women’s oppression.”

—Nabeelah Jaffer, *Times Literary Supplement*

“[A] beautiful book . . . Abu-Lughod is a great listener and a sharp observer of everyday life. She understands the struggles, joys and jealousies of Middle Eastern women and has an ear for the stories that do not make headlines. Refusing to treat Muslim women as a category, she focuses on nuances and complexities. Where others see an undifferentiated mass of individuals, she sees real women with real stories.”

—Elif Shafak, *Literary Review*

“One of [Abu-Lughod’s] great accomplishments is to present readers with concrete examples of women who explain their actions and justify their choices, instead of caricatured victims to be pitied and saved by enlightened others.”

—Joan W. Scott, *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*

“The author dispassionately points out the hypocrisy of colonial feminism, and how more often than not, there is a clear political agenda behind the liberation of the ‘women of cover’ and how the role of the U.S. is often overlooked.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

Lila Abu-Lughod is the Joseph L. Battenwieser Professor of Social Science at Columbia University, where she teaches anthropology and women’s studies.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts · London, England

[www.hup.harvard.edu](http://www.hup.harvard.edu)

Cover photograph © Rania Matar

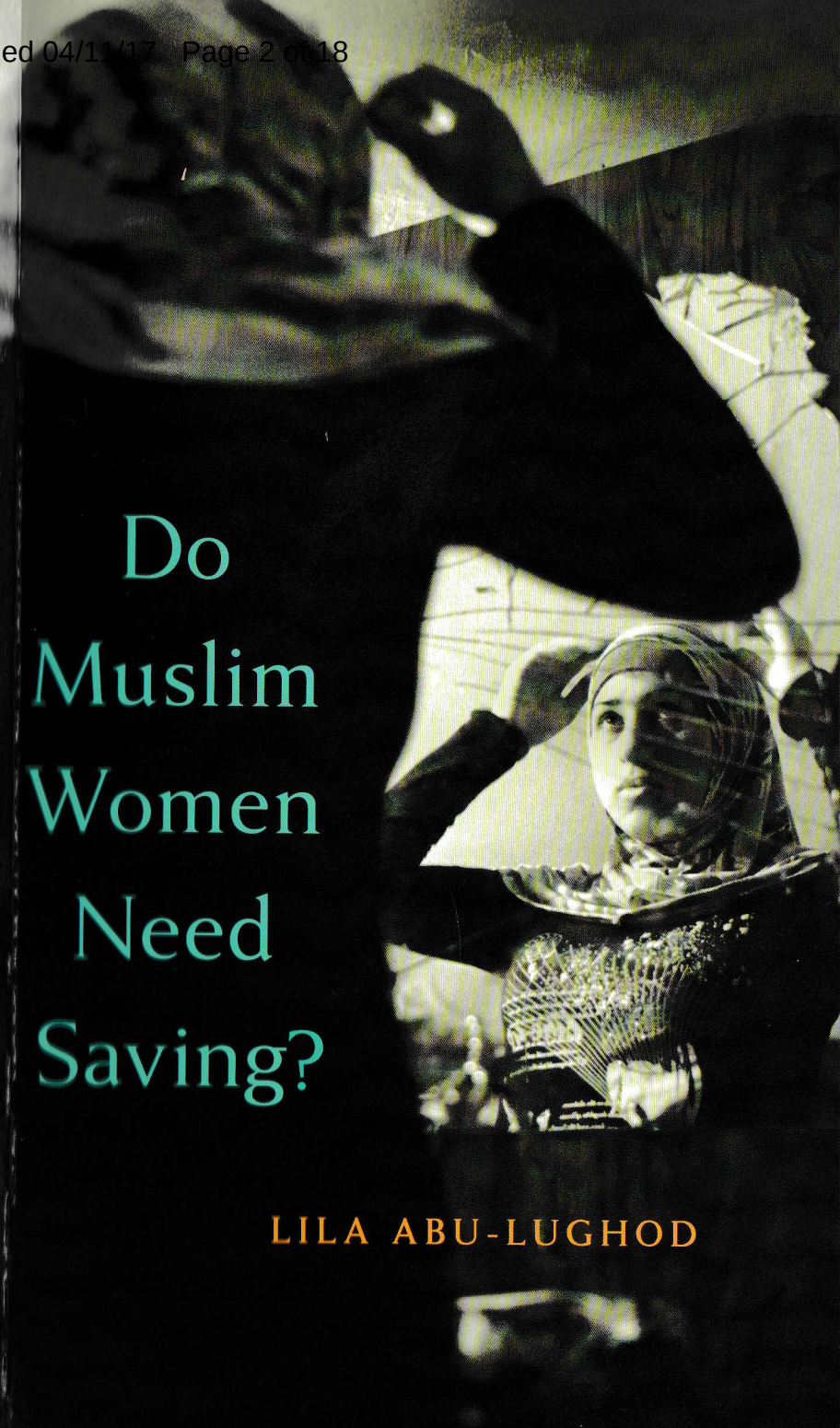


ABU-LUGHOD  
*Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*



*Do  
Muslim  
Women  
Need  
Saving?*

LILA ABU-LUGHOD





good—in schooling, health care, welfare, or gun control—seems also to get lost in this story line.<sup>67</sup> That is why these popular memoirs have such a hold. That is why they seem to have come into our public imagination at the same time the new common sense emerged that we should save women globally.

Before taking a look at the framework of rights that gives shape and purpose to the efforts of activist women and their admirers, I want to unpack one of the most iconic symbols of the oppression of women in IslamLand: the honor crime. In the development of this culturalized category of abuse, we can see perfectly the ways narratives of choice come together with sexuality in liberal discourse and get imbricated in local and international institutions of care and punishment. In tracking this particular type of violation of Muslim women and girls, we see how people are led to suspend their critical faculties in the service of a moral crusade, and how blaming culture justifies intervention.

## CHAPTER 4

### Seductions of the “Honor Crime”

One of the most iconic of the cultural-legal categories created to describe the deplorable state of women’s rights in the Muslim world is the “honor crime.” The deployment of this category makes clear just how inseparable the plight of Muslim women is from the politicized and polarized world in which we live. The 1990s marked the beginning of a strong era for international women’s rights. Violence against women was successfully reconceptualized as a human rights issue and put on the agendas of various United Nations (UN) bodies. It now dominates the feminist agenda worldwide and is part of the new common sense. Naming and publicizing the honor crime, a category taken up eagerly by everyone from media makers to moral philosophers, marks humanitarian concern. Yet we must be wary—this category risks consolidating the stigmatization of the Muslim world and does not do justice to women.

Defined as the killing of a woman by her relatives for violation of a sexual code in the name of restoring family honor, the honor crime poses more starkly than any other contemporary category the dilemmas of rights activism in a transnational world.

It is marked as a culturally specific form of violence, distinct from other widespread forms of domestic or intimate partner violence, including the more familiar passion crime. Neither values of honor nor their enforcement through violence are ever *said* to be restricted to Muslim communities, nor are honor crimes condoned in Islamic law or by religious authorities. Yet somehow their constant association with stories and reports from the Middle East and South Asia, or immigrant communities originating in these regions, has given them a special association with Islam. Anyone concerned with representations of Muslim women, with the lives of actual women in the Muslim world, and with the global enterprise of "saving Muslim women" needs to look hard at this category. Insofar as the honor crime is designated a traditional or cultural practice and is introduced regularly into arguments about international affairs or the risks of multiculturalism, even being condemned in UN General Assembly resolutions, it deserves special attention from anthropologists and those trying to understand the new imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

Honor crimes are explained as the behavior of a specific ethnic or cultural community. The culture itself, or "tradition," is taken to be the cause of the criminal violence. So the category stigmatizes not particular acts of violence but entire cultures or communities. But can one acknowledge the seriousness of violence against women without contributing to the stigmatization of particular communities and their representation as exceptional? In the West today, Muslim communities are regularly portrayed as backward and prone to violence. In the new common sense, international conflicts are reduced to a "clash of civilizations" in which entire regions of the world are represented as rejecting values such as freedom and nonviolence. Western interventions have caused hundreds of thousands of deaths justified by the claim to bring freedom—and women's rights—to these other cultures.

Ambivalence or hostility in Europe and the United States toward immigrants from such regions is rationalized by the "uncivilized" practices they bring with them. Even within many Muslim-majority countries, elites look down on ordinary people from the countryside, the slums, and certain regions, blaming violence against women on the traditionalism and cultural backwardness of their less enlightened or "modern" compatriots.

Naming and criminalizing forms of violence may have positive effects. They may encourage legal reform and the education of judges. They might help governments and communities appreciate the seriousness of violence against women and justify the creation of shelters, training programs for police, and relief efforts for women. But are there ways to achieve such goals without defining some acts of violence against women as peculiar? The risk of this culturalization is that it will produce more animosity and violence. Women will be no safer.

Because moral horror about the honor crime was everywhere I looked in the media, in pulp nonfiction, and in serious academic work, I began to ask myself: What forces could be producing and maintaining this category of spectacular cultural violence? What elements of popular fantasy might be animating it? And what might the category prevent us from seeing about the social and political worlds in which violence against women is occurring?

In this chapter, I describe four problems with the way the category of the honor crime works. First, it simplifies morality and distorts the kinds of relations between men and women that exist in societies where honor is a central value. Second, defining honor crimes as a unique cultural form too neatly divides civilized from uncivilized societies, the West and the rest. Third, the obsession with honor crimes erases completely the modern state institutions and techniques of governance that are integral to both the incidents of violence and the category by which they



are understood. Finally, thinking about honor crimes seems to be a sort of “antipolitics machine” that blinds us to the existence of social transformations and political conflict.<sup>2</sup>

### Moral Puzzles

Rights activists, popular writers, and scholars have all contributed to raising the visibility of the honor crime in the past two decades. The sudden prominence of the honor crime in the late 1990s unsettled me. As an anthropologist who had lived and worked in particular communities of Muslim women in the Arab world, I had spent a long time trying to understand what people meant by honor and what honor meant to them. The subtitle of my first book is, after all, *Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. I was shocked when I read documents like Amnesty International’s fact sheet on honor crimes. Called “Culture of Discrimination,” it states: “So-called honor killings are based on the belief, deeply rooted in some cultures, of women as objects and commodities, not as human beings endowed with dignity and rights equal to those of men. Women are considered the property of male relatives and are seen to embody the honor of the men to whom they ‘belong.’”<sup>3</sup>

Definitions such as this place honor crimes in types of societies where women are not just unequal to men but have no moral agency. By describing women as property, objects, or body parts controlled by men (as do some that reduce women to hymens),<sup>4</sup> these accounts trivialize moral systems and do not begin to do justice to the way women see themselves in such communities. They did not make sense to me. I had lived for years in a community that prided itself on its commitment to honor. I had a rich sense of women’s and girls’ lives in a community in which honor and sexual virtue were central to the social imagination. Honor and modesty were the subject of constant discussion.

These values were key to a shared and complexly lived moral code that inspired and obligated individuals. Women and men reflected on these values in an exquisite tradition of poetry and storytelling.

*Veiled Sentiments*, my first book, focuses on how modesty, the special entailment of honor that involved sexual propriety for women, was part of a widely shared but complex moral code. For my Awlad ‘Ali Bedouin friends, honor helped define (and reproduce) social status. For the men and women I knew, honor was based on upholding personal ideals from valor to generosity, from trustworthiness to refusal to accept slights. For women and girls, as I describe in *Veiled Sentiments*, honor involved displaying most of these qualities of toughness and generosity expected of men and those from strong families (called “free”) but in addition, forms of respect for others. Modesty, I show in my book, was one of the forms this respectfulness took, defining women as worthy of the respect of others. Modesty meant veiling for certain categories of men (and deliberately not others); it meant being reserved with, and even avoiding, members of the opposite sex who are not relatives. It had nothing to do with acting “feminine,” according to our standards. For men, avoiding sexuality was equally important to honor; men were expected to keep a respectful distance from unrelated women and to treat them politely. They would never mention their wives or other women from their family in front of other men—out of respect. Sex outside of marriage was dishonorable for both men and women. And young men had little more choice in marriage partners than did young women. In a kin-based social order, marriages are far too important to be left to individuals.

Should this moral system that sets ideals for both men and women—shaped as it is by the social structure of patrilineal kin relations that organizes descent, inheritance, economy, and



political and social relations—be understood (and judged) as simply a form of patriarchal oppression of women leading to violence? Must the restrictions on women's behavior be understood as constraints on their autonomy imposed by men? To begin to answer these questions, one would need to either ask how people involved in the system see it, or explore the complex ways the moral system plays out in actual social situations. I did both in two of my books, *Veiled Sentiments* and *Writing Women's Worlds*.

Awlad 'Ali girls I knew in the 1980s often complained about the unfair restrictions and suspicions to which they were subjected. Their aunts and grandmothers complained about increasing confinement, the result of leaving their nomadic life, along with some newer factors that I discuss later when considering how the Islamic revival that was transforming Egypt in the late twentieth century affected them. But I noticed that the girls chafed against new restrictions with a self-righteousness that came from their sense that they were, unfairly, not being trusted. They defended themselves not by saying they had the right to do whatever they wanted, but by asserting their own modesty and moral virtue, even if they did like bobby pins or lipstick. They spoke about themselves not as objects controlled by family or by men, but as persons who knew right from wrong.

To begin to understand that girls in this community see themselves as powerful agents of their moral standing, all we need to do is listen to some Bedouin wedding songs. The adversarial gender imagery of a couple of the many proud songs women would sing about brides in their families is striking: "They lived like falcons / The hunters of the wild couldn't touch them." "A bird in the hot winds glides / And no rifle scope can capture it."<sup>5</sup> Here are songs that, to return to a theme we've encountered before, use birds metaphorically to comment on women's lives neither

in terms of emancipation (from the cage) nor grief about loss, but in terms of their pursuit of honor.

To appreciate how complex the system of morality is for individuals, one would have to talk about how everyday life proceeds. My ethnographies are full of stories about how girls dodge accusations, mothers worry about their daughters, brothers stand up for their sisters, and fathers support them against suspicion or accusations. They also recount men's stories of thwarted love or saving face after their sons or brothers have not acted honorably. At the heart of this community is the riveting and revealing interplay of women's and men's public displays of pride and independence and the poems they share with their intimates, poems of desire and pain that show their vulnerabilities and their attachments in their marriages and friendships. My Awlad 'Ali friends would find familiar the social constraints and demands of honor that produced the exquisite anguish of *Romeo and Juliet*; they themselves tell similar love stories about tragic, or near-tragic, desert lovers.<sup>6</sup>

Can this moral system of a community that jealously guards its independence from Egyptian state institutions be captured by the idea that men constrain women's freedom or own their bodies? This is what the Amnesty fact sheet suggests. What should we make of women's fierce commitments to the system? What kind of understandings of power, of people's social ties, and even of individual psychic life would lead us to think in such black-and-white terms about something as complex as gendered human life?

### Compulsions of Liberal Fantasy

Besides the reductive way it presents societies in which honor is so central to morality, there is a second problem with the discourse on honor crimes. The tendency in the mutually reinforcing



scholarship, popular culture, and legal campaigns is to treat the honor crime as a distinctive and specific cultural complex. This tradition continues in Kwameh Anthony Appiah's depiction of honor killings in Pakistan in his book *The Honor Code*, in which he calls for collective shaming or "carefully calibrated ridicule" to spur Pakistani men and those who engage in "honor killing" toward a moral revolution.<sup>7</sup> Even anthropologists like Unni Wikan have fallen into this trap, as demonstrated in her book on a spectacularly mediated honor crime that took place in Sweden in 2002, involving Kurdish immigrants. Her goal, she claims in the book, is to try to understand the culture that produced such an event. But the anthropological motive of understanding (without stigmatizing) is belied by rhetorical moves such as melodramatic chapter endings, consistent misreadings of evidence, and unremitting moral judgment.

Wikan's book examines the case of a father who killed his daughter, Fadime Sahindal, after years of estrangement; the trial, police, and media records were extensive and contradictory. Let me give one example of how Wikan misreads the evidence. One of Fadime's sisters explains that for their father, "everything went to pieces when the media got in on the case. He felt robbed of his dignity, his pride, his honor."<sup>8</sup> After the father had developed a heart condition that forced him to quit his job, he is reported to have told Fadime, "Don't show me up like this, to the media and the police! At least fifteen people spat at me!"<sup>9</sup> In the trial, he testified, "All these Swedes came by and threw stones at my window. They shouted things. 'Fucking blackhead, go back where you came from!'"<sup>10</sup>

Wikan, however, does not pick up on the lost dignity the sister mentions, the racism the father experiences, or the critical role the media and police played in the unfolding events. Symptomatically, she reverts to standard tropes about culture, seamlessly

slipping among Kurdish, Middle Eastern, traditional, tradition-bound, and non-Western culture. Fadime's father, she insists, had a "mental outlook . . . anchored elsewhere; his roots were deeply sunk into a culture, or a set of traditions, with core values other than freedom and equality."<sup>11</sup> She says, "Many immigrants in European countries remain deeply rooted in rural cultures established several hundred years ago."<sup>12</sup> At her most sympathetic, she says that we must understand fathers like him as "victims of inhuman traditions"—against which valiant and enlightened daughters and organizations should struggle.<sup>13</sup> Her anthropological discourse meshes surprisingly well with popular discourses on the honor crime and the larger common sense about the problems of Muslim women.<sup>14</sup>

To get the full flavor of the unsavory politics of this conception of honor crimes, we need to turn to these more popular discourses. We have already seen how pulp nonfiction fixates on choice and freedom to paint its pictures of Muslim women's oppressions. The honor crime category also works through fantasy to attach people to a set of values they are made to associate strictly with modernity and the West. We can see this in two highly successful "memoirs" by honor crime survivors that found enthusiastic, if tearful, audiences in the wake of 9/11, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and the impending military intervention in Iraq. The first is Norma Khouri's best-selling memoir from 2003 of the alleged honor killing of her best friend, Dalia, in Jordan. Called *Forbidden Love* in the United Kingdom and *Honor Lost* in the United States, it is structured as a classic romance novel, complete with a tall, dark, and handsome love object who is not a sexist brute. It pulses with chaste but throbbing mutual attraction. But this romance ends differently—with murder. And there is an Orientalist difference; the gripping plot is interlaced, as Harlequin romances and slasher films are not, with pedantic



lectures on Islam. We are not allowed to forget that we are in IslamLand.

The story is organized by the standard themes of a long history of Western representations of the Muslim woman. In contrast to the free Western woman, she is imprisoned: "For most women," Khouri writes, "Jordan is a stifling prison tense with the risk of death at the hands of loved ones." She is also voiceless: "Women still pray that their silent cries will be heard," echoing the late nineteenth-century missionary women discussed in Chapter 1, who said, "They will never cry for themselves, for they are down under the yoke of centuries of oppression."<sup>15</sup> And then there is the stark contrast between patriarchal tradition and feminist modernity that we have encountered before in Susan Moller Okin's essay, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" Of her doomed friend Dalia, Khouri comments: "And yet there are a few rare women who risk their lives to try [to break the ancient code]. The whispers they hear are not from the desert, but from the winds of change."<sup>16</sup>

The memoir aligns itself with popular feminism. To lend credibility, the book ends with a page similar to the ones we encounter in *Half the Sky*. Titled "What Can You Do?," it urges readers to write letters opposing the practice of honor crimes and to donate money to the UN Commission on Human Rights.

The problem is that the book was a hoax. Norma Khouri, whose real name turned out to be Norma Bagain Toliopoulos, gained asylum in Australia on the basis of the events of the book. Investigative journalists then discovered that she had not lived in Jordan since she was three years old. Suspicious, the Jordanian journalist Rana Hussein tracked dozens of serious errors and anachronisms in the book, and the publisher withdrew it.<sup>17</sup> Rather than fleeing an honor crime, Khouri was a troubled woman (and

compulsive liar) who had grown up in Chicago, had a police record, and was wanted for fraud.<sup>18</sup>

This piece of fiction masquerading as memoir reveals perfectly the fantasy and seduction of the honor crime. Self-righteous horror about the barbarism of "the other" is married to voyeuristic titillation, along the way facilitating the personalization of such powerful symbols of liberalism as freedom and choice. The freedom that honor crime books like this celebrate and that the scandalizing of honor crimes affirms turns out to be the freedom to have sex and to leave home. The choice that is cherished boils down to the right to make personal decisions based on love. So the book's warm and uncritical reception can be accounted for by the attractive way it affirms certain modern Western cultural values through an association of sexuality with liberation, and individual rights with public freedom.

Another "memoir," mentioned briefly in Chapter 3, confirms the erotic charge of the honor crime and its role in shoring up a sharp distinction between the liberated West and the repressive Muslim East. *Burned Alive: A Survivor of an "Honor Killing" Speaks Out*, published first in France in 2003, is a different kind of hoax, based on "repressed memories" (notorious for their unreliability) and filled with inconsistencies and errors.<sup>19</sup> It is the story of Souad (who has only a first name and lives "somewhere in Europe"). She is a Palestinian woman who was allegedly set on fire for being pregnant out of wedlock. Writing her memoir twenty-five years after the events were said to have taken place, this woman, who has been regularly made to act as a witness at conferences on honor crimes, testifies not just to the barbarism of her own society but also to the goodness of the mission of her European saviors. These include a woman named Jacqueline and a shadowy Swiss organization, SURGIR, whose Christian



salvationist language is striking and whose appeal for money appears, as we have now come to expect, at the end of the book.

Souad admits she cannot write or read books, but that Jacqueline had assured her she could just “speak” the book. We are given no clues as to how the book was put together, except that the title page (though not the cover) indicates it was written in collaboration with Marie-Thérèse Cuny. This French writer had earlier helped “Leila,” the French Moroccan whose memoir of forced marriage is analyzed in Chapter 3. As noted there, she would also soon help Mukhtar Mai (the Pakistani village woman whom Nicholas Kristof declares his heroine) write her memoir.

*Burned Alive* consists of Souad’s disjointed, fragmented, first-person childhood memories, many of relentless cruelty at the hands of her father. She gives us vivid fragments of what she claims she had forgotten for twenty-five years—including a younger sister (whose name she cannot recall) being strangled by her brother with a black telephone cord. Souad’s feelings toward her brother are wildly ambivalent—she insists again and again how much she loved him, and yet she depicts him as a murderer. Although Jacqueline describes Souad in the West Bank hospital where she found her as suffering intermittently from amnesia, Souad’s “writing” becomes fluid and erotic when she describes her trysts with the handsome neighbor she believed would marry her, but who impregnated and then abandoned her. The breathless description of the first secret meeting with her would-be fiancé says it all: “I have never been so happy. It was so wonderful to be with him, so close, even for a few minutes. I felt it in my whole body. I couldn’t think about it clearly, I was too naïve—I was no more educated than a goat—but that wonderful feeling was about the freedom in my heart, and my body. For the first time in my life I was *someone*, because I had decided to do as I

wanted. I was alive. I was not obeying my father or anyone else . . . I was breaking the rules.”<sup>20</sup>

These values of individual sexual transgression and personal autonomy are precisely the ones that anthropologist Unni Wikan honors in Fadime, the Swedish Kurdish honor crime victim. Fadime, she declares, is a symbol of the power of love. She stands for “an inclusive view of humankind, universal in its emphasis on the individual’s irreducible value. She represented freedom and equality, regardless of gender, religion, and ethnicity,”<sup>21</sup> all because she defied her family by running off with a Swedish/Iranian boyfriend and then condemned in front of Parliament immigrant communities that would not assimilate.

In all these narratives of popular fiction and bad anthropology, Western society and well-integrated immigrants are granted a monopoly on liberal and human values. The implication is that the West does not include in itself any illiberal values, whether chastity, religious moralism, intolerance, racism, incarceration, sexism, economic exploitation, or inequality. So it is worth considering the ideological role that the honor crime might be playing in a period when critics of American imperial interventions and of European anti-immigrant racism have questioned how liberal existing Western democracies actually are, not to mention thinking about how condemning the honor crime implies a sort of uncomplicated celebration of autonomy when a strong tradition in feminist political theory has uncovered the masculine assumptions of the liberal ideal of the autonomous individual. Many feminists argue that idealizing autonomy devalues not just women’s but also men’s human experiences of dependency and relationship. The most famous illustration of the bias in our evaluations of morality came from the social psychologist Carol Gilligan, whose pathbreaking book *In a Different Voice* suggested



that an ethic of care, expressed more often by women, might be just as important or healthy as the kind of moral reasoning based on ideals of autonomy that is generally viewed as superior.

There are good reasons to be cautious about associating love and sex so closely with freedom and individual rights, and both with the modern West. Historians, political theorists, philosophers, and feminist scholars have questioned these dogmas. Michel Foucault, for one, has shown us how modern discourses of sexual liberation came with new forms of discipline, medicalization, and a language of perversion. An older Marxist tradition held that the subordination of women emerged with the development of private property and the nuclear family. Many feminists have documented the ways women are objectified and turned into commodities in our late capitalist consumer society, whether to sell cars or pornography.

But even if one ignores this kind of theorizing and research, shouldn't one at least ask for a more nuanced understanding of the place of love in the sorts of societies that Khouri and others disparage? In the literature on honor crimes, there is a striking absence of any mention of Arab literary culture, which is renowned for its artistic elaboration on the themes of love. Love has been a special theme since pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and on to the romantic storytelling that formed the basis for European chivalric genres. Certainly for the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin I lived with, love and desire were the stuff of the poetry, songs, and stories they cherished. These were their creative reflections on love and life, which is why I wrote about them in *Veiled Sentiments*.

Things *can* go wrong for people everywhere. Some fathers are violent, some brothers commit incest, there are men who kill their wives and lovers on suspicion, and there are families and marriages that are dysfunctional and abusive. "Honor cultures" do not have a monopoly on violence against women. American

and European newspapers, judges, lawyers, psychiatrists, and prisons testify to this. And not all families in communities where sexual modesty is a key element of young women's morality react the same way to suspicions or sexual infractions. The problem is that when violence occurs in some communities, culture is blamed; in others, only the individuals involved are accused or faulted. As Leti Volpp has shown in her classic article called "Blaming Culture," violent or abusive behavior gets attributed to culture only when it occurs in minority or alien cultural, racial, or national groups.

The honor crime seems to function as a comforting phantasm that empowers the West and those who identify with it. Not only does it shift attention to an abjected stage where caricatured people are victims of their own violent culture but it also encourages self-righteous commitment to change those backward or dysfunctional cultures. As Appiah prescribes, we should persuade Muslim men to shift their sense of honor so that killing their women feels shameful; as others recommend, we should save the women from their cultures. Rather than enabling us to understand social lives that, like ours, are unfortunately too often marred by violence, the legal/cultural category of the honor crime produces strong distinctions. It distracts our gaze from violence within, and establishes the superiority of a dense concatenation of cultural values associated with liberalism—autonomy, individualism, and sexual freedom. In some settings, it enables Westernized elites in Muslim communities to distinguish themselves from their local backward compatriots and to gain new opportunities and alliances, mounting campaigns against honor crimes. The political alignments of a bright, articulate young Jordanian engineer who ran a web campaign against honor crimes are illustrative. Mohammad Al-Azraq had answered the call of a Swiss-educated Bahraini friend to take on the issue. I contacted



him shortly after the website called “There is No Honor in Honor Killing” (nohonor.org) went live in 2007. He identified his motives: “From the most obscure days of Arab tribalism till the 21st century, many crimes have been committed against women in the name of ‘honour’. People kill their own flesh and blood to satisfy backward tribal values and traditions that are by no means related to religion. We—in ‘No Honor’—are trying to raise awareness among young people from the region, and encourage young males to respect their sisters’/daughters’/wives’/cousins’ . . . etc. choices in life.”<sup>22</sup> When I interviewed him on March 29, 2009, he elaborated, “The core thing I believe in is that men and women are absolutely equal. My sister, my mother, my wife, my son—as long as eighteen or over, have the right to make their own decisions. That’s the thing that we’re trying to preach.” Attractive as they are, these views must be put in the context of the wider liberal politics of dialogue and tolerance represented by cosmopolitan youth like him.

In short, the popular concern with the honor crime solidifies certain violences as timeless cultural practices associated with particular kinds of communities defined by their alien difference from us, rather than treating them as the perverse and diverse acts of individuals in different circumstances who sometimes work with a complex of concepts linked to honor. In assuming the uniformity of such practices, popular narratives affix values of individualism, freedom, humanity, tolerance, and liberalism neatly onto the West while denying them to others, despite the actual distribution of acts of inhumanity, intolerance, and illiberalism across many societies.

### Erasing Governance

The sober forms of knowledge production we find in human rights or women’s rights reports by and for grassroots and international

organizations work differently and do a different kind of political work. Here we come to the third problem with the way the category of the honor crime is used. Human rights reports on honor crimes arise from and at the same time hide the ways in which governments and transnational organizations now penetrate the lives of most people and communities. Unlike the sensationalist romance novel/memoir, such reports have all the neutral features of scientific objectivity. In such reports, one typically finds a mix of telegraphic case studies and confusing statistics. For example, Human Rights Watch’s 2006 report on violence against women in Palestine begins its section on “Murder of Women under the Guise of ‘Honor’” in a predictable way—with a clinical quote from an autopsy report: “An 18-year-old female died as a result of manual strangulation and smothering, which were carried out by her family members.”<sup>23</sup> The lists and numbers in these reports convince us that there is something out there. The multiplication of cases lends credibility and objective weight to the existence and specificity of the phenomenon. The accumulation makes it appear that all the cases are variations on each other. These incidents are not to be considered as individual aberrations or pathologies but as patterned forms.

Feminist activists contribute to these reports. Genuinely motivated by concern for the victims and committed to working on behalf of women, these feminists work in grassroots organizations led by courageous individuals. Some offer good services; most carry out research as part of advocacy. Yet when even the most careful scholar-activists attempt to compile statistics, the results are utterly confusing. These anecdotes and noncomparative or unreliable statistics reveal little about contexts, incidences, and individual situations. They are unable, in the end, to draw either distinctions among or commonalities across forms of violence against women.



Even so, these are not the most important lessons I want to draw from the genre of the human rights report. Instead, as the late Turkish sociologist Dicle Koğacioğlu alerted us, we need to pay attention to the infrastructure that enables the manufacture of this statistical and case information. We need to pay attention to the production and circulation of such reports. Looking at the way honor crimes became such a hot topic in Turkey in the wake of Turkey's bid for inclusion in the European Union, she showed how the honor crime was defined and managed in party programs, legal arguments, and newspaper articles. The crimes, she concluded, are produced in relationship to these institutions. Her most important argument was that if we care about women's rights and well-being, we need to reverse the invisibility that modern institutions, national and international, manufacture about their own roles in perpetuating such practices.<sup>24</sup>

This infrastructure and these institutions are not traditional, tribal, or rural; they are the infrastructure of modern government such as social service organizations that are alerted to and follow up on complaints about abuses.<sup>25</sup> They are often run by middle-class, educated women committed to justice, versed in contemporary feminist politics, and connected to wider networks that are willing to work with state agencies and even international organizations. In Europe and the United States, they serve immigrant women; in other countries, they focus on the poor and the rural. In addition, there are the police who go to the crime scenes, arrest killers, and investigate violent incidents. Almost every report of an incident by the Jordanian journalist Rana Husseini mentions that the brother or father either turned himself in to the police immediately or waited for the police to come and arrest him. The extensiveness of the Swedish police records actually allowed Wikan to write her book about Fadime.

Then there are the medical institutions, from hospitals to morgues. Rana Husseini's acknowledgments include special mention of the pathologists at the Jordanian National Institute of Forensic Medicine. Forensic medical teams determine cause of death, conduct autopsies, and even routinely administer virginity tests. Nearly every reported incident concludes with a finding about the virginity of the victim, the result of an invasive medical practice that even nineteenth-century court records in Egypt document as part of the institutionalization of modern medicine.<sup>26</sup>

There are the prisons that house remorseful or stoic killers. Those in Jordan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan also house women who are kept there for their "protection," whether they are the victims of rape, pregnant out of wedlock, or otherwise in danger. It was such women who provided much of the interview material for the 2004 Human Rights Watch report on honor crimes in Jordan. Associated with the prisons are the judicial and legal systems with their laws, judges, trials, and records, and the political systems that ratify international conventions or entertain debates about relevant articles from legal codes.

It turns out that honor crimes, whether "over there" or "in our midst," are almost always implicated in the social institutions of policing, surveillance, and intervention. As research by Palestinian women activists and scholars has shown, for example, it is the failure of those very institutions to respond properly to women's pleas—whether because of racism or sexism—that is responsible for the victimization of so many women. Proposed legislation that promises to punish men for killing women in the name of honor does little to help the women victims, for whom it comes too late. Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif document how Palestinian women in danger regularly face hostile Israeli police who humiliate them, hand them back to elders who are favored collaborators, and fail to follow up on threats or the



willingness of family members to testify against murderers.<sup>27</sup> A discriminatory legal system compounds the problems for women and girls.

Moreover, honor crimes are taken up in national and international political debates and activities, with the media usually fanning the flames. Concrete examples of how honor crimes are implicated in political institutions appear in human rights reports, even when these reports ignore it by introducing matters in clichéd ways. The Human Rights Watch's report on Palestine that I discuss in Chapter 5 repeats Amnesty International's earlier diagnosis almost word for word: "These murders are the most tragic consequence and graphic illustration of deeply embedded, society-wide gender discrimination."<sup>28</sup> Yet when the report comes to discuss the case of a sixteen-year-old Ramallah girl, it notes: "The Palestinian police were held by Israeli soldiers for hours at an Israeli military checkpoint between the city of Ramallah and the village of Abu Qash, where the family lived. The staff of the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling said they were not able to reach her house in time to try to save her life due to movement restrictions between Jerusalem and the West Bank." Here, we see honor crimes caught within checkpoints, curfews, the Israeli occupation, and women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), at a minimum.

And finally there is the media—newspapers, magazines, television, film, and now websites through which honor crimes are filtered, whether in exposés or cyber campaigns. Fadime turned to the press for protection and then was hounded by it. Local, national, and international media—honor crimes are everywhere, in the *Jordan Times*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *Der Spiegel*; on CNN, the BBC, and *The O'Reilly Factor* on FOX News.

The role media play cannot be underestimated. An example from Germany shows how this works. Katherine Ewing, an

anthropologist who wrote a book called *Stolen Honor*, traces how a key incident in Berlin gradually came to be classified as an honor crime and how, in its wake, a set of previous murders of women was reclassified, inducing a national panic about the crisis of the barbaric immigrants within the national fold, a panic that she considers the eruption of a national fantasy.<sup>29</sup> In early February 2005, Hatun Sürücü, a young woman of Turkish background, was murdered in Berlin, allegedly by her brother(s). Journalists at first called the shooting a head scarf killing (since she wasn't wearing one), playing on fears about Islamism. Two weeks into the media frenzy, they had confidently come to call this the sixth honor killing in Berlin in the previous five months. Ewing argues that this "spate of honor killings in Berlin was not likely even a statistical anomaly," but an artifact of classification. A range of murders under various circumstances "retrospectively came to be labeled honor killings."<sup>30</sup> Most involved husbands killing wives, which does not fit the definition.

A young, single mother estranged from her family, living a more "German" life, complete with dancing at clubs, barhopping, and boyfriends, Sürücü's story could easily become about honor. Confusing details like hints that she had a diverse sexual life or that she might have been the victim of incest dropped quickly out of the news. However, Ewing urges us to focus on the institutional and historical context in which she was murdered and became a symbol. In the neighboring Netherlands, the filmmaker Theo van Gogh had just been killed by a Moroccan immigrant for his role in producing *Submission*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali's anti-Muslim "hard core" Orientalist film that I discuss in Chapter 3. Although the Islamic Council condemned German-Turkish youth for "self-administered justice" and deplored cultural traditions, the Right in Germany took advantage of this incident to tar the Muslim community—and multiculturalism.



The context was one, Ewing argues, in which immigrants could serve as “a focal point for the country’s ills and a threat to the democratic principles that are the foundation of the German state.”<sup>31</sup> In contrast, people who knew the social scene well attributed the murder to the gender politics of boys in gangs created in response to neo-Nazi racism and post-9/11 anti-Islamic sentiment. Honor crimes by then had become a signifier for both the machismo and the cultural authenticity of youths of Turkish origin. They had also come to stand in for Germans’ fears of an untamed parallel society in their midst. Turkish women’s rights activists, for their part, seized on Sürücü’s murder to campaign against honor crimes. In the end, this frenzy incited a good deal of speculation on Sürücü’s lifestyle, at the center of which again were the erotics of sexual freedom and the fetish of personal choice.

In Europe, honor crimes are also closely connected to border control and what Miriam Ticktin, the anthropologist whose work on illegal immigrants and humanitarianism in France I quote in Chapter 3, calls the policing of immigration and immigrants. These are matters of national and international administration, not culture.<sup>32</sup> Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, a French scholar who has written about the stigmatization of North African immigrant men for their “sexual deviance,” links this phenomenon to efforts “to mask the new forms of social and economic domination experienced by working-class young people of non-European origin” and to the “precarious lives” into which they are being forced, as sons of the formerly colonized.<sup>33</sup> In the United Kingdom, the major study of honor crimes was conducted by the Centre for Social Cohesion, a conservative think tank devoted to the study of religious (Islamic) extremism. Asylum cases, the extension of welfare benefits, and most interestingly, the issue of visas (an issue we saw lurking in Leila’s memoir of “forced marriage”;

honor crimes are often said to be committed because girls refuse marriages that are related to acquiring visas for their spouses) also confirm how embedded honor crimes are in European immigration politics.

Jacqueline Rose provides more support for these arguments with her eloquent decoding of the role of obsessive discussions of the honor crime in the European politics of immigration, her criticism of its branding as “archaic” or “tribal” when it is so thoroughly connected to modernity and nationalism, and her praise for those who insist that we must refuse to generalize but instead enter the complexity of lives.<sup>34</sup> In a comprehensive comparative study of the relationship between media and political debates on “honour-related” violence in Britain, Germany, Canada, and the Netherlands, Anna Korteweg and Gökçe Yurdakul too have shown how unhelpful the common stigmatizing discourses are. They insist that policy must be built on a recognition of the way that such violence is actually shaped by immigration experiences. They show that targeting this form of violence will be more effective if it is framed as a variant of domestic violence. They recommend that women’s groups be made full partners and the emphasis be shifted toward empowering women as citizens rather than calling for restrictions on immigration.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to nation-states worried about immigrants, honor crimes involve international organizations, UN bodies, donor communities, and local grassroots NGOs. If you look at them closely, in fact, you see that honor crimes do not occur *outside* of these modern state institutions or those of the international community. Honor crimes cannot be analyzed as if they were free-floating or rooted in ancient codes and tradition-bound cultures. The honor crime gives legitimacy and resilience not just to all the mechanisms of regulation, surveillance, and mass mediation intrinsic to modern state power but also to the specific forms and



forums of contemporary transnational governance, whether neoliberal economic institutions or humanitarian intervention of the feminist or military sort.

### The Winds of Change

This brings us to the fourth problem with the way the category of the honor crime works. Blaming culture means not just flattening cultures, stripping moral systems of their complexity, and hiding the most modern political and social interventions that no community escapes; it means erasing history. In all the discussion of honor crimes, where is the recognition of the dynamic historical transformations that are affecting women, families, and everyday life in all communities, including those associated with "honor killings"?

A constant refrain in the alarmist literature on the honor crime is that it is on the increase, even if virtually every article or book published in the past decade cites the inexplicably unchanging figure attributed vaguely to the UN of 5,000 honor killings per year, worldwide. Even Dalia's mother, in the fictional *Honor Lost*, seems to have known the figure. There is, of course, no proof of this, since we have no reliable evidence of prevalence in the past and there are, as everyone concerned has noted, formidable problems of reporting and classification in the present. It would not be surprising, however, to find that familial violence against women might indeed be increasing in some social contexts. The question is where one would look for explanations.

Studies from Europe, Turkey, and Palestine/Israel have noted some relevant factors. They have described the retrenchment of family under insecure conditions among Kurds; reactions to racism in Britain, Germany, and France; and deliberate policies of strengthening traditional patriarchal authority among Palestinians in Israel. In many settings, we see contact with alternative

moral systems and competing forms of authority; differential incorporation into the state and its institutions, including schools and labor markets; and clashing forms of control, just to mention a few of the circumstances that might affect family violence.

Even more crucial to observe is the way the past three decades have brought not just changes in state institutions, migration patterns, ethnic politics, and the spread of global media, but piety movements across the Muslim world. Alongside the Islamic revival come arguments for the Islamization of law and society that are taking different forms. How is this trend of more self-conscious affiliation with what is presented as correct and complete Islamic practice playing out in the sphere of gender? What effects is the Islamic revival having on women's rights or gender violence? The answers, not surprisingly, are complicated. These effects vary tremendously across countries and communities. Surely, such effects should be part of any discussion of honor crimes. But they rarely are.

A look across the Muslim world shows that the "winds of change" that are moving non-elite women—and many elite women—in Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, Malaysia, and even Norma Khouri's Jordan are not the ones Khouri celebrated in her imaginary friend Dalia, which took her to restaurants in four-star hotels, dance clubs, or to liberated sexuality. Instead, these winds are moving them toward what they perceive as a higher Muslim morality. Sexual desires outside of marriage are no less problematic for Islamic piety and Islamic legal codes than for "traditional" moral codes based on family honor. Some Bedouin women in Egypt contrast new restrictions imposed on them by an Islamist turn by young men to an older set of freedoms they felt their tribal ways gave them, even while they are endorsing piety.

This channeling of sexuality through religious language and law is leading to three trends in gender politics, at least in the



regions I know. First, young pious women and men want to live up to the morality of the religious code and this guides them away from a celebration of liberal freedom from sexual restrictions. Many women say they want to be close to God, with all the moral entailments from shyness to sexual propriety and a sort of formidable untouchability that this sometimes involves.<sup>36</sup> Across the Muslim world now, women who mark their piety by wearing the new Islamic dress, or the hijab, have gained autonomy from family and the domestic sphere. Their self-monitoring is at least as powerful a form of conformity to moral standards regarding sexual freedom as that of the kinds of girls I knew among the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin in the 1980s, for whom it had been a matter of family standing. Women and men must figure out how to negotiate their relations given these terms. They are doing so in all sorts of creative ways. Not insulated from pop music, television, coeducational institutions, and leisure activities and consumption, they have made use of institutions like temporary or 'urfi (secret) marriages. They also struggle with themselves and society.<sup>37</sup> Many attribute women's embrace of the hijab as a public assertion of morality, not just religiosity, for those who are massively present now in schools, the workforce, and public space.<sup>38</sup>

Second, with the Islamization of states and legal systems in the last quarter of the twentieth century in countries like Pakistan and Iran, radically new modes of regulation and enforcement of moral standards tied to sexuality, new vocabularies and conceptions, and new forms of authority (and resistance) have developed. Some incidents have even been described as state-sponsored honor crimes. This means that morality is being given religious grounding and is mediated through channels that claim the authority of Islam. The voluntary embraces of morality described earlier are taking place alongside more official

interventions in moral discourses, including their manipulation. A new language is coming into play: one of sin and *zina* (the crime of sex outside marriage). This dominates state efforts at Islamization in places like Iran and Pakistan, as well as the lively internal legal and social challenges to such efforts wherever they are being imposed.

Third, a consequence of this situation is that tensions have emerged between Islamic religious institutions and community regulation. In recent years, major religious leaders in Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere have issued legal opinions (*fatwas*) condemning honor crimes as unlawful. As Lynn Welchman, a legal scholar based in London, has shown in her analysis of the sudden public intervention that the Islamic Chief Justice of the Palestinian Authority made in 2005 on the subject of murder in defense of honor, Islam and Islamic law (the Shari'a) are coming to be invoked more and more against honor crimes. This has new jurisprudential, legislative, and social consequences that have yet to unfold.

At the same time, the honor crime (and women) have become pawns in political battles. In Jordan, we have good documentation on how the honor crime was manipulated by politicians from the Islamic Party in their resistance to the efforts of feminist campaigners backed by the Jordanian royal family to reform penal law. These populist Islamist politicians stymied the efforts by linking these reforms to a Western plot to undermine Jordanian society and morality. This is ironic given that the laws on which the honor defense relies came into Jordanian law from the Napoleonic Code, Ottoman law, and British common law.<sup>39</sup>

These changing responses to sexuality and honor signal important transformations not just in the discourses but also in the institutions through which the honor crime now travels. Any diagnosis of gender violence that attributes it to culture—backward,



traditional, or barbaric—distracts us from these kinds of historical dynamics that are essential to an analysis of violence and to responsible efforts to mobilize against it. It is time to stop talking about “deep-seated cultural beliefs,” “ancient codes from the desert,” and efforts to “understand” how people in certain alien cultures could want to kill their daughters. Even feminists from the Muslim world need to be more careful. Although they tend to be vigilant about racism and wary of the dangers of civilizational discourse, they sometimes let their fears of Islamic fundamentalism distort their understandings. The Women Living under Muslim Laws (WLUML) campaign called “Stop Stoning and Killing Women!” that I discuss in Chapter 5 conflates a bewildering range of practices and puts into service the fascination with horror and sex that attach to the timeless honor crime for their antifundamentalist agenda.

### Dilemmas for Concerned Activists

The seductive power of the honor crime, with its unique mix of sexual titillation and moral horror and its capacity to subsume and consume diverse acts, has allowed it to emerge as a robust category that does significant political and cultural work. My intention in challenging the usefulness and accuracy of the category is not to defend or excuse the violence it tries to name; nor do I wish to undermine the value of much of the reparative work carried out in its name. Instead, I have sought first to redirect our attention to the historical conditions and precise political configurations that lead certain figurations of suffering to become objects of earnest and widespread concern while so many others go unremarked or unlabeled. Second, I wanted to trace the varied impacts of this structured concern, nowadays framed in the hegemonic language of our times as violations of women’s rights.

I would not want to say, as some might, that familial violence is not a serious problem, pointing out, for example, that more women die in traffic accidents. I am not even saying that we should look at how many (more) women fall victim to structural and military violence, whether through the malnourishment of poverty or the burning flesh of aerial bombardment. There is no excuse for brushing under the rug the harms of interpersonal violence and ignoring its gendered or sexed forms. It is the achievement of feminism to have made violence against women and sexual violence public moral and legal issues, not hidden or taken-for-granted matters of private life.

However, it is a problem when we consistently fail to compare murder and assault rates by intimates between societies in which women are allegedly victims of honor crimes and those in which honor is not invoked as a motive, justification, or legal excuse. The specifics are important, and as an anthropologist, I am committed to going deeply into different systems of gender, power, and morality. But as part of the attention to specifics, we also need to look systematically at all the political and legal institutions through which everyday life, including violence, proceeds in various places.

My main concern has been with the determinants of the cultural construction of the honor crime and the effects of its deployment.<sup>40</sup> We have seen the articulating domains in which the category works. We have examined the work of the honor crime in distinct projects and scales of power and have begun to untangle its effects in different spheres and locales. These have included policing and exclusions of immigrants; the disciplinary penetration of rural and urban subaltern communities by state and social service organizations; particular attempts at domination by national, class, or ethnic groups; defenses of liberalism

that fuel a divisive separation of West and non-West; attraction of funding for feminist projects and research; international militarism; and new forms of transnational governance carried out in the name of rights or humanitarianism.

Looking ahead, there are signs that other cultural categories might be moving into the limelight. We should watch out for these, and be equally wary. Polygamy is a likely candidate for a new campaign, following along the lines of “forced marriage,” that theme of so much pulp nonfiction and political work by governance feminists.<sup>41</sup> Such categories will draw strength from new political-cultural configurations that include religious debates about gay marriage, controversies about competing legal systems and religious arbitration in Europe, the emergence of a number of international Islamic feminist reform organizations, the dynamics of Islamist identity politics, and the justification of continuing military intervention in Muslim lands in the name of introducing “rule of law.” These two figurations of women’s suffering—polygamy and forced marriage—are both redolent of sex (harems and rape). They work slightly differently from the honor crime and have different political and social effects. Dealing with real abuses and women’s suffering in many cases, they also will provide new opportunities for rights work, scholarship, and intervention. They will present feminists and human rights advocates with ethical and political conundrums, as has the honor crime.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Social Life of Muslim Women’s Rights

Fayruz had some big news to share. When I arrived in the village after a year’s absence, I went to visit her. She had been in the midst of a cancer scare the last time we’d seen each other. They had removed a tumor that doctors assured her was benign. She told me about the pain she had suffered and the long nights when she wept thinking about what would happen to her children if she died. She was now back to her bold, beautiful self, full of energy and determination.

Fayruz wanted to show me something. We set off on foot, her long, flowing dress complemented by the black head covering all women in the village wear. She had her daughter and her new daughter-in-law in tow. Down some rutted dirt roads, we found ourselves in the midst of the open agricultural land that surrounded the village. She proudly pointed to a monstrous three-story house under construction in the midst of the fields of wheat. Fayruz showed me around, struggling up the great spiral staircase, stepping over the construction rubble. Then she took me to see the side door, which someone had blocked up with mud. She explained that her younger brother had gone to war with her.

# Exhibit 3





LILA ABU-LUGHOD  
Columbia University

# The cross-publics of ethnography:

## The case of “the Muslimwoman”

### ABSTRACT

*Engaged anthropology, public anthropology, and public ethnography* are names for a long tradition of trying to make a difference beyond the academy. The passionate and polarized responses of both nonacademic publics and engaged scholars in adjacent fields to my attempt to intervene in public debates about Muslim women’s rights raise questions about the ethics, politics, and potentials of ethnography’s travels across fractured global publics. They illuminate the geopolitical terrain of current debates about feminism and Islamophobia and reveal that ethnography may be most effective in interrupting or unsettling hegemonic representations and political formations when it makes available alternative accounts of lives and communities that can then authorize and give substance to critics’ arguments. Does this instrumentalization of ethnography benefit those whose lives anthropologists share through fieldwork? [*engaged anthropology, public ethnography, rights, ethics, feminism, Islamophobia, Muslim women*]

الأنثروبولوجيا الملزمة، الأنثروبولوجيا والإثنوغرافيا الجماهيرية هي مسميات لتراث مديد من محاولات لتخطي المؤسسة الأكاديمية ساعية إلى تغيير ما في المجتمع. وقد أثارت مداخلتي في السجلات العامة حول حقوق المرأة المسلمة ردودا متحمسة ومتضادة لدى الجمهور بشقيه العام والأكاديمي الملزم من الحقول المعرفية المجاورة للأنثروبولوجيا. وتضمنت هذه الردود أسئلة حول أخلاقيات وقدرات الإثنوغرافيا في الوصول إلى جماهير ممتدة في عالم متصدع. ومن أثر هذه الردود أنها تكشف عن المدى الجيو-سياسي لهذه السجلات المتعلقة بالحركة النسوية ومرض الرهاب من الإسلام (إسلاموفوبيا) مبينة أن للإثنوغرافيا ثمة قدرة فائقة على إعتراض أو زعزعة التمثيلات المهيمنة والتشكلات السياسية الطاغية من حيث أنها (أي الإثنوغرافيا) توفر دراسات بديلة لحيوات وجماعات قادرة بدورها على تزويد الزخم والمصادقية لمقولات ناقدة لهذه الهيمنة. هل هكذا تسخير للإثنوغرافيا يعود بالمنفعة على من ندرس حياتهم من خلال الإنغماس الأنثروبولوجي فيها على طريقة البحث الميداني؟ [الأنثروبولوجيا الملزمة، الإثنوغرافيا الجماهيرية، الحقوق، الأخلاقيات، الحركة النسوية، الإسلاموفوبيا، المرأة المسلمة].

Anthropologists have long tried to make a difference beyond the academy. They have used their understandings of human social life derived from ethnographic and comparative work to intervene in political debates of the day. Despite anthropology’s implication in colonial and development projects, inevitable for a discipline forged and still strongest in Europe and its settler colonies in North America, South Africa, and the Pacific, anthropologists have often challenged prevailing views and hegemonic political arrangements. They have taken public stands on everything from utilitarianism to evolutionary thinking, racism to norms of gender and sexuality, development to neoliberal governmentality, militarization and war to humanitarianism, HIV/AIDS to indigenous and human rights. Recent efforts to institutionalize public anthropology (Borofsky 2000) build on this tradition of engaged anthropology.

Today, some of the best anthropologists “make politics matter differently” by “repopulating public imagination with people and their precarious yet creative world-making,” as João Biehl and Ramah McKay (2012, 1224) have put it in a review essay praising “ethnography as political critique.” Didier Fassin (2013) follows in arguing that it is “public ethnography” rather than public anthropology that anthropologists might distinctively offer to wider publics and for the public good.

In addition to intervening in public debates, anthropologists should study the afterlives of their publications, Fassin (2015) argues, rather than imagining their task is over after they have been through the “two lives” of ethnography: the fieldwork and the writing. The trajectory of my ethnographic work and the responses to my effort to intervene in contentious debates in the United States and Europe about Muslim women, debates tightly linked to policies toward a region where the United States has been involved controversially, raise three issues that anthropologists who use ethnography to intervene in urgent social and political affairs must think about carefully: First, how prepared are we for the ways non-academic publics respond to our work, and even for the readings of our work by engaged scholars in adjacent fields? Are there ways to use these responses productively? Second, can the ethnographic specificity with which anthropologists work effectively interrupt and unsettle hegemonic representations and politics? In what contexts might these challenges be most effective? And third, is public ethnography a responsible way to repay the debts we incur to those who have given us the privilege of letting us share their lives and worlds to do our ethnographic work?

As an anthropologist with deep commitments to ethnographic fieldwork in local communities in the Arab Middle East, I felt compelled to respond to the ways women like those with whom I had worked were catapulted to the center of popular media attention in the service of disturbing global imperial political interventions in 2001. To help justify the military invasion of Afghanistan by the United States and its allies, politicians and the media put the spotlight on the rights of Afghan women, and by extension all Muslim women. For the next decade, my ethnographic work focused specifically on the question of women's rights. I returned several times to a village in Egypt where I already had been doing fieldwork for many years. I also began to study transnational and local feminist activism, to read anthropological work on human rights and humanitarianism, and to examine popular genres of writing about Muslim women, including what Dohra Ahmad (2009) called pulp nonfiction. In 2013, I published *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Abu-Lughod 2013), a book rich in ethnographic substance and consciously directed to a wider public. My intent was to challenge the prevailing common sense.

Many of the book's arguments were addressed to other scholars and students, but I imagined the mainstream liberal American public as an important audience for the book, given that this audience is more familiar with media representations and trade books than with academic works. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* took up key topics of public debate: freedom, veiling, honor cultures, violence, Islam, and women's rights. I sought to offer alternatives to the multistranded, highly mediated, and institutionalized public production of what miriam cooke (2007) has called "the Muslimwoman"—a homogenized creature oppressed by her religion, her culture, and her men. I examined prevailing representations. I analyzed the forces that produced them and gave them credibility. I created frameworks for thinking differently about the lives of such women, based on intimate looks at particular lives in particular places. This was the anthropological and ethnographic contribution.

This book reached more diverse publics than my previous ethnographies. There was a range of initial responses to it: near silence in my target public sphere, the US liberal mainstream (which plays a crucial role in building a consensus about US policies toward the Middle East and Muslims), outrage in one counterpublic of which I had been barely aware, and touching personal affirmation in another marginalized counterpublic that had not been in my direct sights when I wrote. Academic reviews took longer to come in. Although these have been largely positive and thoughtful, a majority have come from outside anthropology, particularly from scholars interested in women and global feminism. Some feminist activists who work on and in the Muslim world were more ambivalent toward the book. This reaction, as I will discuss, illustrates Marilyn Strathern's

(1987) observation that the relationship between anthropology and feminism is awkward. The awkwardness has intensified, I would suggest, as feminisms have taken firm root in various settings, gone global, and aligned with other transnational political movements and institutions from human rights and humanitarian governance to the "war on terror."

### Ethnography's travels

Anthropologists are increasingly concerned about the ethics, politics, and potentials of ethnography's travels across fractured global audiences. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* differed from my previous ethnographies, which had been based on intensive long-term research in particular communities in Egypt and organized in terms of topics of interest to scholars of social life: theories of culture, gender, kinship, and morality; the politics of emotion; the social role of expressive culture; nationalism and mass media; ethnographic writing; and the politics of representation and knowledge production. Although the core of the book grew out of scholarly articles published first in academic journals, I rewrote them to make them more accessible because I wanted to influence debates on women's rights, human rights, and the politics of Islam and Islamism in the 21st century. I took tentative steps to find a trade publisher. When rebuffed, I retreated with relief to the familiar standards and intellectual freedom of an academic press.

Ethnography plays a key role in the book. Anthropologists always think through big issues using the situated and microscopic knowledges that they develop by doing fieldwork in particular places, as Clifford Geertz (1973) noted. Because I could not reconcile what I was encountering in public discourse with what I knew from years of fieldwork in Egypt, I spent a decade doing more ethnographic research so I could tackle the subject of Muslim women and their rights. Unlike other excellent recent works that challenge the common sense about the Muslimwoman by analyzing gendered Orientalism or the politics of imperial feminism (e.g., Grewal 2005; Hesford 2011; Kapur 2002; Kumar 2012), I built my arguments systematically out of the everyday lives and concerns of women who might be seen as falling within this charged figure of the Muslimwoman—a figure that runs through media coverage, security concerns, international governance, immigration policies, military intervention, and even feminist advocacy.

Can nonspecialist publics that have not been trained in reading our genre assimilate anthropological modes of argument and evidence? Is ethnography translatable? Can we expect those outside our discipline to appreciate what the particulars of everyday lives, grasped in their complicated social contexts and conveyed through narratives, tell us about the way the world works? That is the essence of anthropological and ethnographic work. It is the heart of

our method. It is what we teach our students by training them to read ethnographies.

The ways my book was taken up can provide insight into what happens when ethnographic work leaves the comfort zone of its customary disciplinary and academic publics. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* was caught in cross-publics, in both senses of the word—it crossed different publics and made at least one public very cross. It entered multiple lifeworlds at odds with one another and with anthropology. It was opened up to different criteria of authority and judgment, not to mention rules of civility. Other anthropologists have written about what happens when the audiences for their work go beyond fellow anthropologists; some of the most troubling afterlives of ethnographies are those in the communities themselves, when their subjects read or hear rumors about the work (Brettell 1996; Scheper-Hughes 2001). Ethnographies can also get caught in wider political and institutional battles, subjecting anthropologists to hurtful vitriol, as Fassin (2015) describes for his work on HIV/AIDS politics in South Africa and on policing in France. But he steps back to show how much he learned from these responses about the political and institutional dynamics in these countries.

Similarly, by examining how nonacademic audiences received my book, we can learn a great deal about the political terrain, structure, and affective force in the United States and Europe of what some people gloss as Islamophobia (though matters are more complex than this shorthand suggests). I will analyze the early responses before turning to the more awkward responses from fellow academics who are not anthropologists; their reactions can be used to understand more clearly the ways Islamophobia has made navigating women’s-rights advocacy even more treacherous than it was when feminists had to contend with what Leila Ahmed (1982) called colonial feminism.

Although I am media shy and declined to hire any of the publicists who offered me their services, I confess that I was disappointed by the relative silence with which my book was received, at least publicly, by the US liberal public sphere. The latter includes those who write, promote, and devour books like those I criticize in my opening chapters—including the sensational franchise of the *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, *Half the Sky*, cowritten with Sheryl WuDunn (Kristof and WuDunn 2009). Endorsed by celebrities, the book advocated saving the world, one woman at a time, by battling gender inequality. It has even led to video games and TV movies.

Perhaps this silence is the fate of almost any book published by an academic press. The *New York Times* website, it must be said, aired a video interview with me two months after the book came out; the *New York Times Magazine* published a review four months after it was published.<sup>1</sup> The video was two minutes long, and the book review was one line long and appeared in very small print at the bottom

of the page in a section called Marginal Marginalia. For a book that I had worked on for over a decade, that was the fruit of ethnographic research carried out over 30 years, and that was on a subject that Juliane Hammer (2013, 110) has characterized as “center stage” in North American and European public discourse—this seemed too little.

The silence seemed especially ironic when, a few months after my book was published, Kristof (2014) wrote a column in the *New York Times* Sunday Review called “Professors, We Need You!” He began by noting that “some of the smartest thinkers on problems at home and around the world are university professors, but most of them just don’t matter in today’s great debates.” He blamed some of this on the “anti-intellectualism in American life,” which is certainly the case compared to Europe. The rest of the article, however, castigated professors for being out of touch and marginalizing themselves by using turgid prose. I had worked hard to use accessible prose, and I was very much in touch with current issues. So I had to surmise that I may not have got a hearing because the liberal public sphere did not welcome my critiques of the media and of the devastating effects of US foreign policy toward the Middle East, the Muslim world, and Palestine.

The book received a different reception in the United Kingdom, providing evidence that hostile views of the Middle East and Islam—with the Muslimwoman as linchpin—have a special hold on the US public. A major UK newspaper and a number of serious UK publications reviewed the book almost immediately. These were signs that despite serious problems of racism and Islamophobia in the United Kingdom, the public debate there on Muslims is more open and inclusive; there are certainly more critical spaces in the UK public sphere compared to that of the United States. The demographics of the UK reviewers hint at this diversity: all but one (a negative review by a conservative writing in the *Sunday Times*) were writers or scholars of Arab, Turkish, or South Asian background.

### Polarized online counterpublics

The blogosphere, however, was not silent. This is a relatively new facet of the mediation and circulation of scholars’ work with which we must contend. The first reviews of my book in North America appeared online, representing two opposing counterpublics. These online reviews traded in different currencies than those of the academy or the learned pages of the high-brow UK *Literary Review* or *Los Angeles Review of Books* (the only US public forum to review the book). The reviews’ criteria for judgment, their emotionality, and their politics lay outside the disciplinary and academic conventions that were more familiar to me.

These polarized responses illuminate some of the political stakes of my venture into public ethnography on the question of Muslim women. The first surprise was the



measure used by the two blogging counterpublics to evaluate the book: truth versus lies. This is foreign terrain for anthropologists raised on Max Weber, Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, Donna Haraway, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said, to name a few who have shaped our disciplinary common sense about objectivity.

On the positive side, reviews began to appear on feminist websites and blogs shortly after I published the book. These praised the book for confronting stereotypes. Some of the smartest reviews appeared on blogs not specifically oriented to Middle Eastern or Muslim issues, the most lucid appearing on *Feministing* under the title “Not Oprah’s Book Club.” Although the writer highlighted my ethnographic experience, she summed up the core argument of the book in terms of myths and realities:

It’s an age-old fairy tale: an artificial division between the West and its mythical counterpart, what Abu-Lughod calls “IslamLand.” On one side: innocent moral agents—the beneficent saviors. On the other: nefarious brown men and “caged birds,” the Muslim women utterly disempowered to resist them. In reality, the spread of international capital and centuries of (ongoing!) colonial history make it impossible to separate “their” world from our own. (Villano 2013)

*Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* also hit a chord with the writers at *Muslimah Media Watch* (<http://www.muslimahmediawatch.org>), founded in 2007 by Fatemeh Fakhraei. The blog describes itself as

a forum where we, as Muslim women, can critique how our images appear in the media and popular culture. Although we are of different nationalities, sects, races, etc., we have something important in common: we’re tired of seeing ourselves portrayed by the media in ways that are one-dimensional and misleading.<sup>2</sup>

The first of two reviews on *Muslimah Media Watch* opens with a quote from the introduction to my book: “I am often bewildered by what I read or hear about ‘the Muslim woman.’” The review goes on, “For those of us who share this sentiment, Abu-Lughod’s book is essential reading ... (written in an *accessible, blissfully jargon-free* style) on the issues we at Muslimah Media Watch are concerned with on a daily basis” (tasnim 2013; emphasis mine).

Another public offered the opposite judgment, expressed through accusations that I lied. This tune began to play, softly at first and then louder, in a counterpublic about which I have since learned a good deal, especially from the Norwegian anthropologist Sindre Bangstad (2013, 2014). The first review, in the Rupert Murdoch–owned British conservative newspaper the *Sunday Times*, was headlined “Drawing a Veil over the Truth.” The subtitle was “Some of Her Conclusions Defy Belief” (Russell 2013).

This judgment and language were amplified in the right-wing Islamophobic blogosphere, where the reach and particular animus of this discourse of truth and lies became apparent. The sinister notes first sounded in Bruce Bawer’s review of my book in *FrontPage Magazine*. It was titled “Saving Islam from Its Victims.” Bawer was affronted by the book. He wrote,

She knows, in short, that every day millions of Muslim women endure suffering rooted in the Koran and in Muslim tradition. But instead of using her knowledge to try to help improve those women’s lives, she uses her rhetorical skills to dance around the truth—dodging, deflecting, doing whatever it takes to uphold the stunningly callous and patently dishonest proposition that Muslim women don’t need saving. (Bawer 2014)

A US writer based in Norway, Bawer is associated with a network of writers and bloggers whose work was quoted approvingly in the Norwegian mass murderer Andre Behring Breivik’s 1,516-page cut-and-paste tract called *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*. As Martha Nussbaum (2012, 55) and others rightly point out, none of those whom Breivik quoted can be held responsible for his gunning down 77 youth leaders of a major Norwegian political party that he considered soft on Muslim immigration. But his text can be used to trace the existence of an Islamophobic network of which some of my reviewers are a part. Bawer’s book titles give away his political stance: *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West from Within* and *Surrender: Appeasing Islam, Sacrificing Freedom*. Bawer was in touch with another writer Breivik quoted: a Norwegian who went by the name “Fjordman” and wrote for a blog called *Gates of Vienna*.<sup>3</sup> In case readers are unaware of the significance of the title, the site explains, “At the siege of Vienna in 1683 Islam seemed poised to overrun Christian Europe. We are in a new phase of a very old war.”

As a scholar accustomed to academic book reviews, I was especially taken aback by the comments posted to Bawer’s online review. Online comments, I have since discovered, are notoriously abusive. Although sometimes frightening, they are part of what we must confront when our publics become more diverse. Public ethnography makes us lose control over the mediations of our work (Fassin 2015). I quote only two to clarify the connotations of “dishonesty” within this particular public. “Oldtimer” wrote, “i would like to see a picture of her. Is she wearing that face covering burka that the women she talks about must wear? Or is all she says just, I think it’s called, taqiya(?)”<sup>4</sup>

As Bangstad’s (2013, 2014) research reveals, this comment includes a telltale sign of the Islamophobic worldview that inspired Breivik’s hostility: the term *taqiyya*. The term also appeared in a comment on Bawer’s review by

“Geoffrey” (who describes himself as a conservative/libertarian and supporter of the Tea Party): “Lila Abu-Lughod is a practitioner of stealth jihad, a master of taqiyya. The author [of the review] shouldn’t be surprised at her lying. She advances Satan’s cause and he has a special place in his chest (no heart) for her.”

I was surprised to find *taqiyya*, a concept from Shi’ism related to the ethics of concealing one’s faith to avoid death, such an everyday concept for nonspecialists like these. Yet, as Bangstad explains, it emerged as a key term in the foundational writings in the genre known as Eurabia established by the author Bat Ye’or, now known as Gisèle Littman. “In Ye’or’s work,” Bangstad notes, “and in the understandings of her followers, *taqiyya* is ... perceived as systematic ‘lies’ or ‘deceptions’ through which Muslims everywhere in the world ‘conceal’ their ‘real’ intentions to establish Islamic dominance over non-Muslim peoples” (2013, 372). Ye’or also popularized the concept of *dhimmitude*, coined from the word designating protected minorities in the Ottoman Empire but twisted, according to Bangstad, to mean the “obligatory submission [of non-Muslim peoples] by war or surrender to Islamic domination” (Bangstad 2014, 148, quoting Ye’or). For Ye’or and those in this right-wing Islamophobic public, *dhimmitude* signifies a Muslim threat to the West, one that should be met by an alliance between Jews and Christians in support of Israel. Nussbaum (2012, 20–58) has characterized this as paranoid thinking, which marks much anti-Muslim work, including that of the extremist Americans Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer (from whose provocative book title, *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam Is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs*, the charge against me of “stealth jihad” was lifted).<sup>5</sup>

I turn now to a second element of these two marginal counterpublics’ online reviews: their very personal and emotional tone. It is not just a matter of lies and truth. On one side was another enthusiastic review on *Muslimah Media Watch* titled “How ‘Do Muslim Women Need Saving?’ Saved Me.” It was posted by “shireen,” a regular on the blog, who identified herself as a Canadian soccer-playing mom who wears the hijab. She wrote,

My contribution to this series of reviews is more of an account of the emotional impact of being able to read and apply her work.

When I received my copy, I read it feverishly and quickly. I felt I had to stop myself at times and just exhale. I was drinking her powerful and measured words in too quickly.

It wasn’t simply an intellectual experience of reading a solid piece of work that criticized and called out the disingenuity of a “global industry” that felt the need to save women. It was also a very psycho-emotional experience. Throughout the book, I found myself nodding vigorously as the author brilliantly poked and prodded at those heavy in their disdain and disregard

for accepting Muslim women as individuals as opposed to being a one big sad and repressed group that needs to be spoken for and about. (shireen 2014)

The assaults that popular culture imposes on North American Muslim feminists, and Muslim women across Europe—assaults that have been widely documented and that include not just “representations” but hate crimes, physical attacks, online abuse, and discrimination in the labor market—are palpable in her emotional response: “I had moments of intensity where I was clutching the book tightly because it resonated so deeply. A friend of mine confessed that she sometimes slept with the book” (shireen 2014).

The mirror opposite of these strong emotional responses appears in Bawer’s *FrontPage* review. Bawer can hardly contain his rage:

This was a tough book to get through. I had to keep putting it down. The world-class dishonesty, the willingness to deny the real suffering of women and girls in order to prop up the poisonous religion that’s responsible for that suffering—and to impugn the motives of noble people who do care—made me livid. (2014)

It is ironic that Muslim feminist bloggers felt so personally comforted by my book while Bawer was so offended on their behalf. In the world of Eurabia and beyond, as Bangstad and others have shown, this advocacy for Muslim women is strongly linked to anti-immigrant political platforms, and Bawer himself worked with a Norwegian secular feminist who established Human Rights Service (HRS), an NGO. Set up to assist immigrant women, HRS has served, Bangstad argues, as a conduit “for the mainstreaming of counterjihadist literature, including works in the Eurabia genre” (2013, 376).

To return to the question of public ethnography, however, I was most struck by the impossibility of there being a place in Bawer’s world for ethnographic work that might complicate understandings. In my book, I invoke the authority and results of long-term fieldwork—the detail of individual stories that cannot be fitted into standard molds, the complex meanings of religious identity and practice, the multiple efforts of feminist and human rights groups as they are caught in broader geopolitical currents, and the complex political economies that shape the local situations of Egyptian or even Afghan women. Yet for Bawer, these merited no mention.

## Pulp nonfiction and the Muslimwoman

Bawer’s review was published in the magazine of the US-based right-wing David Horowitz Freedom Center, whose self-proclaimed mission is “the defense of free societies whose moral, cultural and economic foundations are under attack by enemies both secular and religious, at home

and abroad.”<sup>6</sup> This refers to the Left (exemplified for them by the professoriate) and Islamists. This is the same center that in 2007 published a pamphlet (Spencer and Chesler 2007) in connection with Islamofascism Awareness Week, an initiative to recruit students to attack women’s-studies programs across the United States for being soft on the question of Muslim women. The pamphlet was coauthored by Robert Spencer (“stealth jihad”) and Phyllis Chesler, a retired feminist psychology professor. Titled *The Violent Oppression of Women in Islam*, the pamphlet offered a mishmash of examples of abuses from all over the world placed side by side with quotes from the Qur’an. The cover image, a stilted black-and-white photomontage, appears to show a veiled woman being buried alive. This pamphlet represents the purest example of the deployment of the “defense” of Muslim women’s rights to bolster denunciations of Islam.

Chesler writes regularly about feminist issues on right-wing blogs and in magazines. She published a memoir just a few months after my book came out with an intriguing title: *An American Bride in Kabul* (Chesler 2013). In this memoir, Chesler finally reveals the personal basis for her “authority” to speak on issues of gender in the Muslim world, something that had long puzzled me given that she was a US feminist psychologist, not an expert on the Middle East or the Muslim world. She reveals that she went to Afghanistan in 1961 after marrying at age 19 a fellow student from Bard College. He was a dapper cosmopolitan Afghan elite interested in theater. She went with him, her heart set on exotic adventure. But she was shocked and disappointed, escaping less than six months later and eventually obtaining an annulment.

Fifty years later, she writes this memoir, which opens with the following sensational sentence: “I once lived in a harem in Afghanistan.” The next lines perfectly affirm a stereotype while appearing to negate it:

I came as the young bride of the son of one of the country’s wealthiest men. To my astonishment, I was held captive—but it’s not as if I had been kidnapped by wild savages and ravished. This is not a tale of a white and helpless maiden taken by Barbary pirates and sold into an imperial harem. I was not *sold* into captivity. I walked into it of my own free will. (Chesler 2013, vii; italics in original)

She even confesses sheepishly that she had uttered the words (the *shahada*) that converted her to Islam. Why tell us this when she has kept it secret for 50 years? One can only surmise that it is so she can join the ranks of the abused Muslim heroines of popular (as-told-to) memoirs, such as *Forced into Marriage* and *Burned Alive*, that one finds in airport bookstores. Or to stand with the celebrated “ex-Muslims” like Ayaan Hirsi Ali who tell tales of woe to denounce Islam as a barbaric religion. Their works define and

structure feelings about Muslim women and, as I argue in my book, through this pulp nonfiction subliminally authorize a moral crusade to save them from Islam (Abu-Lughod 2013, 81–112).

Chesler’s memoir follows the formula of this genre. She reproduces the requisite chapter titles reflecting the genre’s narrative convention of going from bondage to freedom: “The Imprisoned Bride,” “Burqas,” “Harem Days,” “Trapped,” “Escape.” To bulk up her barely remembered experience, she interweaves into the narrative a series of 18th- and 19th-century European travelers’ accounts, of not only Afghanistan but also Iran, Egypt, and Arabia. For good measure, she sprinkles in some current accounts by wives who have written best-selling accounts of their unfortunate marriages to “Eastern” men. One could hardly ask for a better illustration of what Edward Said (1978) characterized as the citationary nature of Orientalism, in which other texts are more authoritative than the realities.

Here is a typical instance: after saying she is “getting used to spending my days at home,” Chesler writes,

It is impossible for a Westerner to imagine the deadening torpor of a protected life under house arrest. Eventually, one is grateful for the smallest outing outdoors—a lovely picnic in a burqa, being allowed to watch the men and boys fly kites or swim. I am looking at a photograph taken in 1865 that is titled “Sweet Waters of Asia.” (2013, 59)

The connection between 1961 and 1865, and between Kabul and a photograph taken on “the eastern shores of the Bosphorus,” 4,000 kilometers west, is left unexplained.

Chesler spent less than six months in a Kabul that is very different from what exists now. She lived in the wealthy gated household of the head of a major bank with chauffeurs and servants. She was surprised that her sister-in-law met her at the airport in the latest Western fashions and high heels. She struggles hard to make her story fit the script. Until her final days there, her greatest abuse seems to be her self-starvation, caused by her mother-in-law who refused to make special foods cooked in imported Crisco rather than the native ghee. She also blames her mother-in-law for her dysentery and hepatitis—the result of a nefarious anti-Semitic plot to leave the vegetables unwashed. She has no memory of marital rape but says she finds mention of it in her diary. She chafes under restrictions of “house arrest” and bemoans the fate of women she sees wearing burqas, which she describes as “body bags” and “sensory deprivation chambers.”

Her lack of desire to understand the new social world she has entered might be excused in a 19-year-old girl from Brooklyn. It is harder to explain why in the intervening 50 years as a scholar she has not availed herself of the rich scholarship by anthropologists and historians of the region,

scholarship that would have provided insight into the complex gendered world she had entered. Instead, she describes this world as one of “gender apartheid” and writes pamphlets like *The Violent Oppression of Women in Islam*.

One can read this memoir of Afghanistan not as what she claims it is—a reckoning with herself—but as a lure. Chesler wants new audiences for the second half of the book, in which she rehashes hundreds of articles she has posted on right-wing blogs and magazines over the last two decades, many on her pet theme of the honor crime. Here also one finds the familiar tirades against gender apartheid, “anti-Semitic Palestinian-loving Muslims who are seeking to destroy Israel,” and “Sharia law”—the subject of fear mongering by US politicians in ignorance of the meanings of legal reasoning and argument in Muslim societies, as studied by anthropologists like Brinkley Messick (1996, forthcoming).<sup>7</sup>

### Serious engagement and that awkward relationship

Chesler’s extremist positions bring to the fore a tension that exists in more genuine forms within the larger feminist community. Anthropologists who are careful ethnographers of women and gender must confront real dilemmas, beyond the mendacity of Islamophobes who have seized on “the woman question” to further their cause. Women’s rights and issues like gender-based violence should concern everyone, and the important work that activists and practitioners in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, or elsewhere in “the Muslim world” are doing is to be respected. This is why I had such feminists in mind as interlocutors and publics. But as an anthropologist, I also included them as subjects of some modest ethnography on what I called “the social life of Muslim women’s rights,” because it is important to understand how problems of women get framed in international discourses and institutions and how activists in particular regions work.

The most serious public to respond in a timely way to *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* consisted of committed feminist scholars, writers, and activists, most of whom work in and on the Muslim world. Their responses were different from those of the grateful writers of *Muslimah Media Watch*. The views that appeared in more academic venues reveal the uneasy relationships between anthropology and transnational feminist scholarship and activism. Yet it is in such adjacent and allied fields, I believe, that ethnography has the best chance of affecting the terms of political and public debate. It is this audience that is most genuinely concerned about the issues I tackle in the book, and they may be most open to what an anthropologist can offer, since understanding the complex forces that shape the social world matters to projects of social transformation and gender justice. As far as the Muslimwoman is concerned, it is clear that

all of us are hamstrung by this figure’s entanglement with geopolitical forces and organized Islamophobia.

The most thoughtful challenges to *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* came in an academic review symposium on it published in *Ethnicities*. The three invited reviewers who responded, all Europe-based feminist scholars who work on and in different Muslim communities in Europe and abroad, raised significant ethical-political questions about the stance of the book. The most consistent concern was how much support my book offered for what Deniz Kandiyoti (2015) called “internal critiques.” By this she meant critiques by feminists who challenge the patriarchal injustices in their own societies, working to reform law, change canons, and criticize conservative social practices, cultural ideologies, and interpretations of religion. Taking a different approach, the other two reviewers asked how much room I give to “authentic critical voices” (Malik 2015, 765) as opposed to those simply playing to Western audiences and riding the wave of Islamophobia to promote themselves, as do the well-known “native informants” (Dabashi 2006; Mahmood 2008). One of the reviewers, Maleiha Malik, rightly insisted that one must find ways to “safeguard space for legitimate critiques” (2015, 766). The other, Schirin Amir-Moazami (2015), alarmed by anti-immigrant discourse in Germany and France, puzzled over what to do about the fact that only certain feminist voices—those that blame Islam for misogyny in Muslim cultures—get authorized in the mainstream public spheres in Europe and the United States.

Given the widespread ignorance about and deliberate prejudice against Muslims, it is important to highlight the diversity of women and the existence of feminists within such communities. To counter the discourse of white women saving brown women from brown men, to adapt Gayatri Spivak’s (1988) famous formulation, I regularly teach about the long local histories of women’s movements and activism (however blurry we know the boundaries to be between local and transnational, inside and outside). There is fine scholarly literature on this subject by now (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1998; Al-Ali 2000, 2007; Booth 2001; Chowdhury 2011; Rinaldo 2013; Salime 2011; Shehabuddin 2011). Most intriguing are the movements that emerged in the first decade of the 21st century that could be labeled Islamic feminist. I examined two groups from this movement, Musawah (which means “Equality”) and the Women’s Initiative for Spirituality and Equality (WISE), which define themselves as global and work for reform and rights from within the religious tradition. There are others. These surely count among the “authentic internal critics,” alongside a range of others like the Marxist and secular liberal feminist activists and even the Islamist women who work from within political parties or movements to push for reforms and women’s leadership (e.g., Deeb 2006; Jad 2005; McLarney 2015; Salime 2011; Yafout 2015).



Yet because my touchstones are the rural communities where I have done ethnographic research and because the subjects of my ethnography are ordinary women living in Egypt who have had almost no contact with activists, my perspective on feminists is somewhat at odds with the feminists' self-images. Like all rights-based feminist projects that refer to the key international instrument of women's rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the arguments of the Islamic feminists align with liberal frameworks and forms of argument whose purchase and social base are not yet clear in the regions where they seek to work. This may be the only effective path open for change, but the circumstances must be noted. My ethnographic work among the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin over the past couple of decades has shown that there is internal debate about new restrictions on women's movements, wedding practices, and even mourning (Abu-Lughod 1993, 1997, 2013) because of the influence of conservative Gulf-influenced Bedouin families. But the alternative is not "freedom" or gender equality. In Upper Egypt, women counter and resist many aspects of gendered power, "traditional" and new, but usually by invoking their rights under Islam. Ethnographic vignettes show the impossibility of disentangling individual women's problems from the global economic policies that impoverish them, the national policies that render their families vulnerable, the class politics that deprive them of dignity, and the military interventions that undermine their security. I argued that feminist activists should take these into account.

The engaged fields of feminist scholarship and activism do not sit easily with anthropology because of the different social locations from which women's lives are being assessed and gender politics analyzed. The differences between the ways NGOs and development and empowerment projects "give voice" to the women they are helping and the way anthropologists represent subaltern women have been the subject of critical writing (e.g., Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006). Yet little ethnographic work has been conducted on women's-rights projects themselves or on the encounters between feminist activists or NGO workers and the less educated and the often nonactivist women for whom they advocate. I examine some of the organizations that feminists in and from the regions have founded, some of the causes they have taken up, and some of the languages of justice they have mobilized (Ferguson 2015; Salime 2015), following paths opened up by other anthropologists, in particular Sally Engle Merry (2006).

As an ethnographer who has worked in rural areas with women who are not urban professionals or well educated and who are mostly poor, I view feminist activists with a double consciousness: they are both respected peers and colleagues working in adjacent fields and, when seen

through the eyes of the less educated and privileged women I have come to know in Egyptian villages and desert areas, urban elites who do not share the desires and values of many of those on whose behalf they work. One can no more brush aside the internal class politics of feminist activism in these parts of the world as the imperial politics of a US State Department liberal global feminism that needs the figure of the oppressed Muslimwoman.

Articulating differences among forms of feminist critique is analytically and politically fraught. On the one hand, the tensions I experience bridging these worlds are not unfamiliar to anthropologists who have worked on human rights. Unlike critical political theorists who boldly link human rights and humanitarianism to colonialism or who interrogate the paradoxes of rights, legalism, or universalism that lie at the heart of liberalism, anthropologists proceed ethnographically, studying the workings of rights claims and practices on the ground. On the basis of ethnographic work, anthropologists have criticized the binds into which indigenous people are placed by the demands of liberal multiculturalism and recognition (Povinelli 2002; Simpson 2014) and the ways human rights work promotes social distinction, opens career paths, and depoliticizes suffering in a world of transnational governance and neoliberal governmentality (e.g., Allen 2013; Englund 2006; Jackson 2005). Although anthropologists have worked as legal advocates and rights activists, there is still debate about how appropriate this kind of direct engagement is (e.g., Cowan, Dembour, and Wilson 2001; Goodale 2009).

On the other hand, work on women's rights is burdened by the special history of colonial feminism, and it is particularly fractious in the parts of the world on which I work because of the twin pressures of religious revival and Islamophobia.<sup>8</sup> I used my ethnographic work in one Egyptian village to explore the incommensurability between everyday lives and the social imagination of rights, whether by outsiders, veterans of women's activism in the region, or the cosmopolitan Islamic feminists who are doing creative new work. Such organizations are conceived and run by educated urban women who, in this age of NGOization (Grewal and Bernal 2014; Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006; Shehabuddin 2008), spend their time studying, drafting position statements, applying for funds, and generally seeking legal reform and cultural change along tracks that might work. I was interested in how these organizations relate to those on whose behalf they work. Although my "thick" ethnography in the Egyptian village was unmatched by my ethnography of activists, I observed that even though activist projects mobilize genuinely concerned, smart, creative, committed, and often quite learned individuals, such rights work intersects with global institutional politics and class inequalities.

The public responses from some feminist scholar-activist colleagues in or of the Arab and wider Muslim

world have made me more conscious of the costs of uneven ethnographic efforts. Given the hostility and suspicion toward feminist projects and the dedication they require—aspects of such projects that I emphasized strongly in my analysis of the work of Palestinian women activists—it would have been useful to have produced more relational ethnographic work on projects of women’s development, empowerment, and rights. Ethnography of feminist activists, experts, and organizations would not necessarily have changed my analysis but would have grounded and nuanced my analysis of their contexts. The value of this approach is clear from some pioneering ethnographic work on feminists (Ali 2015; Hodgson 2002, 2003, 2011; Merry 2006; Sukarieh 2015; Sweis 2012; Walley, n.d.).

The hesitation in my support for authentic internal critics is a result of the combination of my fieldwork experiences with rural women in Egypt and my primary location in the United States, where discourses about Islam and the Middle East and the devastating policies they underwrite appear particularly dangerous. To confront simplistic or tendentious discourses about how Islam is to blame for women’s oppression, I opened *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* with a vignette of a woman friend in the Egyptian village where I had worked for 20 years. It was the eve of the revolution of January 25, 2011, though we didn’t know it. I described her shock when I explained that many people in the West blame Islam for women’s oppression. She insisted, to the contrary, that her problems were the fault of the government. She complained about the arbitrary powers of the security forces, a lack of concern for the poor, corruption, and gross inequalities. From my ethnographic work, I also shared stories about women who fought for their inheritances against their brothers, wielding the Qur’an and enjoying the full support of elders and religious authorities. I presented the troubling case of a young woman who was subjected to the violence of a husband, noting that he was condemned by the whole community as a bad Muslim.

When figures like Bawer or Chesler, who claim to care about women, lay abuses and suffering at the feet of the Qu’ran, a “poisonous” religion, or “honor cultures,” anthropologists like me, who work with more complex theories of culture and culture making and have intimate knowledge of diverse women’s lives, feel they must react. Just after my book was published, I came across new evidence of the insidious deployment of culturalist arguments: a media blitz for a documentary called *Honor Diaries*. Associated with Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s foundation, it was funded by the Clarion Fund, the same shadowy foundation that produced *Obsession*, a notorious Islamophobic film that was distributed free in hundreds of thousands of newspapers in swing states during a US presidential election to undermine Barack Obama by tarring him as a Muslim (Saylor 2014). Key players in this campaign are Israeli.

The motto of the campaign is “Culture is no excuse for abuse.” Yet it is *Honor Diaries* that is “blaming culture for bad behavior” (Volpp 2000). The film and campaign frame violence against women as happening only in Muslim or brown communities and as only being related to their culture—not to structural violence, global economic depredations, political contestations, or war, to name a few other obvious sources.<sup>9</sup> My book traces the way tropes of cultural harm have functioned to stigmatize religious communities, ethnic groups, and social classes, following a path blazed by feminist scholars like Uma Narayan (1997), who, for example, coined the phrase “death by culture” to describe the way dowry deaths in India are (mis)framed. Being forced into this reactive stance by the wider context of Islamophobia may have discouraged me from fully investigating or focusing on the conservative uses of Islam by political groups seeking to undermine women’s rights and lives, something apparent across the Middle East and elsewhere; these are precisely the targets of so much “internal” feminist criticism, and for good reason.

### Instrumentalizing ethnography?

In their review of the anthropology of human rights, Iris Jean-Klein and Annelise Riles argue that anthropologists should do ethnography in the world of rights since this is the only form of engagement the profession is “uniquely qualified to administer” (2005, 174–75). They suggest that our self-disciplined ethnography should be oriented to anthropological knowledge production. In contrast, Fassin makes a case for a critical and public ethnography that moves beyond the discipline, because the ethnographer plays a special role as a “presence both involved and detached, inscribed in the instant and over time, allowing precise descriptions and multiple perspectives, thus providing a distinctive understanding of the world that deserves to be shared” (2013, 642). This is especially relevant, he continues, in “understudied regions of society, but can be significant also in spaces saturated by consensual meanings: in the first case, it illuminates the unknown; in the second, it interrogates the obvious” (642). My ethnography of some Muslim women is a case of the latter: it interrogates the obvious in a space saturated by the consensual meanings that I have called common sense.<sup>10</sup>

Yet making ethnography more public and using it strategically to contribute to political debates intensifies the troubling ethical questions that anthropologists have always taken seriously. As someone with long-term relationships with specific communities in what could be construed as “the Muslim world,” I have worried about exposing particular people’s everyday and intimate lives to broader publics beyond the academy and for purposes beyond “anthropological knowledge production.” To challenge the public discourse about the Muslimwoman—and

by implication, the Muslimman, as Shenila Khoja-Moolji (2015) suggests—am I then instrumentalizing ethnography?

In the afterword to the 30th-anniversary edition of my first ethnography, *Veiled Sentiments* (Abu-Lughod 2016), I reflect on the responsibilities we have to those who have become part of our lives through fieldwork. I have known people in this small Bedouin community over 35 years. I have watched children grow up and marry, lost beloved friends to illness and death, and become over time more uncertain about anthropology's higher purpose. In the early 1990s, I had written a second ethnography of this community of Awlad 'Ali Bedouins, *Writing Women's Worlds* (Abu-Lughod 1993), because I felt that *Veiled Sentiments* had failed to capture the spirited and textured ways women lived, argued, and thought in this community. I used intimate stories of the everyday to undermine generalizations about such classic themes for the region as systems of kinship and the honor code. I placed people and their stories in particular circumstances. This "ethnography of the particular," as I called it, was meant to disrupt presumptions of the homogeneity of cultures and to confront commonplaces of both anthropology and feminist studies.

I had misgivings about this project at the time.<sup>11</sup> I likened my ethnographic storytelling to candid photographs; I knew that my Bedouin friends preferred formal posed portraits. Later, when *Veiled Sentiments* was translated to Arabic (Abu-Lughod 1995), something I eagerly welcomed, I worried that the theoretical arguments about the complexity of culture and moral systems might be lost on those unfamiliar with the ways anthropologists write. The stories of love, betrayal, and loss that I had bent to this higher purpose of social and cultural analysis and to the task of "humanizing" an Arab community to outsiders (something they would be surprised to learn was needed) might just seem indiscreet. The disclosures were for me at least partially redeemed by the justice I had done to the proud ways my friends lived. I attempted to show the richness, intensity, and complexity of their social and imaginative worlds. I recorded for posterity poetic traditions that were being lost. The fact that so many colleagues continue to teach the ethnographies suggests that they do offer something important. I like to think that these ethnographies make it possible for readers to have at least a few Muslim women populating their imaginations when they run across the manufactured stereotypes of the Muslimwoman.

Questions about the ethics of revealing people's lives to the public are even more pertinent for the more confrontational and readable *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Anthropologists' methods produce a unique kind of knowledge and produce knowledge in a unique way. What happens when this knowledge is opened to the scrutiny of the ignorant and the hostile, not just the serious or curious? Anthropologists who work with women and on gender

politics in the Middle East and the Muslim world would like to share Fassin's measured confidence that "a conversation between the ethnographer and his or her publics generates a circulation of knowledge, reflection, and action likely to contribute to a transformation of the way the world is represented and experienced" (2013, 628). Yet we feel exhausted, overwhelmed by the hold of the cultural common sense and daunted by the structures that keep it in place, from well-meaning liberalism to Orientalism, from well-funded Islamophobia and the associated terror-expertise industry to US and Israeli geopolitical interests and media collusion. Those of us who work in these regions sometimes resent the responsibility we feel to always use what we have learned to speak back to negative or ignorant views held by Western publics, including feminists, or even local elites who sometimes share their views about the cultural backwardness or "excessive" religiosity of less privileged compatriots. This limits our foci and constrains what we can say.

Fassin concludes his defense of public ethnography by noting that "we owe in priority those with whom we worked and those primarily concerned by the issues on which we conduct our work" (2013, 640). But how does making public our ethnography repay those with whom we have worked? Anthropologists have always worried about the consequences of disclosing what we have learned as ethnographers about communities we have come to care about. We now live in a world where borders are regularly breached with social media and travel, where we cannot control who will read or see or hear what we have made public, where what we have presented in good faith may be redeployed in the service of different projects, and where those who have trusted us enough to let us into their lives might be made vulnerable or somehow compromised by what we reveal.

In this context, Audra Simpson's (2014, 95–115) advocacy of "ethnographic refusal" is compelling. Writing about the Mohawk community of which she is a part, Simpson developed this stance in light of the history of anthropology's complicity in undermining the sovereignty of the native peoples who were, after all, its original objects of study. She advocates "ethnographic refusal" as a protective move against the ongoing dispossessions of settler states that use their knowledge about native communities to discipline or undermine them. Similar dilemmas arise when we become aware of how significant the Muslimwoman is to the geopolitics of empire, the war on terror, and, increasingly, the xenophobic nationalist politics around immigrants and refugees in Europe (Ticktin 2011).

How can we decide whether it is "public ethnography" or "ethnographic refusal" that would best repay the debts we incur to those who have shared their lives with us? This must be answered case by case. The conversation in which I seek to intervene with my ethnography of women and gender is not one that the women about whom I am

writing are directly concerned. They would be surprised to discover how they are represented. But their lives and possibilities are deeply affected by the events and formations to which representations of the Muslimwoman are connected as product, justification, or affective ground for intervention. Given this context, if ethnography can make available alternative accounts of lives and communities that can then authorize and give substance to those forces seeking to challenge the standard views and policies, it is valuable. In the case of the Muslimwoman, ethnographies by feminist anthropologists have indeed populated the public imagination with women who disrupt the common sense manufactured for purposes that contribute to harming these women and their communities. For example, ethnographies such as Saba Mahmood's (2004) and Sherine Hafez's (2011) on women in the Islamic revival in Egypt, Lara Deeb's (2006) on Shi'ia Muslim women associated with Hizbullah in Lebanon, and Nadia Guessous's (n.d.) on the aversions of secular Moroccan feminists to the veil—to name just a few on the Arab world—encourage skepticism about taken-for-granted values of liberation or secularism.

Given the deadly repetitions of the public discourses on the Muslimwoman and the kinds of cross-publics that I discovered coalescing around my book, the alternatives we can offer are crucial. If our ethnographies can generate debate and lead to serious conversation about life-and-death political issues, this may change attitudes and eventually policy. The article (Abu-Lughod 2002) that led to my book is routinely one of the “most downloaded” articles from *American Anthropologist*. It rivals Horace Miner's (1956) satirical classic “Body Ritual among the Nacirema” assigned by teachers to force students to question their smug assumptions about who is a “primitive Other.” Like the multiple reprints and translations in anthropology and women's studies textbooks and readers, the downloads suggest that my counterhegemonic arguments resonate with colleagues. This work articulates, with ethnographic support, views that thoughtful people already have developed about the dangerous ways that representations of Muslim women are deployed politically.

This kind of work is therefore useful for opening conversations in the classroom and beyond. The effects of such conversations are not easy to measure. Some will be led to explore other ethnographic work on women and gender politics in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and in immigrant communities in Europe, Australia, and North America. Some will be led to inform themselves better about interconnected global histories, rejecting the binary divisions between East and West. Some will reexamine assumptions and prejudices. At the least, such ethnographic work changes the parameters of public discourse.<sup>12</sup> My hope is that this will in turn affect global politics. In that case, public ethnography could be instrumental in repaying some of our debts to those with whom we have worked.

## Notes

*Acknowledgments.* I am grateful for the incisive comments of three anonymous reviewers and *AE*'s editor, Niko Besnier. They suggested excellent ways to strengthen this essay. I also have benefited from audience questions and suggestions at the universities, including my own, where I presented earlier versions. I am especially grateful for the invitation to deliver the 2014 Maryse and Ramzy Mikhail Memorial Lecture at the University of Toledo, where I first began to think about these issues.

1. For the video interview, see John Williams, “The Read Aloud: Video of Lila Abu-Lughod,” *New York Times* website, December 23, 2013, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/23/the-read-around-video-of-lila-abu-lughod/?r=0Links>.

For the book review, see Tyler Cowen, “A One-Sentence Book Review,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 23, 2014, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/23/magazine/23-one-page-magazine.html?r=1>.

2. “About MMW,” *Muslimah Media Watch*, accessed July 20, 2016, <http://www.muslimahmediawatch.org/about-2/>.

3. “Fjordman” made his identity public after the shootings (Bangstad 2014, 80).

4. The comments appeared on Bawer's (2014) review but have been removed as of July 23, 2016.

5. Nussbaum explicitly links it to the type of anti-Semitism represented in an earlier era and associated with *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The connections between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism have been explored by anthropologists, including Ruth Mandel (2008) and Katherine Ewing (2008), and by others, including those analyzing cartoons (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008).

6. Website of the David Horowitz Freedom Center, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://www.horowitzfreedomcenter.org>.

7. Chesler's accusations on a right-wing news blog the following year expand on these ideas about anti-Israel feeling. In an article (Chesler 2014) about the 2014 National Women's Studies Association Conference, where Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions were to be discussed, she charges activists with “hijacking feminism to attack Israel” and laments that this was “only the latest, among many other examples, of the way in which Women's Studies—an idea which I pioneered so long ago—has been Stalinized and Palestinianized.”

8. Juliane Hammer argues that “a thorough analysis of gendered Islamophobia needs to take into consideration the problem of delineating the boundaries of what is identified as Islamophobia as opposed to critical feminist discourse, secular critique, and intra-Muslim reform” (2013, 110).

9. The sensationalism is patent from the graphic photos that accompany their e-mails to the promotional announcements with headings like “STATUS UPDATE: MURDERED,” “Female Genital Mutilation: In America?,” “What If You Were Forced to Marry?,” and “Don't Let ‘Intersectionality’ Stop You from Being a Feminist.”

10. It is telling that, according to Deeb and Winegar (2012, 542), about 40 percent of recent work in the anthropology of the Arab world focuses on gender. The statistic is positive in indicating that anthropologists continue to struggle against stereotypes with careful ethnographic work and that there is increasing acceptance of feminist anthropology in the discipline. The negative interpretation is that anthropologists may be inadvertently contributing to the impression of a unique pathology around gender and sexuality in the region. My own earlier review essay had labeled the strong focus on women as “harem theory” (Abu-Lughod 1989); since then, work has expanded the focus to gender and includes ethnographic work on masculinities and sexuality.



11. My misgivings are different from those expressed by Webb Keane (2003) about that project (Abu-Lughod 1991). Despite generously placing my arguments about "ethnography of the particular" in a genealogy that includes Franz Boas and Clifford Geertz, he missed the points I later made in the introduction to my book about the feminist critiques of the power (some say masculine) of using abstract theoretical language and about my own orientation toward confronting problems of hostile representations of distant communities, for which "ethnography of the particular" and "writing against culture" were tactical. He misrepresents my focus on particular individuals as reflecting ontology and arising from my simple valorization of the individual and agency when again I intended these as tactics to confront powerful forms of generalization about communities in the Middle East.

12. Mayssoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock (2013) forcefully question the ethics of researching vulnerable communities. They argue that the "overresearched" Palestinians who live in the conveniently located refugee camp of Shatila feel they get no direct benefit from the researchers keen to give voice to Palestinians. But when a *Guardian* columnist (Bunting 2016), again, in the United Kingdom, discusses colonial feminism in the context of David Cameron's announcement of a program to teach English to Muslim women in Britain (as antiradicalization and under threat of deportation) and suggests that *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* should be required reading for the then British prime minister, we can see how public ethnography might be useful for those advocating changing attitudes and even policies.

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