Reading and Teaching Against the Grain of Gendered Orientalism in Film

by

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**Abstract**

The clash of civilizations discourse, (re)articulated by Samuel Huntington in 1993 and widely accepted as true, is yet another echo in a long history of the Orientalist's (Said, 1979) clarion call for the disciplining of Arab and/or Muslim subjects, who are often considered to embody values antithetical to Western civilization. Indeed, this Orientalist antipathy continues to find its way into twenty-first-century representational practices and public policies, including television media, social media, print media, and popular cultural art forms such as film (Shaheen, 1994, 2000, 2003, 2008). These media participate in the production and reproduction of problematic tropes and stereotypes that, whether intended or not, contribute to public misunderstandings of, and suspicions about, Arabs and/or Muslims. These misunderstandings also find their way into Canadian public policy and law, such as Bill S-7 (Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act) and *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). This codification of Orientalist stereotypes contributes to their being taken for granted as truth, and their circulation in public and artistic discourse through various media and by a range of political, journalistic, and artistic figures.

This research deepens and extends emerging examinations and critiques of Orientalism by focusing on the way gender is used to garner support for ongoing Orientalist practices. The project is theoretically located at the nexus of feminist, intersectional, Orientalist, postcolonial, and anti-colonial scholarship, and it addresses issues of patriarchy, Orientalism, gender, racism, colonialism, imperialism, and their presence within popular culture, and more specifically, in Hollywood films.

Drawing upon Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* and Jack Shaheen's (1994, 2000, 2001, 2008) many studies of the depictions of Arabs (and Muslims) in Hollywood film, I pick up the thread of inquiry and draw upon postcolonial feminism and Jacques Lacan's notion of the gaze to explore the gendered nature of Orientalism in Hollywood film and its relationship to contemporary political contexts. Using a case study approach, I engage in a deep reading of the film *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow et al., 2013). This reading reveals the presence of a nested set of binaries that, taken together, produce a gendering of Orientalism in service to Western exceptionalism, white supremacy, phallocentrism, and femonationalism. The various binary orderings of subjects used in the film constitute the production of West and East as the deadly (and inevitable) antithesis of one another gives rise to not only ideological polarizations but to the drafting of subjects into impossible positions of purity and abjection.

The research yields a number of pedagogical considerations and interventions to read and teach against the grain of gendered Orientalist representations. The first is an analytic insistence on intersectional feminism to preclude defaulting to liberal or nationalist feminisms. The second is a test modeled on the Bechdel test for gender equity. The Hamdon test looks for the presence (and absence) of characters and characterizations in film that act as *objet petit a*, thereby disrupting the Symbolic (taken for granted norms and normativities) and troubling the Imaginary (the comfort of being in alignment with the Symbolic). The third advocates for feminist writers, scholars, and artists in post-secondary curricula, with a particular focus on those whose subject positions include that of Arab and/or Muslim (of all genders and sexualities). The fourth is re-remembrance through critical autobiography. Remembering and (re)engaging with memory through critical autobiography (Ahmed, 1999) allows for both re-authoring and de-authorizing problematic claims. The last intervention is a pedagogy of affirmation – the production and

proliferation of aesthetic works whose very presence is antithetical to Orientalism, gendered and otherwise.

## Preface

Portions of Chapter 6 were excerpted from a chapter titled "Lessons on Dismantling the Master's House: An Adult Educator's Reflections on Intersectional Feminism," of which I was the sole author. This chapter was published in D. Wallin & J. Wallace, eds. (2018), *Transforming Conversations: Feminism and Education in Canada since 1970*. I gratefully acknowledge McGill-Queen's University Press for granting permission for its use in the preparation of this dissertation.

My dissertation is a critical pedagogical research project wherein I examine the nature of gendered Orientalism and its presence within some liberal feminisms and as it manifests in Hollywood. I designed this research project to develop and test an analytic frame that would enable me to read popular cultural forms to discern the presence of gendered Orientalism. To be clear, this is not a study of film, but research into one way of reading film, for the purpose of highlighting the presence of gendered Orientalism. I engaged with the film, as I would a literary text, using screen shots from the films as one would use quotes from a literary work to illustrate the theoretical argumentation and analysis I forward in my dissertation.

In a dissertation of approximately 240 pages, I use 58 screenshots from *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow et al., 2012), each one I (generously) approximate to be about 0.25 seconds long, which means I use material that comprises less than a minute of a film that is 2 hours and 37 minutes in length, or about 1/500th of the film. This is not a commercial research project, but will be available through library information systems, online, in accordance with the University of Alberta Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Guidelines. The material from the film has been incorporated under the fair dealing provisions of the Copyright Act, and each such screenshot has been properly cited in accordance with good scholarly practice.

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my children, Alia Hamdon O'Brien and Geoffrey Hamdon O'Brien, and to my mother Faye Zakeah Hamdon and the memory of my late father, Sidney Shakeeb Hamdon. This dissertation stands as a tribute to the many hours of lively and thought-provoking discussions held around various dining tables and during which I learned the fine art of thoughtful argumentation.

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To my lively, lovely, and loving Lebanese-Canadian-Muslim family: your very existence constitutes a refutation of Orientalism, gendered and otherwise. Thank you, my beloved Mom and Dad, for raising me to follow my quirky dreams. And I have the best brothers, sisters, and in-laws ever: Susan, Lorrine, Sid, Brad, Neil, Lesley, Garth, and Donna: no one makes me laugh like my siblings – you are always a tonic. I want to thank my wonderful nieces and nephews, for keeping me on my toes and up-to-date.

Finally, I wish to express gratitude, love, and admiration for my two children: Alia Hamdon O'Brien and Geoffrey Hamdon O'Brien. Your gorgeous souls inspire me and your contrapuntal brilliance and heartfulness - musical, intellectual, and spiritual - has enriched my life beyond measure. I am grateful more than these words can express, that we are kin.

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# Chapter 1

## Roots of the Research

### Remembrance #1: Narrating Bodies on Borderlands

*(Workshop recitation, Toronto, Canada circa 2000)*

*To live in the borderlands you:*

*are neither* hispana india negra española

ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, *half-breed*

*caught in the crossfire between camps…*

*To live in the Borderlands means knowing*

*that the* india *in you, betrayed for 500 years,*

*is no longer speaking to you,…*

*In the Borderlands*

*you are the battleground*

*where enemies are kin to each other;*

*you are at home, a stranger,…*

*To survive the Borderlands*

*you must live* sin fronteras

*be a crossroads.* (Anzaldúa, 2012, pp. 216–217)

*Borderlands:* a moving narration of the body as both battleground and source of strength; a place both mapped over by others' perceptions, and thus somehow bound but also porous, fluid, and without borders.

Borderlands: a luxuriant and wild terrain inhabited by Chicana poets, seers, scholars, activists. Borderlands: a place where waves of new feminisms crash into and over the earlier

waves. In the borderlands, I found feminists who provided a new way to decipher the past, my past.

**Remembrance #2: Lessons in Double Consciousness**

*I did not know I was different until I started public school at the age of six. It was early in the fall, and I was still feeling very quiet and shy in my class. We were reading our social studies textbook and while I have no recollection of the written text, the picture to which our teacher drew our attention is etched in my memory. It was a photograph of (ostensibly) an Arab/Muslim man. He was perched upon a camel, he was missing several teeth, and those he had were stained and broken. He was grinning, but the effect was not of an affable, good-natured man, but rather of a 'simpleton.' His clothes appeared dirty and torn. My teacher, a sweet and very young woman, was saying something about his race and religion. Something began to dawn on me – this man and I shared an identity.*

*I knew I was an Arab and I knew I was a Muslim. So, I guessed that meant my dad and uncles and grandfathers were too. But I could not reconcile the picture in the book with my own experience of Arab/Muslim men. I had never really thought about what 'being those things' meant. They just were.*

*I don't know why, but I felt confused and slightly ashamed and was in deep in reverie when my teacher's voice pierced my thoughts. She cried out, 'Wait class, Evie is a Mohammedan; she can tell us all about it!' She seemed so pleased – for me, for herself and for the class.*

*My cheeks burned hot. I think I mumbled something like, 'I really don't know anything about it.' And in fact, I did not know anything about being a Mohammedan (which is an Orientalist and erroneous name for the adherents to Islam or Muslims). I didn't know anything*

*about 'that man's' life. And, I did not know how to articulate my beingness as if it were an artifact.*

In that moment, looking upon that picture – which drew upon the authority of the school, the teacher, and the silent invisible voice of scientific reason – my own understanding of what it meant to be an 'Arab' or a 'Muslim' or 'me' was ruptured. For the first time, I realized that others saw me in a way that I could not recognize. It was, to borrow from Gloria Anzaldúa (2012), as if the Canada in me betrayed me. I believe that what I experienced, for the first, but not the last, time was what both Frantz Fanon (1952) and W.E.B. Du Bois (2018/1903) refer to as double consciousness, which refers to the doubleness of sensing oneself, through one's own sense perceptions, while simultaneously surveilling oneself via the perceptual field of people racialized as white. Double consciousness allows the Other (those racialized as non-white, for example) to "have a profound understanding of the cultural frameworks and the institutional barriers that Whites employ to oppress them" (Blau & Brown, 2001, p. 221, cited in Akom, 2008, p. 250).

In that grade one classroom, I was seeing myself and my family through the eyes of my classmates, my teachers, and the unseen and unknown authorities who wrote that social studies textbook. Indeed, I felt as if some struggle were taking place in and on my six-year-old body. In that classroom, and on that day, I began the journey of becoming a stranger in my home. A journey that that took me to Lebanon in 1976, where I hoped I would find my home, my place.

For years I had yearned to go to 'the land' or *al-Balad*[1] to find my roots to be at home and not a stranger. That is, I hoped to be in a place where I looked like everyone else, where my

[1] The literal translation of *al-Balad* is "the country," which is how every Lebanese person I knew as a child referred to Lebanon. "I miss the *balad*." "Is he going the *balad* this year?" "The air is so beautiful in the *balad*."

skin and nose and hair would not, did not, trigger the inevitable question: Where are you from? However, once in Lebanon, I was constantly identified as foreign – even before my crude Arabic could betray me. People said I looked *Umercain* (Arabic for American – which is a kind of shorthand for Western). My yearning for a place to fit went unmet, and I returned home with a greater sense of dislocation. I was neither of here (Canada) nor of there (Al-Balad). *At a crossroads*, seemingly in perpetuity.

In the ensuing years since I first heard Anzaldúa's poem, I have sought the wisdom of scholars, activists, and feminists who have thought carefully about these things. I'm thinking of Edward Said (1979), Himani Bannerji (1993, 2000), Sherene Razack (2001, 2004, 2005a), bell hooks (1981, 2000), Judith Butler (1999), and Patti Lather (2002); I'm thinking about Stuart Hall (1990, 1993, 1996, 1997a, 1997b), and Homi K. Bhabha (1994, 1996); I'm thinking about Paul Gilroy (2004), Gloria Anzaldúa (2002, 2012), Chandra T. Mohanty (2003), Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), and Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998). They have traced and unlaced the tangled discourses, images, and sounds that call forth and set out conditions that constrain those whose subjectivities do not conform to dominant norms. They have refused any easy answer to these things called identity, difference, and belonging and have posed important questions about the ways in which our subject positions have the potential to both trap and liberate.

The more I have read and reflected upon the notion of identity and difference and tried to leverage them to teach against these grains (Simon, 1992; Ng, 1995) of racism and sexism and colonialism, the more dissatisfied I have felt with the theoretical offerings I have encountered. Even theories that speak of hybridity, fluidity, performativity, even the best of the postcolonial approaches, feel insufficient. There always seems to be a gravitational pull to essentialize, a desire for marginalized bodies and communities to seek safety and belonging in commonality.

To locate an *us* in the us/them binary, establishes conditions of bounded-ness (bound together) and boundaries (keeping others out) and thus a kind of self-essentializing. The trap is that once again difference remains a problem to be (re)solved, a lack to overcome, a problematic excess. The hybrid/mestiza/o working the borders is still, in some way, negotiating an order or a structure which, although seemingly unshakable, might perhaps be transgressed in the neither/nor of the interstitial (Bhabha, 1994, Fenkl in Kroll, 2010). The interstitial according to Bhabha is where and how "newness enters the world" (p. 303), a newness that has the potential to subvert binaries.

**Remembrance #3: Teaching Against the Grain**

*My colleague and I are designing an experiential learning activity (for adult learners in our (Re)Doing Difference workshop) the purpose of which is to elicit the presence and sources of stereotypes and assumptions. We structure the activity so that learners do not have to take ownership of these ideas but instead they are asked to identify and describe what they hear from family members, see on and in the media, at work, and at school. We include the category Muslim man in our first attempt at using this activity. The descriptors are depressingly predictable. Variations on violent, controlling, and oppressing women appear over and over. Not one positive descriptor interrupts this narration. In the activity debrief we ask the participants two questions. First, do you know many or any Muslim or Arab men? The answer more often than not is 'no'. We then ask them to reflect upon where these ideas about Arab/Muslim men might originate. A barrage of answers emerges: the movies, newspapers, radio call-in shows, books, and magazines. A lengthy discussion ensues about the prevalence of images that paint a seemingly accurate and uniform picture of Arab culture and the religion of Islam. We continue to use this activity adding the categories Muslim woman, and Arab men and women into the mix.*

*And the results are always the same: at the conclusion of these discussions, a residue of antipathy remains, the flip-charted depictions of the abject Arab/Muslim are not easily dislodged. Even in the presence of two bodies (my own and that of my colleague, who is also Muslim) – bodies that contradict their understanding of what it means to be Arab and/or Muslim – their belief in what the media and popular culture tell them remains intact. The media representations they arrived with remain more real than my own six decades of lived experiences.*

Over the years, I have endeavoured to teach against the grain (Simon, 1992; Ng, 1995) of these media reproduced discourses. Inspired by Roxana Ng and other critical pedagogues, I use analytic and pedagogical tools to enable students to make connections between identity differences, power, and privilege. However, this approach and these strategies have proven relatively ineffective in disturbing problematic discourses and stereotypes relating to Arabs and Muslims – of all genders. Perceptions stubbornly persist: to be Muslim, to be Arab is to be dangerously Other(ed). These pedagogical roadblocks, coupled with experiences with liberal feminists and their writing, have led me to this study and the always present question of how to disrupt, challenge, and undo the causes and effects of the interlocking relations of oppressive power structures and their vested histories.

In this chapter, I present personal, socio-political, and pedagogical reasons for undertaking this study. In addition, I clarify some terminology, map out the socio-political, educational, and research landscapes to illuminate the presence of this antipathy towards Arabs/Muslims in Canada. I also discuss the dearth of research on anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment in Hollywood film, and notably that absence of any sustained and rigorous gendered analysis. Finally, I present the research questions that guide my study.

Today, because the face of Canada has changed since I sat in that first-grade classroom, I pass as something not-quite-white but probably not Arab or Muslim (mostly because the assumption is I would be in hijab if I were Muslim); still, I feel the effects of gendered Orientalism all the time. Comments about the oppressive nature of Arab/Muslim culture and dangerous and/or untrustworthy Arab/Muslim men still sting and shock, even after all these years. Not a day goes by when the relentless stream of Islamophobia emanating from government, media, and social institutions, and in personal contexts does not weigh upon me. And my sisters who wear hijab are often the lightning rod for this fear. This combination of my own lived experience of embodying the Arab/Muslim Other, and my reading of theory and research into issues in identity, difference, and social justice, have brought me to this study. My vision for this research is to make theory work for the complexities of identity, for the complexities of socio-political contexts, and especially for educators and who must navigate spaces in which we are teaching and learning about the social and political effects of difference.

## Islamophobia or Orientalism?

Over the past couple of decades, and certainly since 9/11, the term *Islamophobia* has become ubiquitous and is used to reference social, political, and individual expressions that embody a general and unreasonable antipathy towards Muslims. Islamophobia is defined as fear or hatred of Muslims or Islam, and certainly both sentiments are present in these expressions of antipathy. However, I confess that I am wary and weary of this term for two reasons. First, it focuses our attention excessively on the Muslim Other, fixating on the problematic identity group rather than on ontological and epistemic frameworks that insist on ranking and sorting human beings into hierarchies of goodness and civilizational capacity. Second, it leverages fear as the pivotal response, which has the effect of bolstering racist discourses of the fearsome nature

of Muslims and/or Arabs. In using the term *Islamophobia*, somehow the fearsome nature of the Muslim is inadvertently called into being. My critique of the term *Islamophobia* is based on the arguments of those who challenge the usefulness of the term *homophobia* (Herek, 2004; Dermer et al., 2010). These criticisms highlight how the term *homophobia* fails to signal the presence and the effects of systems of oppression, and overly focuses on individual beliefs and behaviours. For example, Gregory Herek's (2004) article on the origins and history of the term *homophobia*, points out that homophobia fails to signal the presence of systems of oppression. He offers an argument for the use of alternative terms (for example *heterosexism*) that would point to the system of oppression at the root of the maltreatment of members of the LGBTQ2++ community. This critique is echoed by Dermer et al. (2010) who call for terminology that is more accurately descriptive of the complex set of relations involved in individually and socially oppressive practices. These critiques are useful to an anti-oppressive framework (whether analytic or educational), which by definition is focused on addressing systems of oppression, rather than individual behaviours.

Since I am more concerned with developing a thoughtful engagement with oppressive discourses and systems (such as imperialism and white supremacy) and their effects on the lived experiences of human beings, the term *Orientalism* is more accurate and appropriate, and so I have chosen to employ it to discuss the various cultural, social, and political phenomena that reproduce and reflect antipathy towards those who are perceived to embody the Oriental Other. That is not to say that I will not use the term *Islamophobia*, nor reference others' use of it. I wish to emphasize that I regard Islamophobia one outcome of Orientalist discourse, rather than a wholly new phenomenon.

Canada has a long history of developing and using policies and practices to determine the types of identity differences that constitute a threat to the so-called public good and the development of shared national values and identities. Settlement and governance policies relating to Indigenous peoples, immigration laws pertaining to people of African descent, Chinese nationals, the internment of Japanese, German, and Ukrainian Canadians during World War II are just a few examples of how public policy and practice has been used to privilege some bodies over others. These kinds of policies have increasingly been used to isolate and demonize Muslims and by default Arabs. Within certain spheres (both public and private) cultural practices ascribed to Arabs/Muslims have been portrayed as antithetical to the Canadian way of life (Cheadle, 2006; Hamilton, 2007; Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Three examples of this are the Hérouxville debate (Hamilton, 2007); *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*, the new immigrant guidebook issued by the Government of Canada in 2012; and the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act (Bill S-7), which passed into law in 2015. These examples reflect a narrative within Canada that suggests that Arabs/Muslims are civilizationally incompatible with Western norms and standards.

In 2007, the town of Hérouxville, Quebec, issued a code of conduct for its citizens. The code garnered wide attention (both positive and negative) because it explicitly banned the covering of faces, the stoning of women, and female genital cutting. Due to the nature of these prohibitions, it was widely assumed that they referenced so-called Muslim practices (Ahadi, 2009). In his paper describing this and similar calls for bans on veiling, Daniel Ahadi refers to the code as "a re-articulation of the centuries-old misinterpretations and misrepresentations of the Muslim religion, which have carried over to the 'postcolonial' era" (p. 240).

The Government of Canada's 2012 edition of the handbook for Canadian immigrants took a similar tack, banning certain practices for Canadian immigrants and by extension making sweeping inferences and subtly (or not so subtly) articulating the Occident/Orient binary. The following passage in the immigration handbook buttresses the "clash of civilization" discourse (Huntington, 1993) while masquerading as concern for the rights and well-being of Muslim women:

> In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, "honour killings," female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 9)

Bill S-7, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, introduced by then Immigration Minister Chris Alexander, constitutes legislative endorsement for the informal narrative found in the immigration handbook. While many rose in Parliament to speak against the bill citing their own and community members' concerns for the way in which the bill seems to target certain communities, Bill S-7 was passed into law, with various amendments, in 2015.

The original and long title for the proposed legislation was An Act to Amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to Make Consequential Amendments to other Acts – namely, those acts that were designed to protect girls from underage marriage. However, the Conservative Party and the proposing member chose to foreground and embed the short title of the bill, Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act. This shift constitutes a discursive linkage between a particular culture or set of cultural practices and misogyny. The culture alluded to in this bill appears to pose threats so serious that they require special legislation to curtail them.

These regulatory practices have more to do with cultural essentialism (and the problematic and racist stereotypes it engenders) than with the dismantling of phallocentric logics or patriarchy and misogynistic and masculinist practices. They do more to promote fear of the cultural Other than to emancipate women. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (2015), New Democratic Party Member from Pierrfonds-Dollard, Quebec, rose in the House of Commons to offer a similar critique: "having the words 'barbaric' and 'cultural' in the same title is offensive to some people because they feel as though their entire culture is being described as barbaric." One of the bill's staunch supporters was Costas Menegakis (then MP for Richmond, BC). Ironically, Mr. Menegakis was also on record as being "Pro-life, pro-family,"[2] which seems to contradict his passion for supporting the rights of Muslim women. This contradiction lends credibility to my own and others' observations that claims to support women's rights are thinly veiled expressions of Orientalism, which have a gendered component.

In 2017, in an attempt to draw the country's attention to the problematics of Orientalist discourses, a private member's motion was tabled in the House of Commons calling for the study and condemnation of Islamophobia and other religion-based hate speech. The motion, M-103, sought to bring attention to increased Islamophobia, called for efforts to address it through the collection of data on hate and related incidents, and aimed to develop public educational approaches to mitigating misconceptions about Arabs/Muslims in Canada. M-103 met with a significant degree of public repudiation, including an opinion piece by Rex Murphy in the *National Post*. Murphy skillfully (by that I mean under the guise of concern for the well-being of Canada) hints that this motion gives aid and comfort to Muslim terrorists and their sympathizers.

[2] Compare Candidates, Campaign Life Coalition, n.d., Retrieved from http://www.campaignlifecoalition.com/index.php?p=Federal_Candidate_Evaluations,View&prov=ON&riding=1114

He writes, “There is also concern that the motion will, in some manner, chill valid criticism of Islamist terror, or will not make allowance for legitimate criticism or analysis of Islam” (Murphy, 2017). Murphy was not alone in his critique; there were protests across Canada. One organization called the Canadian Coalition of Concerned Citizens claimed that M-103 is “a gateway drug for the Muslim Brotherhood...Next, it becomes a bill, then it becomes a law and then we’re a communist country” (Beeston, 2017). And the *Montreal Gazette* printed an opinion piece by a Montreal physician called “Canadians Should Oppose the Anti-Islamophobia Motion, M-103,” in which the author characterizes the bill as a slippery slope towards censorship of legitimate critique of Islamic extremists and “depraved terrorist armies, who cite a unifying explanation for their actions in Islamic texts and doctrine, occupy large swaths of entire nations” (Emil, 2017). The language used in these critiques of M-103 faithfully reproduces the clash of civilizations discourse, drawing a straight line between ensuring the human rights of Arabs and Muslims to the conversion of Canada to an Islamic state. The Hérouxville case, the revised immigrant handbook, Bill S-7, and the response to M-103, reference antipathy towards Islam and Muslims. This hostility appears to derive from a particular kind of violence inherent in Islam and therefore in those who identify with or practice the religion of Islam. These perceptions and feelings about Muslims and Islam (which are often confused with being Arab, or vice versa) often include well-worn and tired Orientalist tropes relating to the always already oppressed Arab/Muslim women and girls who suffer at the hands of brutish Arab/Muslim men (including frequent references to the pedophilic tendencies of the Prophet Muhammad). Indeed, the passage I have quoted from the immigration handbook (as well as the Hérouxville code) suggests that, according to some Canadians and some Canadian political parties, certain identities and certain

categories of people are inherently and fundamentally unfit for Canadian citizenship unless they are deculturalized (Razack, 2004).

These are but a few examples of the way in which Orientalism continues to be codified into Canadian policies. They are illustrative of tacit and explicit calls for the disciplining of unruly Muslims; those whose behaviour and practices are considered endemic to Islamic/Arab culture and antithetical to Western values. Jasmine Zine's (2012) *Islam in the Hinterlands: Muslim Cultural Policies in Canada* discusses the connections between Canadian public policy, informal national practices, and Canadian public opinion as it relates to Muslims in Canada. Of particular note is the way in which the construction of the Muslim Other (especially since 9/11), through various discourses and media, have had an effect not only on individual Canadian's perceptions of Muslims but also on public policies and practices, and public pressure to modify policies and practices to police Muslims in Canada.

One unspoken solution to the problem of the so-called anti-Western Muslim in Canada is the development of implicit criteria by which it can determine who is a 'good' Muslim and who is a 'bad' Muslim (for example, through modes of dress). These determinations are not only seen as important in the context of protecting public and political spaces, but also inform interpersonal relations amongst inhabitants of Canada: they instruct Canadians who they should fear and who they should subject to everyday surveillance and discipline.

In the following sections, I turn my attention to delineating the purpose and contours of the study, including a brief review of existing research and discussion of the value of and

approach to studying film as it relates to representations of Arab and/or Muslim women (A/M women).[3]

## Research on Representations of Arab/Muslim Women in Film

In this section I review the kind of research that is available relating to representations of A/M women in film, not so much for its relevance (although some is tangentially related), but rather to illustrate the gaps in research. While there is some English language research related to news media images of Arab/Muslim women (Harb & Bessaiso, 2006; Ismael & Measor, 2003; Khabiani & Williamson, 2008; Rantanen, 2005; Shaheen, 2003), there is scant research on representations of Arab/Muslim women in Hollywood film. Given this absence, I have expanded the parameters of this section to include European films. I have delimited this search to those studies that draw upon feminist theory to analyze these representations.

Three significant studies examine American film (there was no similar research on Canadian film) as it relates to Arabs and Muslims. Jack Shaheen (2001) and Tung Yin (2010) catalogue films that have featured harmful Arab and Muslim stereotypes and tropes in Hollywood films. Media studies scholar Shaheen's (1994, 2000, 2001, 2003) work on popular cultural portrayals of Arabs/Muslims is the most comprehensive. He identifies tropes and draws connections between prevalent stereotypes in films and the political and ideological climate within which the films were made. Shaheen (2003) concludes that "Hollywood went out of its way to turn Arab Muslims – Egyptians, Palestinians and other dark-complexioned baddies from

[3] I use *A/M women* to illustrate how these complex subjectivities and signifiers are both conflated and used carelessly and reductively.

Lebanon to Libya, from Syria to the Sudan – into the most maligned group in cinematic history" (p. 77).

Yin's work is strikingly similar, which helps to corroborate Shaheen's findings. However, neither Shaheen nor Yin offer a gendered analysis of these representations. That is, neither utilizes feminist theory to explore the very particular ways in which gender is mobilized to buttress Orientalism or sexism in these films. In contrast to Shaheen's and Yin's work, historian Daniel Mandel (2001), in his essay "Muslims on the Silver Screen," dismisses any claims that representations of Arabs/Muslims are disproportionately problematic compared to other racialized groups. He claims that while there are negative representations of Arabs and Muslims in film, they are not overrepresented as negative stereotypes and their representations are comparable to other racialized groups.

Katherine Pratt Ewing (2006) provides a comprehensive overview of films made in Germany about Turkish Germans. In "Between Cinema and Social Work: Diasporic Turkish Women and the (Dis)Pleasures of Hybridity," she draws upon discourse theory and postcolonial notions of hybridity to contrast those films which reproduce Orientalist tropes and those which privilege the possibility of the hybrid. However, Ewing concludes, in spite of the efforts of some filmmakers to disrupt stereotypical representations, they tend to fall back into cultural essentialisms. This claim rings especially true when the main subject of the film is the presence or absence of a woman's so-called emancipation. In such cases, hybridity is positioned as an escape from oppressive Muslim and Turkish culture. That is, the European culture moderates and ameliorates the destructive elements of Muslim/Turkish patriarchy. However, this positioning re-inserts a binary insomuch as European culture is seen as having a civilizing effect on Muslim and Turkish culture. In a similar study of migrant cinema, Sandra Ponzanesi (2011) uses the

Lacanian notions of lack and the Other to explore themes of assimilation, discipline, and banishment within European films that deal with migration. Indeed, there is a genre of film known as migrant cinema that takes up issues of migration, nationalism, and belonging. Within the context of this genre, Ponzanesi examines three films, two of which focus on Muslim women (Pakistani and Iranian). The focus of her work is on encounter and its implications for belonging and exclusion and how these are shaped by xenophobia in contemporary Europe. Ponzanesi, drawing upon Sara Ahmed's (1998) work, uses the term *encounter* to get at the construction of Otherness through figurations of sameness and difference. Used in this way, encounter is both a reflection of the intrasubjective structuring of self and other and a political manifestation of this structuring. For Ponzanesi, "the politics of encounter highlights how strangers were never outsiders but a constitutive part of Europe's project of modernity and of its contemporary global dynamics" (p. 74). While she addresses issues of coloniality and Orientalism, she does not interrogate the function of a masculine symbolic order in the socio-political context of modern European encounters with the Muslim world.

This review reflects the dearth of detailed and sustained research on Arab/Muslim women and film, especially European and English North American film. This paucity highlights the importance of this project and the possible contribution it can make in addressing the persistence of problematic stereotypes and tropes in Hollywood films.

## Mapping the Terrain to Teach against the Grain

The general terrain my research traverses is the complex psychodynamics of Orientalism as it is reflected and reproduced in film. The cinematic is not a-contextual; nor is it a benign space. Obviously, the cinematic exists within a particular set of social and political contexts. It is part of the constitutive fabric of the Lacanian Symbolic. Earlier in this chapter, I raised the issue

of social and political policies, practices, and discourses that have the effect of surveilling and disciplining A/M women and other Arabs and Muslims. Included in everyday methods of surveillance and discipline are the problematic images of Arabs and Muslims that persist in school texts, popular culture, news media, and literature (Said, 1979; Shaheen, 2001, 2003; Steinberg, 2002, 2007). This is the representational terrain that this study addresses. These images serve, in part, to narrate who is, and who is not, a fit citizen (Bhabha 1994); however and moreover, they also serve to create a public and shared understanding of prohibited and/or dangerous expressions of Arab/Muslim subjectivity. The burqa, hijab, the beard, the long coat, the kufi or fez (caps worn by some Muslim men) represent a level of Muslim (or Arab) visibility that has become conflated with barbarism and terrorism, and as antithetical to Western modernity. As Said (1979) has compellingly argued, the idea of a civilizationally superior West pivots on the construction of a depraved Orient that is always/already antithetical to Western modernity. The persistent presence of these images and their effects on people's perceptions of Arabs/Muslims provides a compelling reason to study both visual and textual depictions of Arabs and Muslims in various media, including popular cultural media. These depictions carry weight for their discursive influence, which implicates them as sites of public pedagogy, a concept I expand upon in chapter two.

While I trace my personal interest in problematic representational practices to the early school memory detailed at the beginning of this chapter, my formal interest in this subject accelerated after the first Gulf War, when representations of Arabs and Muslims in magazines, Hollywood movies, and television seemed to take an odd turn. It was at this point I noticed that some liberal feminists and feminisms exploited images and ideas of A/M women and girls to lend support to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and to generally support Canadian and American

foreign and military policies. Their alignment with these policies served to buttress the clash of civilizations discourse and gave credence to public policies and private sentiments that increasingly reflected a growing mistrust of Arabs and Muslims living in Western countries (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004; Joshi, 2006; Poynting & Mason, 2006; Razack, 2004, Razack 2005a, 2005b; Said, 1979; Sway, 2005; Werbner, 2000).

This strange alliance between those advocating for women's rights and those supporting wars on terror exacerbated the marginalization of A/M women who must "navigate between both racialized and gendered politics that variously script the ways their bodies and identities are arranged, defined and regulated" (Zine, 2006, p. 27). The burdens of patriarchy fall thrice on the shoulders of Arab/Muslim women: not only must they negotiate gendered oppression within their communities (as does every woman, everywhere), but they must also bear the gendered racism emanating from liberal or second-wave feminists (and sometimes even those who claim more radical affiliations) all while navigating Western patriarchy. It seems that the drive to save the Arab/Muslim woman from being oppressed by her culture has not abated since earlier colonial times.

It is the literal scripting and arranging of Arab/Muslim women's identities in film that this research is concerned with. Rigorous attention to cinematic representations of marginalized groups is vital given the widely accepted and much-studied claim that media are not neutral sites, by rather help to comprise what Giroux (2004) calls public pedagogy. Public pedagogy refers to the "regulatory and emancipatory relationship among culture, power, and politics" (p. 62) and includes a variety of cultural sites from museums to malls to popular culture. Culture, Giroux notes, "plays a central role in producing narratives, metaphors, and images that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others"

(p. 62). Jubas et al. (2016) corroborate Giroux' claims in their work on "popular culture as pedagogy" (p. 1). With a focus on film and television, Kaela Jubas, Nancy Taber, and Tony Brown present a series of case studies which "problematize adults' learning in daily life as they interact with popular culture" (p. 3). Giroux and Juba et al. encourage a more spacious understanding of the pedagogy of popular culture and the implications of ignoring the effects of culture (popular and otherwise) on people's understandings of themselves and others in relations to social and political life.

The pedagogical value of popular culture has not escaped the attention of contemporary political actors who have used various media to both reflect and shape public opinion (Entman, 2007; Giroux, 2004, 2008; Simon & Jerit, 2007, Shaheen, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2003). The pedagogical power of media has also been well documented (Cañas, 2008; Gardener et al., 2008; Giroux, 2004; Guy, 2007; Mahtani, 2002; McGowan, 2007; Tisdell & Thompson, 2007). According to Talmadge C. Guy (2007), "popular culture has become a major pedagogical project, the path through which most of us learn about ourselves and others" (p. 15). Elizabeth Tisdell and Patricia Thompson (2007) build on this idea by drawing attention to the power of popular culture to reproduce "structural power relations based on race, gender, class and sexual Orientation" (p. 652). Recalling Bhabha's (1994) reflections on nationalism, film has the potential to sediment the notion of citizens as "historic objects of a nationalist pedagogy" (p. 208) and can, and has, played a role in the sorting of subjects into citizens and outsiders. Indeed, film is a particularly potent shaper of public opinion because of the possibility for ideological manipulation. Indeed, according to Todd McGowan (2007),

> in the cinematic situation things become more politically charged. The spectator's lack of conscious control renders the spectator extremely vulnerable to ideological manipulation

> while at the cinema. The pseudo-dream world of the cinematic spectator represents the key political problem of the cinema; rather than serving as a tool for making spectators aware of the functioning of ideology, the very form of film itself seems to operate in the opposite political direction – as a crucial ingredient in the propagation of an uncritical subjectivity. Cinema appears to produce uncritical subjects who fail to realize that they are uncritical. (p. 13)

To help me navigate this cinematic terrain, I turn to the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan. According to Khana Ranjanna (2003) "creative work is … akin to the work of dreams and psychoanalysis is thus a fitting instrument for its interpretation" (p. 158). I use Lacan's work selectively, drawing upon McGowan's interpretations of the gaze and *object petit a* and Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. This analytic framing enables an examination of how individuals are constituted (Imaginary) through their socio-political contexts (Symbolic), even in the face of Symbolic failure (the Real). Given the topology of the registers, I am also interested in exploring when and if and how within the context of film, or the context of reading against the grain of film, that the constitutive nature of the Symbolic (in and out of the filmic context) can be revealed.

The task of revealing the workings of the Symbolic on the Imaginary is particularly important given that media and other creative and cultural forms of representation have the capacity to both inform and persuade (constitute), which affirms the pedagogical role of popular culture, and in particular films. Henry Giroux (2008), Guy (2007), Jubas et al. (2016) and Tisdell and Thompson (2007) all have argued that film *is* a site of pedagogy as it is a container and purveyor of dominant discourses and symbolism (Ranjanna, 2003; McGowan, 2015). It is imbued with socio-political truth claims and collective perceptions relating to various aspects of contemporary

life, such as immigration policies and immigrant settlement practices, educational policies and practices, foreign policies and militarism. Others from within (and beyond) the field of critical media studies have also studied the effect of visual media on public opinion and public perception (Giroux, 2008; Hall, 1997a, 1997b; Kelly, 1998; Macedo & Steinberg, 2007; Razack, 2008; Storey, 1996; Steinberg, 2007). And given the propensity for political actors to use popular culture to shape public opinion (Entman, 2007; Giroux, 2004, 2008; Simon & Jerit, 2007, Shaheen, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2003), being able to read the filmic word with and against the world, seems more necessary than ever before.

## Research Aims and Questions

One important caveat and point of clarification is that this study is not focused on film criticism but rather is interested in film as pedagogical – that is, in its capacity to reproduce hegemonic ideas about self and Other and to be utilized to disrupt and interrupt longstanding notions of the same. This research is intended to support the development of analyses and other pedagogical interventions that make possible the examination and critique of representational practices relating to Arab/Muslim women specifically, and marginalized subjects, in general. Further, this research offers an in-depth reading into the symbolic meaning and political valence of these representations and their implications for and in educational practices. This research is not an exhaustive review of films nor of the tropes contained therein. Such a study, although worthy of attention, exceeds the scope of this research and would not serve my research aims.

I present the film *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow et al., 2013) as a case study in the mobilization of particular types of images and absences, which communicate a set of social relations that re-inscribe both Orientalist and problematically gendered relations. It is a fruitful and useful site from which to initiate pedagogical conversations relating to gendered Orientalism

– conversations that are of obvious importance within feminist contexts but are of equal importance for educators who endeavour to identify and address discourses and practices that reproduce symbolic and material inequities.

Situated within this filmic case, my research is guided by the following questions: (1) What do these representations of Arab/Muslim women communicate about the gendered and racialized relations that are knotted together at the nexus of coloniality and patriarchy? (2) What do the symbolic orderings of these representations communicate about the socio-political location of these subjects, particularly for their possible relationship to the presence and production of Orientalist discourses in Canada? (3) How are these discourses gendered and what is the relationship, if any, to Orientalism? (4) What are the implications for reading and teaching against the grain of these powerful images, within the context of anti-oppression educational practices?

To address these questions, I draw upon a range of post/anti/decolonial scholars, as well as those who have used Lacanian theory to work with film. I draw from and expand upon the work of Said and Fanon and McGowan. Said's concept of Orientalism is foundational to this research, as is Fanon's use of psychoanalytic theory to interrogate intersubjectivity in oppressor/oppressed relations. I am especially indebted to McGowan for his work, especially his application of Lacan's ideas about gaze as *object petit a*. Although both Fanon and Said have been (justly) critiqued for lack of attention to the connections between patriarchy and colonialism, the continued relevance and importance of their work is reflected in references to it by anti- and postcolonial feminists such as Chela Sandoval (2000), Chandra Mohanty (2003), Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998, 2003), Leila Abu-Lughod (2001, 2002), and Sherene Razack (2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008). Since my objective for this study is to draw upon concepts initially

conveyed through Orientalism and psychoanalytic theory while challenging the presupposition of a symbolic order predicated on patriarchy or phallocentric logics, the use of Said and Fanon seems justified.

Finally, I draw upon those whose scholarship lays bare the workings of phallocentrism. Phallocentrism refers to the symbolic privileging of masculinism, initially within the family structure through the father (and his maleness as signified by the phallus) and which extends to other forms of authority, conflated with the masculine. The social implications are many, but regarding my research, phallocentrism relates to the ordering of both gendered and political relations (such as colonial or imperial relations). I will be drawing upon this notion of phallocentrism to analyze gender and gendered relations in the selected film.

This research extends existing work into contemporary expressions of Orientalism, primarily relating to gendered Orientalism, which, as a phenomenon, is implicated in shaping public opinion and public policy. Developing more nuanced theorizing of gendered Orientalism and extending the application of this research into applied disciplines such as education, health, law, and journalism has the potential to help remediate public's perception of those who racialized as Arab/Muslim. Further, this research makes original and vital contributions by studying the representations of Arab/Muslim women in film and leveraging the findings from this study to the development of a set of pedagogical interventions.

## Conclusion

This chapter traces the impetus for this research and describe the contemporary socio-political context within which it is carried out. Within Canada, as elsewhere in the West, Orientalism persists in mainstream politics and media, including popular cultural media. It is the latter that I am most interested in, given the persistent flourishing of Orientalism within

Hollywood films. I have identified a need for this research due to a deficiency of careful and gendered analyses of Orientalism in contemporary Hollywood films, especially post 9/11. Given the current social and political realities in Canada and elsewhere, I argue that this research project constitutes a contribution to the development of responses to the misrepresentations communicated through these popular cultural forms. The chapter concludes with a brief outline of my approach to the research.

The remainder of the dissertation proceeds as follows. In chapter two I present the key literatures that shape the conceptual and analytic framework for the research. Chapter three describes how I conducted the research and analyzed the data. In chapters four and five I present the findings from the research and in chapter six I discuss the findings and their implications, with a focus on pedagogical implications. In chapter seven I summarize the research and reflect upon questions arising and future pedagogical and research projects.

# Chapter 2

## Conceptual Framework

This study is situated at the nexus of feminism, intersectionality, Orientalism, postcolonial, and anti-colonial scholarship. It addresses issues of patriarchy, Orientalism, gender, racism, colonialism, imperialism, and their intersections at the site of popular culture, and more specifically, in Hollywood films. Traditionally, educational research has focused on questions of epistemology, or what it means to know and what counts as knowledge. This study departs from that tradition to posit an ontological starting point that centres the ways in which subjects come to be ordered through systems of signification. I privilege this theoretical starting point on subjects and subjectification for the opportunity it affords to challenge identity binaries, hierarchical ordering, and the ideologies reproduced through cultural practices such as film.

I turn to various approaches, which take up ongoing colonial and imperial ontologies, to unpack the origins of Orientalism and its effects, while also drawing attention to the mobilization of gender as a weapon in the so-called war on terror. Not only is gender mobilized in this war on terror, but ideas about gendering, racialization, and civilization are themselves used to further sediment discourses relating to Orientalism. As Edward Said (1993) observed, regarding territorial struggles,

> Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings. (p. 7)

Pulling on the key threads and strands of literature that are in service to a gendered analysis of Orientalist discourse, within the context of Western ideologies and contemporary geopolitical struggles, requires more than a feminist analysis and critique of Orientalism or theories of coloniality. The complexity of the task requires a conceptual framework that provides a multi-perspectival examination of my research questions: (1) What do representations of Arab/Muslim women communicate about gendered and racialized relations that are knotted together at the nexus of coloniality and patriarchy? (2) What do the symbolic orderings of these representations communicate about the socio-political location of these subjects, particularly for their possible relationship to the presence and production of Orientalist discourses in Canada? (3) How are these discourses gendered and what is the relationship, if any, to Orientalism? And finally, (4) what are the implications for teaching against the grain of these powerful filmic images?

In the sections that follow, I trace my journey to derive the conceptual prism though which I examine and interrogate representations of gender and Orientalism in popular cultural films such as *Zero Dark Thirty*. I map the ways in which key literatures shape my approach to this study, how they inform my understanding of the social problem relating to representations of Arab/Muslim women, and their usefulness in answering my research questions in the context of film. Drawing upon these bodies of literature, I develop an approach to interrogate representations of Arab/Muslim women in film and potentially other popular cultural forms.

## Binaries and Subjectivities

Central to this research is an examination and critique of binary orderings of subject positions, especially as they are located and produced in the complex intersections of race and gender, and as they are presented in film. This analysis includes addressing the ways in which

binarisms are produced by and, in turn, reproduce cultural norms that become taken for granted as ontological starting points. One way to understand the binary is as both a symbol and embodiment of relational ordering of the metaphysics of presence and absence. Todd McGowan (2008) describes absence, or the always already lacking, as a symbolic deadlock in that we might use it to challenge the dominant order but we cannot transcend it. Any attempt to find the missing signifier (the lack) and restore it to the dominant order is futile because to find the missing signifier is analogous to utopian transcendence and the end of the human struggle for meaning. Patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism are representative of the "incompleteness of the signifying structure" (McGowan, 2008, p. 61), which has implications for this study as it takes up issues of gendered and Orientalist relations.

Of particular relevance to this project are the binaries male/female; Western female/Eastern female; and Occidental [West]/Oriental [East]. Each of these orderings locates presence to the left and absence to the right of the slash. In the next section, I explore key literatures that expose, critique, and dismantle the ideology and psychoanalytic logic of a number of binary orderings relevant to this research. There is no linear or compartmentalized way to take up this rich field, which has emerged with intensity since the last half of the twentieth century. I have organized my presentation loosely around the framing of the binaries and critiques of them. This is by no means an exhaustive catalogue of the scholarship in these fields; I focus on that which relates most directly to the study of binaries at the intersection of gender and Orientalism.

Although much of this research is predicated upon identifying, critiquing, and remediating these aforementioned and problematic binaries, I want to recognize the trickiness of dealing in and with not only disabused categories such as race, but equally slippery and contested categories such as gender, culture, ethnicity, and so forth. As Gunaratnum (2003) has so aptly

observed, “Race and ethnicity are not objective, stable, homogeneous categories; but are produced and animated by changing, complicated and uneven interactions between social processes and individual experiences” (p. 8).

Those whose research involves identities that are racialized must continuously grapple with how to use the now discredited concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture while at the same time engage in rigorous ongoing critiques of their very use. The effects of race, racialization, and Orientalism are embedded in social policies and practices, including those within various educational contexts. The effects of these problematic signifiers determine that we still require language that will enable researchers “to address and to account for the specific relationships between our analytic categories and subjective, social and material relations” (Gunaaratnum, 2005, p. 5). So what are we left with, as we in the academy and elsewhere rely upon the power of language to talk back to the effects of over two hundred years of Enlightenment and Orientalist thinking on our backs? Even as we carefully repudiate any scientific claims to the legitimacy of markers such as gender and race, what language are we left with? I suggest that it is important that language is used in ways that constantly interrupts itself, so to speak, so that we can focus on the effects of raced thinking, gendered thinking, and Orientalism. While I use words that are heavy with discursive meaning throughout this project, I want to emphasize that the effects of these words are significant, particularly in research that involves racialized social relations. Raced language makes use of temporary signifiers that gesture at a set of social relations. What research of this nature ought to be concerned with are the social relations themselves and the processes that give rise to them. And for that, for the time being at least, we are left with language that is conceptually and politically laden.

## Coloniality, Imperialism, and Orientalism as the Symbolic

If the Symbolic consists of the rules, norms, laws (linguistic and otherwise) within which subjects function, it is wise to highlight some of the more salient aspects of the Symbolic within which this research takes place, and within which the subjects endeavour to locate themselves. The relevance of colonialism and imperialism to a study of this nature is found in the long-standing relationship between the so-called East (or Orient) and the West (or Occident), much of which can be characterized by and through colonial or imperial practices such as military invasion and occupation and postwar protectorate statuses. For example, Lebanon and Palestine were protectorates of France and Britain, respectively. Post–Second World War and more recent examples include the Western/American invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. The latter have often been represented in various forms of popular culture, including film.

Although sometimes used interchangeably, colonialism and imperialism are distinctive sets of relationships. One difference between them is the presence (or absence) of settlement (McLeod, 2000). For instance, while both colonialism and imperialism are economic and political systems focused on exploiting local resources for the economic gain of a foreign nation or interest, and each employ similar techniques to subordinate a nation or region or people, colonialism relies upon settlement whereas imperialism does not. McLeod suggests that imperialism has replaced colonialism in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first century. However, ongoing settlement practices in North America, Palestine, Kurdistan, and other places where land claims are outstanding and where people have been de-territorialized and displaced suggest that colonialism is not a thing of the past.

I situate colonialism as one form of imperial practice, and imperialism as speaking to a range of conquistadorial practices not limited to the settlement of another land. Ellen Wood and

Larry Patriquin (2012) describe how contemporary capitalism is able to engage in imperial activities without "direct coercion" (p. 245). In their view, the capacity of contemporary imperialism to dominate follows

> the distinctive division of labour between the economic and political moments of capitalism, and between economic imperatives and political coercion, [which] makes possible capitalism's unique capacity for universalisation and spatial expansion. Capital is not only uniquely driven to extend its economic reach, but also uniquely able to do so. The self-expansion of capital is not limited to what the capitalist can squeeze out of the direct producers by direct coercion, nor is capital-accumulation confined within the spatial range of personal domination. By means of specifically economic (market-) imperatives, capital is uniquely able to escape the limits of direct coercion and move far beyond the borders of political authority. This makes possible both its distinctive forms of class-domination, and its particular forms of imperialism. (Wood & Patriquin, 2012, p. 245)

In the case of both colonialism and imperialism, discourses are generated and reproduced that support the policies of domination (Said, 1979; Sandoval, 2000). Included in these discourses are activities associated with arts and culture, such as film (Brittain, 2006; Said, 1979; Zine, 2006). Thus, film is not necessarily incidental to the production of social support for imperial activities but can be marshalled to buttress social and political support for war and economic sanctions.

While not renowned for their work in the area of gender, Fanon, Said, Bhabha, and Hall are foundational to any anti-colonial and/or anti-Orientalist project. Together they provide a trio of concepts that shape this research: Orientalism as a persistent and affecting discourse in the

West (Said, 1978); representational practices in service to colonialism, imperialism, and racism (Said, 1978; Hall, 1992); the psychodynamics of colonial relations and the need for a non-essentialist engagement with cultural/racialized identities in anti-oppressive work, be it educational or otherwise (Fanon, 1965, 2004, 2008; Bhabha, 1994). Although a critical engagement with phallocentrism is (largely) absent from their work, postcolonial feminists have rigorously addressed gaps in their scholarship (Abu-Lughod, 2001; 2002; Bannerji, 1993, 2000; Mohanty, 2003; Razack, 2004, 2005a, 2008; Hunt & Rygiel, 2007; Ranjanna, 2003, Farris, 2014, Yeğenoğlu, 1998). In the following sections, I map the value and importance of these three key critics' specific contributions to my study.

**Fanon on Colonial and Racialized Binaries**

Fanon's exploration of the inter- and intra-subjective terrain of the colonizer/colonized does at least two important things for my study: it turns the colonizers' theory on itself, and it turns our attention to the intrasubjective processes that *produce* the Other. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952) explores the psychodynamics of the colonizer/colonized binary through the experience of whiteness/blackness. Drawing heavily upon psychoanalytic theory, Fanon maps the ways in which the unconscious works upon black (and white) subjects and how the racist binary interpellates each within the white/black binary. While Fanon's work yields important insight into the psychodynamics of the colonizer, his work also illuminates the effects of colonialism and racism on the black/Arab subject. Like Du Bois,[4] Fanon examines the intrasubjective effects of colonial subjugation on the colonized, including a body of work that

[4] There are no references to Du Bois in Fanon's works, though Fanon's study of black subjectivity in relation to the white colonizer is strikingly similar to Du Bois' concept of double consciousness. According to T. Owens Moore (2005), there is no evidence to suggest they ever met.

presages the notion of internalized racism (and therefore internalizations of other forms of oppression). *Black Skin, White Masks* is a particularly helpful (if ungendered) examination of the effects of race thinking and racial hierarchies on black subjects.

While Fanon's work on the ordering of racialized identities within a white supremacist framework (and his project of demarcating a pathway out of this neurotic psychodrama) is important, of greater salience to my project is how Fanon presages the leveraging of Arab/Muslim (A/M) women in the Orientalist project that is the so-called war on terror in *A Dying Colonialism* (Fanon, 1965). In this work, Fanon describes the specialists' preoccupation with gendered and familiar relations. Their interest, Fanon argues, was to use these relations against the Algerian people themselves. Although Algerian men were considered to have little respect or consideration for women, paradoxically (and perhaps uncomfortably), they could not help but observe the existence of a "structure of matrilineal essence" (p. 37). This observation was read through the racist lens of European supremacy, leading the French colonial functionaries to conclude that Algerian women had been "transformed by the Algerian man into an inert, demonetized, indeed dehumanized object" (p. 37). In a disingenuous discursive move, Algerian women were produced as victims who required rescue and subjects who could be used as pawns in colonial conquest. I remain indebted to Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*, especially the chapter called "Algeria Unveiled" for the analytic possibilities it affords with respect to certain images in *Zero Dark Thirty*.

**Bhabha on the Formation and Ordering of Subjects**

Postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha has also informed the development of this study, particularly his work on identity and difference as they pertain to the social or cultural sphere (and by extension the political). In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) imagines the

liberatory possibilities of the concepts of liminality and the hybrid, without dismissing the continuing presence of colonial relations evidenced in the continued narration of the racialized/cultural Other. He writes,

> The site of cultural difference can become the mere phantom of a dire disciplinary struggle in which it has no space or power. Montesquieu's Turkish Despot, Barthes' Japan, Kristeva's China, Derrida's Nambikwara Indians, Lyotard's Cashinahua pagans are part of this strategy or containment where the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 46)

Bhabha's observations help to locate filmic depictions and representations of cultural difference and make sense of them within the rubric of colonial practices and relations. In this way, his work is helpful in navigating, interrogating, and challenging the psychodynamics of the colonizer/colonized binary in a contemporary world where the objectification of the subject and a continued preoccupation with essentialist identities continues to inhabit anti-oppressive educational practices. These educational practices can inhibit a more radical engagement with theory (particularly theories of difference) as well as a reimagining of the subject outside of existing categorical domains in order to "think beyond the narratives of originary and initial subjectivities" (p. 2). Additionally, Bhabha illustrates the usefulness of bricolage – the weaving together of multiple disciplines – to explore how the Other becomes constructed as object through intellectual, cultural, and representational practices that colonize and "reproduce a relation of domination" (p. 46).

**Said and the Occidental/Oriental Binary**

*Orientalism* (the book and the concept) sits at the intersection of racialized binary orderings and the binary of the colonizer/colonized. In his germinal work, Said (1979) carefully

makes the case that both the Orient and the Occident are ideas that have been discursively produced to constitute each as the binary opposite of the other. Drawing upon the methodology of Michel Foucault, Said argues that Orientalism (the concept) relies on quasi-scientific rationale and cultural hegemony to develop and sustain powerful ideas concerning the essential nature of Muslims/Arabs as intellectually, emotionally, and (ultimately) civilizationally inferior to Western peoples and cultures. The disproving of scientific racism and biological determinism has not mitigated the power of the Orientalist image of the East and Muslims. This persistence is reflected, at least in part, by the continued presence of Orientalism within authoritative visual, textual, and discursive sites, including the successful repertoire of American films and television (as discussed Jack Shaheen's body of work, and which I will address later in this chapter). Unfortunately, Orientalism does not confine itself to popular culture, but also finds its way into academic works such as Samuel Huntington's (1993) *Clash of Civilizations* and Bernard Lewis's (1994) *Islam and the West*, which rely heavily upon Orientalist tropes.

*Orientalism* (the concept and the book) remains salient to any study of contemporary Muslim and/or Arab identities, especially those concerned with representational practices, including film. Said's careful tracing of the complex of relationships among literary, artistic, and scholarly productions of the so-called Orient and their influence on the European imaginary as well as European foreign and colonial policy informs not only historical analyses but contemporary ones as well, and his analysis continues to be leveraged by scholars to problematize uncritical and unreflective claims about (the) Arab/Muslim world(s). In fact, his work is cited beyond the confines of those studying the effects of Orientalism. Indeed, it is difficult to find work on colonialism that does not make some reference to Said's *tour de force*; postcolonial feminist scholars such as Meyda Yeğenoğlu and Lila Abu-Lughod, for example,

have also broadened and refined Said's original research. In this study, I extend Said's work to focus on the effects of these subject positionings (Occidental/Oriental – West/East) and the ways in which they are (re)produced in the gendered, racist, and Orientalist practices of Hollywood films.

## Nationalism and Gendered Orientalism

Postcolonial and anti-colonial theorizing and scholarship proliferated during the latter half of the twentieth century and continue to expand today. While this work offers an important challenge to global political orders, local colonial practices, white supremacy, and phallocentrism, there has been a significant absence of anti-colonial and intersectional analyses from much of Western feminist thinking and theorizing. This absence has been and remains problematic for Arab/Muslim (and other racialized) women. Sherene Razack (2004) points out that liberal feminists' work solidifies the Western/Eastern binary by sidestepping the Orientalist problematic first identified by Said. An example of this is Canadian Muslim author Irshad Manji's (2003) recuperation of the Orientalist trope of the East as perpetually pre-modern, a trope that proliferates in the work of other liberal feminists, right-wing nationalists, and others.

Between the first Gulf War and the build-up to the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Arab/Muslim woman became the site of much Western anxiety and liberal feminist concern (Butler, 2008). The discourse of emancipation has been co-opted to repudiate Arab culture, Arab/Muslim men, and Islam. In turn, certain ideologues have mobilized these feminist claims to support the ongoing justification of foreign policies, including military policies (see Chapter 1 for Canadian examples). Within the context of Europe, Sara Farris (2017) explores these issues in *In The Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Farris defines femonationalism as "the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-

Islam … campaigns and … the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality" (p. 4). Although Farris's research focuses on Europe, her analysis of public policies and opinions relating to antipathy towards the Muslim/Arab Other strike a familiar chord, recalling the Hérouxville code of conduct, the Barbaric Practices Act, and, more recently, antipathy towards Syrian refugees.

In Canada, Sally Armstrong is a clear example of what Farris refers to as a femonationalist. A journalist who has been writing about Arab and Muslim women's rights since 1996 when she began covering events in Afghanistan, Armstrong had a regular presence in *Homemaker's* (which she also edited), a free monthly delivered to suburban households between 1966 and 2011. She is a self-proclaimed witness for Middle Eastern and African women, and one who has been lauded for her work on human and women's rights. She is quoted in the *Ottawa Citizen* as saying, "Globally, people are much more aware of how other societies live, and they are realizing that 'culture' is not an excuse for practices like child marriage and rape" (Laucius, 2013). Such claims by Armstrong are meant to recruit Western feminists to the cause of freeing Arab/Muslim women from their cultures and "their men," who are produced as excessively oppressive by their culture. While Armstrong may view herself (and be viewed by others) as a champion of Arab/Muslim women, her analysis and brand of journalism has contributed to and been complicit with the buttressing of the West/East binary by reinscribing discourses of savagery and recalling Fanon's (1965) observations about European policies and Said's (1978) exposure of similar kinds of gendered Orientalism.

One of Armstrong's liberation crusades revolved around an Afghani woman named Fatana. Canadian sociologist Shahnaz Khan (2001) undertook a careful analysis of Armstrong's interview with Fatana. Drawing upon postcolonial feminist theory, Khan highlights the

shortcomings of using a liberal individualist framework to examine women's lived experience during wars of imperialism. She writes,

> The conditions that help to structure Fatana's life have not been static nor a function of Islam's oppression of women, as Sally Armstrong or Mavis Leno would have us believe. Rather they are connected to the social and political changes of the time. (para. 29)

Further, Khan reminds the reader, accounts for Afghan women's experiences fail to attend to the ways in which some men also struggled under various occupiers and oppressive regimes. And finally, Armstrong neglects to mention that the Taliban, whom she credits with the misery of Afghan women, was funded and equipped by the United States and its ally, Saudi Arabia. In this double move of privileging one narrative out of context, Armstrong mobilizes Fatana as a fetish object for Western fascination, while failing to draw attention to the economic and political factors that enable Afghanistan to remain destabilized.

Manji has also heavily criticized Islam and Muslims for its/their failure to develop a set of contemporary values especially relating to women. Described by cultural studies scholar Sunaima Maira (2009) as a "good Muslim feminist," the Canadian feminist is often praised as a credible informant and commentator on all things Muslim and/or Arab. In addition to performing her identity as a Muslim in a way that does not offend Western sensibilities (which includes conforming to Western codes of dress), Manji also falls into the category of what Sandro Luce (2016) calls the ventriloquized native informant, a subject who effectively ventriloquizes him or herself by parroting the colonial/imperial narrative. Luce concludes that "the epistemological as well as the ontological problem, therefore, pivots around the subjected-subjects that represent not only the unknowable Other but, moreover, are deprived of their voice; they are ventriloquized" (para. 6).

I agree with Luce and would argue that Manji's (2005) work offers a clear example of the ventriloquized native informant. Her blogs and public speaking engagements also serve to publicize her claims about the inherent racism, misogyny, and anti-Semitism of Islam. In this move of repudiation, whereby she challenges Muslims to reject these aspects of their faith and to undertake to reform Islam, Manji locates herself outside of Islam, despite her claims to a Muslim identity.

Manji continues to garner widespread acclaim, often from conservative politicians and journalists, for her courage to reject political correctness relating to Muslims and Arabs. She often mobilizes her personal history of family violence as proof for the violence inherent in Islam. In contrast to the endorsements she has received from Glenn Beck, Margaret Wente, and Alan Dershowitz, Manji has faced heavy criticism from Sherene Razack, Sunaima Maira, and Max Blumenthal. While each has a different critique, all three converge in highlighting the heavy-handed way in which Manji approaches her examination of Muslims and Islam, often ignoring geopolitics, cultural nuance, and historical contexts.

Razack (2005) has written that Manji (along with other liberal feminists) has "enabled blatant racism to be articulated in the name of feminism" (p. 12) by validating her insider knowledge. However, Manji's knowledge remains subjective, individual, and unsubstantiated beyond her immediate experience. Regardless of the paucity of evidence she marshals for her claims, her subject positions (Muslim, woman, lesbian, urban), first-hand accounts of the brutality of her family experiences (which she attributes to Islam), and valorization of Western civilization (including Western notions of liberal feminism as it intersects with capitalism) "are important for a liberal feminist narrative about Muslim societies: their 'personal confessions' are promoted and marketed because they provide 'authoritative' and authentic testimonials about

their oppression by Muslim and Middle Eastern men" (Maira, 2009, p. 637). Indeed, in a Facebook status update posted on July 15, 2016, Manji writes,

> The more I read and reflect on the terrorist attack in Nice, France, the more I'm persuaded of something: it wasn't Islam but an aspect of Arab culture that informed the French-Tunisian killer. According to multiple sources, he was a lone wolf who had no interest in religion. But as a man, he felt the "humiliation" of various failures in his life. As I write in Allah, Liberty & Love: "Because Arab norms set infantile expectations of men, what emerges is a victim mentality that allows men to commit assorted abuses of power, including rampages against anybody or any society that seemingly humiliates their frail sense of self. Whether real or imagined, their trauma imperils the security of more people, from their own families to citizens of the West." Thoughts?

Manji's mobilization of the clash of civilizations discourse (Huntington, 1993) has also caught the attention of certain American leaders and politicians. She has been invited to speak at the Pentagon and was provided funding for one of her projects, by Nina Rosenwald who spearheads the William Rosenwald Family Fund (Blumenthal, 2012). This fund has supported Geert Wilder's Islamo-fascism Awareness Week and Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy, a Washington-based think tank that has a reputation for generating anti-Muslim/Arab bias. Whether intentional or not, both Manji and Armstrong have contributed to justifications for domestic and foreign policies to save Arab/Muslim women from their culture, religions, and men. It is within these discursive and social contexts that I situate my research.

## Gendering Orientalism and Postcolonial Theories

When Antoinette Fouque wrote, "the difference between the sexes is not whether one does or doesn't have a penis, it is whether or not one is an integral part of a phallic masculine

economy" (cited in hooks, 2000, p. 8), she was referring to socio-political systems and discursive practices that produce and reproduce the primacy of masculinism. And as Julia Kristeva (1986) observed, "We cannot gain access to the temporal scene, that is, to the political and historical affairs of our society, except by identifying with the values considered to be masculine (mastery, superego, the sanctioning communicative word that institutes social exchange)" (p. 155). It could be argued that the primary project of feminism and feminist theory has been to disrupt this closed system, to challenge the logic of it, and to imagine/theorize/enact another or other way(s) of knowing and being. This symbolic privileging of masculinism, initially within the family structure through the father (and his maleness as signified by the phallus), has been and is extended to other forms of authority, which are conflated by virtue of their authority with the masculine or the phallic. The social implications are many, but I am concerned specifically with how masculinism orders both gendered and political relations, including colonial or imperial relations.

While Bhabha, Said, and Fanon did not ignore issues of gender and sexuality in their work, it was secondary to other primary entry points into their analyses of colonialism and its effects. As a result, they largely failed to consider the masculinist nature of coloniality and gendered relations within the communities of the colonized. Even Fanon's (1965) writings on the veil – while of interest for their insights into the way in which women's bodies become sites of struggle between the colonizer and the colonized – do not offer a feminist analysis of this dynamic. In "Algeria Unveiled," Fanon (1965) describes the Algerian women as one means by which Algerian society might be destabilized. The veiled woman becomes symbolic of the country's refusal to become subject to France. Thus, its presence/absence symbolizes domination/resistance, and the unveiling of Algerian women becomes a form of symbolic

penetration, whereby the men of Algeria are also subjugated by the colonial power. To the colonial master, her domestication signals the conquest of the Algerian man.

In this and other writings, Fanon carefully reveals one logic of coloniality: the performance of the Oedipal constellation and reinscription of the phallic order in the guise of colonialism. In this case, the colonial power (embodied by occupying soldiers and state functionaries) represents the father/phallus/all. Similar to Said, Fanon failed to challenge the masculinist symbolic order itself. This was a serious shortcoming, which has since been addressed by a number of post/anti/decolonial feminist scholars and via intersectional feminism (hooks, 1981, 2000; Abu-Lughod, 2001, 2002; Bahramitash, 2005; Bannerji, 1993, 2000; Bannerji et al., 2001; Fusco 2008; Khabiani, 2008; Lorde, 2003; Maira, 2009; Morega & Anzaldua, 2002; Razack, 2004, 2005a, 2007; Thobani, 2014; Trinh, 1989; Yeğenoğlu, 2003, 2014; Zine, 2006, 2009, 2012). Theorizing the obfuscation of gender issues, including heteronormativity and rigid binary conceptualizations of gendered identity, has contributed to much more sophisticated understandings of the way in which power works via binary constructions of identities. This work has engendered more radical approaches to de- and anti-colonial practices, as well as other anti-oppression practices. Indeed, queer and postcolonial and anti-racism feminists do not simply invert the hierarchy or replace white men with black men, or queerness with straightness. Rather, their various scholarly endeavours work to (re)imagine the possibility of radically liberatory forms of being and knowing.

Poet and scholar Audre Lorde (2003), in her germinal lecture *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*, reminds the scholar/activist about the ongoing need to address the structure of patriarchy in conjunction with analyses of other structures of oppression. Lorde (2003) does not distinguish between theirs and ours or here and there, but clearly says,

"The failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. Divide and conquer, in our world, must become define and empower" (p. 27). As clearly indicated in her title, for Lorde the road out of patriarchy is not through a modified version of it. At the same time, she also calls upon feminists to engage with difference in a radically new way – to recognize its creative potential without romanticizing or minimizing it.

If re-theorizing and re-imagining epistemic and ontological relations that subjugate women has been the general focus of feminist theory, the central foci of postcolonial feminist theory has been "to racialize mainstream feminist theory and to insert feminist concerns into conceptualizations of colonialism and post colonialism" (Lewis & Mills, 2003, p. 3). The particularities of women's social locations due to racialized, classed, or national location has been neglected or only partially addressed within major theoretical streams such as colonial, postcolonial, and feminist theories. Racialized feminists in the United States (for example bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Trinh T. Minh-ha) have addressed problematic essentialisms and racisms reproduced within second-wave feminist texts. In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre*, hooks (2000) critiques liberal feminists: "while it is evident that many women suffer from sexist tyranny, there is little indication that this forges 'a common bond among all women'" (p. 4).

Echoing Lorde (1984), I do not locate patriarchy within a particular cultural context, nor do I understand it to be a reflection of a specific culture. I wish to explore the possibility that what has passed as a desire to emancipate 'Eastern' women by 'Western' women and men might be seen as an expression of a colonial and racist *patriarchy* – rather than an endeavour to dismantle the master's house. I do not make any claims about the absence of patriarchy in the so-

called East. Instead, I argue for the global ubiquity of it and the need for a feminist project that more closely maps onto Chandra Mohanty's (2003) call for a *Feminism without Borders*.

This observation emerges from my study of the works of Mohanty, Razack, Bannerji, hooks, Anzaldúa, Moraga, Trinh, Yeğenoğlu, Abu-Lughod, Zine, and others who, working from intersectional and postcolonial and anti-colonial frameworks, critique iterations of feminism in which the voices of women who had access to multiple forms of privilege were valorized and even amplified. Hooks (1981, 2000), Sandoval (2000), Mohanty (2003), and others have argued that feminisms that have failed to interrogate their cultural biases (which I will refer to as liberal feminism) have served to reproduce colonial and imperial relations. Thus, one of the foci of postcolonial feminist scholars has been to de-centre liberal feminism, through rigorous critique, but moreover their work has had the positive effect of re-centring the problem of global patriarchy. These de-/anti-colonial feminists emphasize that colonialism and patriarchy are interpenetrated – that is they work together to (re)produce patriarchy and the colonialism/imperialism, both of which are experienced by Other women (here and in the *imaginary there*) in material ways.

Razack's analysis of Abu Ghraib is but one example of the ways in which feminist and postcolonial theories are being extended. In "How Is White Supremacy Embodied? Sexualized Racial Violence at Abu Ghraib," Razack (2005b) argues that the "sense of self that is simultaneously required and produced by empire is a self that is experienced *in relation* to the subordinate other – a relationship that is deeply gendered and sexualized" (p. 343). Thus, the Iraqi man must be subordinated, feminized (by being subject to degrading sexual acts), just as the Algerian man is domesticated by the subordination of "his" women by the colonizing forces

through the forced removal of the veil (Fanon, 1959). Clarifying the relationship between the psychic and the social, Razack (2005b) explains that

> Oedipus is not simply the normal structure through which all humans travel on the path to mental, sexual and social maturity: it is the means through which the flow of desire is encoded, trapped, inscribed within the artificial reterritorializations of a repressive social structure – the family, the party, the nation, the law, the educational system, the hospital, psychoanalysis itself. (p. 355)

Thus, in contemporary colonial and imperial relations, we find the structure of the European family being re-deployed and employed through the disciplining of unruly desires and in the domestication of those who manifest an excess of difference, into the ordered and orderly adherence to the laws (of the father, the state, and today of capital). Here, the libidinal economy of the Oedipal replicates and is replicated on the "libidinal unconscious of the political economy" (Razack, 2005b, p. 167).

**Gendering Responses to Orientalism**

Many of the themes that are used in postcolonial analyses (and explorations of the place of Arab/Muslim women and the veil in the colonial/Western psyche) can be traced back to this particular ordering of the intrasubjective, and which is mapped onto the intersubjective and socio-political spheres. In other words, both gendered and economic relations are ordered through the desire to have or maintain access to those things that symbolize privilege (and which still symbolically map onto phallic symbols of power). Yeğenoğlu (2003) suggests that a truly liberatory form of analyses will have to come from outside of this order. Her call echoes Lorde's (2003) caution that we cannot undo patriarchy from within a founding myth that is patriarchal: a myth for which the organizing totem is the phallus and against which women (and children and

racialized and sexual minorities) will always be evaluated and found (and felt) lacking. Yeğenoğlu (1998) points out that the type of theorizing that originated with Said's and Fanon's work has come to a point where it is in need of invigoration to account for the heterogeneous nature of coloniality and for the limitations of using discourse analysis and psychoanalytic theories as complete explanatories for the cause and effects of colonialism. Some of this new theorizing, she argues, will not only allow for an explanatory form of theorizing, but for one that opens up spaces for decoloniality and decolonized feminist theories and practices that could pose a significant challenge to the accepted patriarchal order so closely bound up with coloniality.

Indeed, the continued decolonizing of feminist theory might mean the articulation of a set of organizing principles or theory, which does not take as its starting point (or breaking point) the phallic symbolic order (systems of patriarchy) we have inherited. I refer to Walter Mignolo (2011) who offers this perspective: "Modernity and postmodernity are options, not ontological moments of universal history, and so are subaltern, alternative or peripheral modernities" (p. 279). Such unruliness recalls Chela Sandoval's (2008) concept of delinking or differential consciousness, which speaks to the adoption of a "tactical subjectivity" (p. 58) or holding a position, or an identity, or enacting a strategy for as long as it is effective and necessary for the purpose of "intervening in and transforming social relations" (p. 61). Sandoval's vision of an oppositional feminism calls for an irreverent disregard for adherence to the boundaries of theory, ideology, and academic disciplines. Salient here is Alexis Shotwell's (2012) call for "open normativities: collectively crafted ways of being that shape subjectivities oriented toward widespread flourishing" (p. 990). Each of these approaches to understanding subjectivity has in common a refusal to be bound by Cartesian dichotomies and thus constitute a rupturing of that obligation.

In light of these calls for something beyond current forms of analyzing gendered and racialized relations, the work of Meyda Yeğenoğlu is invaluable. In *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Yeğenoğlu (1998) both critiques and builds upon Said, Fanon, Bhabha, and Lacan. Her overarching project is twofold: to apply a feminist lens Orientalism by reading the postcolonial and the Lacanian through a feminist and non-Western lens, and to then step outside of the symbolic ordering around so-called Western thinking as it relates to Arab and Muslim women (and others). Regarding the question of Arab/Muslim women and their role in the colonial constellation, Yeğenoğlu argues that "Within modernity comes a new form of institutional power which is based on visibility and transparency and which refuses to tolerate areas of darkness" (p. 41). For her, "The veil can be seen as the resisting data or tropology of this modern power whose program aims to construct the world in terms of a transparency provided by knowledge as power" (p. 41). Thus, the body of the Arab/Muslim woman is perceived as resisting being known (a form of colonization within the framework of modernity). An examination of this constellation of tropes through and with Lacanian concepts of desire and the gaze have the potential to be useful in the reading filmic texts and images.

There is another critical set of observations and theorizing in Yeğenoğlu's (1998) work: her unpacking of the Western imagining of the mysteries behind the veil and the power and value of the mystery itself, and moreover the importance of the desiring itself. The tropic Orientalist woman, intersected with gendered and imperial ideology, (re)creates itself in fields of representation. "Veiled women," she writes, "are not simply an exterior target or threat, but a target, object or subject who are engaged epistemologically, literally, and metaphysically. It is this textual engagement which turns the veiled woman into a metaphor for the Oriental culture" (p. 51).

It is this production of A/M woman qua Oriental, as a perpetual mystery and always already (the) outside constituted by the inside of the West(ern subject), that is leveraged to buttress the West/East binary as given through Orientalism. The West can only be constituted as the site of the universal subject, if the East remains the site of abjection, or as Yeğenoğlu (1998) observes, "They should remain different, because I should remain the *same*: they are not/should not be a possibility within my own world, which will thus be different" (p. 57). The anxious desiring to ensure that they never become us can be mobilized as a powerful motivator for something like a war on terror.

## Public Pedagogy and Popular Culture

The meaning of pedagogy is multiple and contested however I use the term more expansively and philosophically, drawing upon Freire's (1985, 1987, 2002), conceptualization of pedagogy as a "philosophy or a social theory" (Macedo, 2002, p. 24). In his introduction to the 30th anniversary edition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2002) Macedo reminds the reader that when Freire used the term pedagogy he invited educators into a reflexive orientation to their work. More specifically, Freire and his body of scholarship on emancipatory education, called upon those who teach to constantly be thinking about what it might mean to cultivate and sustain educational contexts within which an individual might become "a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world (sic)" (p. 32). Or as Giroux (1987) put it, "at the heart of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of knowing is the idea that naming the world becomes a model for changing the world" (p. xiv).

For Freire, reading and literacy refers to an iterative process of reading the word against the grain of one's own lived experience, such that individuals develop the capacity to read the word and the world and in turn narrate their own lives and authorize their own lived experience. (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire's pedagogical philosophy remains salient and important in our

increasingly mediated world which narrates and communicates social norms through representational practices. In a world saturated with screens and images (Giroux, 2008), the world that requires reading has expanded to encompass the world of culture, popular culture, including the world of film. Indeed, these cultural spaces are a pedagogical spaces (Jubas et al., 2016) and the images they use to communicate also require reading and sense making. Popular culture is part of a broader pedagogical horizon: public pedagogy (Giroux 2004a, 2004b; Zine and Taylor, 2014; Jubas et al., 2016). Public pedagogy refers to the "regulatory and emancipatory relationship among culture, power, and politics" (Giroux, 2004a, p. 62) and it is this regulatory function, that is the power of public pedagogy to determine attitudes and behaviours that makes it a relevant site of analysis and examination. As Talmadge C. Guy (2007) observed, "popular culture has become a major pedagogical project, the path through which most of us learn about ourselves and others" (p. 15).

Guy's claim that popular culture has become instrumental in how we learn about others is echoed by Zine and Taylor (2014), who note the upsurge in representations of Muslim women since 9/11, ostensibly intended to educate the West about Muslims and Muslim women, but which largely re-inscribe Orientalist myths. Their observation coheres with that of Elizabeth Tisdell and Patricia Thompson (2007) who write about the power of popular culture to reproduce "structural power relations based on race, gender, class and sexual orientation" (p. 652). Culture, through its production of signs, symbols, images, and sounds "plays a central role in producing narratives, metaphors, and images that exercise a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others" (Giroux, 2004a, p. 62).

Recalling Freire's sage advice about the pedagogical importance of reading the world and the word with and against each other, Giroux reminds those who engage pedagogically with popular culture that

> While deciphering the ideological content and representational politics of films is an important pedagogical task, it is also crucial to place them in concrete historical circumstances. If we are to read films as social and political allegories articulating deeply

> rooted fears, desires, and visions of the future, then they have to be understood within a broader network of cultural spheres, social formations, and institutions rather than read as isolated texts. That is, they have to be critically engaged within the social anxieties and assumptions that prompted their production and their circulation as public texts in the first place (Giroux, 2008, para4).

There is ample evidence of the pedagogy of film in Jubas et al. (2016) *Popular culture as pedagogy*, in which the editors curate a rich exploration of the pedagogical worlds of film and television and demonstrate a number of ways that these popular cultural forms can be read.

Finally, public pedagogy and popular culture as pedagogy refers not only to critical readings of cultural texts, but also signals the possibility for the production of cultural texts which might have the effect of "redefining representational practices" (Zine & Taylor, 2014, p. 3). In *Muslim women, transnational feminism and the ethics of pedagogy* Zine and Taylor reflect upon the import and potential impact of the work of Muslim women who are engaged in cultural production and conclude, "We regard their word as a critical form of public pedagogy that examines, confronts, and transforms social worlds" (p. 3). Thus, it seems important to consider the complexity and plurality of the public and re-imagine this as publics and thus to look beyond popular cultural forms that reproduce to those that transgress through the proliferation of normativities which disrupt binary conceptualizations of subjects (Shotwell, 2018).

## Register Theory, *Objet Petit A,* and Film

Psychoanalytic theory has shaped and is shaped by Western modernity, and it has been used across a number of disciplines (including postcolonial theory) to explain how subjects encounter and navigate their own and others' place in the social and political scene. As Ranjana Khanna (2003) argues in *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*, psychoanalytic theory "provides mechanisms for the critique of postcoloniality and neocolonialism … as well as a reading practice that makes apparent the decentered nature of the psychoanalytic paradigm" (p.

x). The value of Lacan's work is that it provides the means to think through the complex relationships between and among the intersubjective and the socio-political (in particular, the nature of the colonizer/colonized relationships). Psychoanalytic theories, including Lacan's work, have been leveraged in various ways to formulate resistance to, and emancipation from, colonial strangulation. This is done through the exploration of the interplay between the intrasubjective world of the unconscious and the intersubjective or social world. As Anzaldúa (2012) once observed,

> The struggle has always been inner, and this is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads. (p. 109)

And as Sandoval (2008) also observed, "new self-conscious sciences were developed that can be said to typify and express a Western decolonial era: psychoanalysis can be understood as the naming and delimitation of the Western psyche" (pp. 162–163). Certainly, Fanon drew upon his mastery of psychoanalytic theory to fathom the mind of the colonial master; he not only theorized but enacted means of resistance and revolution – symbolic and embodied.

The salience of Lacanian theories and concepts to explore depictions of the racialized Other is substantiated through postcolonial and decolonial analyses of representational practices. Of particular note is Stuart Hall (1996, 1997), whose contributions to the study of representational practices of racialized subjects drew heavily upon Lacan's for its capacity to reveal psychodynamics of objectifying practices. Much of Hall's work examines the function and effect of the gaze and desire. Within Lacan's oeuvre, conceptualizations of the gaze change over time. In his earlier work, the gaze was associated with the scopic drive or the desire to

possess through visual apprehension. Feminist film theorists, such as Laura Mulvey, have used this early understanding to posit a male gaze (either deployed by men or internalized by women). This interpretation has limitations, not the least of which was its "failure to account for differences among spectators" (McGowan, 2007, p. 4). For this study, I am specifically interested in Lacan's later writings about the gaze and the relationships among *objet petit a* or the gaze, and his register theory. I draw heavily upon McGowan's interpretations to guide my use of Lacan for the purpose of reading film.

According to McGowan, Lacan's later work reveals that the gaze is no longer seen to be solely a function of visual mastery but can also be understood as an object outside of the subject (*objet petit a*). In this way, the gaze as *objet petit a* signals a gap in, or the partiality of, the Symbolic order (the social structure/ordering of the world). The subject's experience of the gaze is an encounter with the failure of the Imaginary (subjective sense making, which, in part, covers over any gaps in the symbolic) to account for 'everything' (a sort of failure of ideology). The gaze, in the form of lacunae or lost object, is said to signal the Real, or that which is not contained/domesticated within the Symbolic order or the Imaginary of the subject's perceptual field. *Objet petit a* is reminiscent of Ladelle McWhorter's (2011) notion of an excess of difference: something which is not accounted for and which therefore threatens the subject's ordering of the world. In the context of this research, I am looking for what the presence (or absence) of Arab and/or Muslim subjects in film. Do they mark a rupture in the symbolic order? Do their bodies demarcate an excess? And how does their undomesticated presence threaten a number of symbolic orders, including patriarchy, Orientalism, and/or capitalism? In what follows, I discuss the aspects of Lacan's work that I use in this research: register theory and the notion of *object petit a*.

The three registers – Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real – map onto my research as they correspond to subject positions, Orientalism, and all that is instantiated outside of the Orientalist discursive. If, as Ellie Ragland (2008b) suggests, "Topology situates the subject in a place of the Other, toward which the subject is supposed to orient itself" (p. 107), then as long as the field of the visual (the Symbolic) appears whole and self-evident, and subjects see themselves as realized through identifications given by the Symbolic, there is not much space for an interrogation or interruption in the smooth functioning of these reproductive systems. In this regard, the Symbolic is comparable to ideology: it masks the ways in which what we perceive has been structured to produce particular meanings and to obscure that which troubles the illusion of totality. In McGowan's (2007) work on Lacan and film, he maps out the ways in which film preserves or disrupts this functioning.

It is this topology that has implications for unsettling taken-for-granted and totalizing narratives because, of course, no ideology or Symbolic order can completely account for everything (including a subject's experience of their self). All that exceeds the Symbolic and the Imaginary is indicative of the Real, the third of the Lacanian registers. The Real is the unruly, the uncanny, the contradictions, the evidence to the contrary: in short, the Real is that which cannot be accounted for from within the ordering of the Symbolic nor the sense making of the subject within it. When made palpable via the gaze or *objet petit a*, the Real becomes the uninvited *quelque choses* that ruptures the apparent completeness of the other two registers. As McGowan (2007) observes, "To affirm the Real is to affirm that the work of ideology never comes off without a hitch" (p. 3). The beauty of the Real, within the context of social justice work, including anti-oppressive education, is that it holds promise of that moment, pedagogically speaking, when another way of thinking or perceiving becomes possible, or rather, when the

current way of thinking becomes not only impossible, but the impossibility is inescapable. In the context of film, I am looking for the presence or absence of filmic elements that have the potential to unsettle the Imaginary's coherence with the Symbolic.

That which might unsettle and create an opening for critically reflexive engagement with the Symbolic and subjects relationships to it is *objet petit a*, also referred to as the gaze. *Object petit a* or the gaze is not an object of substance, but rather is something that has been "lost in the process of signification" (McGowan, 2007, p. 6), and as such signals a lack or lacunae of the sort that unsettles the uninterrupted relationship between the Imaginary (self) and the Symbolic (their world), momentarily disrupting the topology. This unhinging of the self from the Symbolic is the cause of anxiety and triggers a subject's desire to remediate this rupture and the smooth functioning of the registers. Put another way, the subject seeks to patch the hole left when the Real (located in the presence of a lacunae) punctures the Symbolic. This "impossible object" (McGowan, 2007, p. 10) initiates and perpetuates an arc of desire. This is not the desire of wanting some thing, but rather an irresistible urge to assuage the unease and anxiety caused by the presence of the no thing. This insufficiency, which threatens not only the Symbolic but also the Imaginary, is the cause of much anxiety and the desire to remediate this rent in the Symbolic order – by eliminating any evidence that it is incomplete. There is a desire "to possess the alien object and make it part of" themselves (McGowan, 2003, p. 30) or revel in "the disappearance of self in the experience of enjoyment" of the lacuna (as lost object) (McGowan, 2007, p. 11). This arc of desire, triggered by the gaze (the object cause of desire), seeks to compensate for or consume that which does not see you and cannot be mastered to preserve the illusory completeness of the symbolic order (for example, patriarchy or Orientalism or capitalism). What

filmmakers do with *objet petit a* signals the social and political valence of the film. One way to discern this valence is through the presence and uses of fantasy in film.

In the worlds of film, there exists the possibility to let this anxious encounter with *objet petit a* unsettle and disrupt through the use of the fantasy of excess (McGowan, 2007). In films that use this type of fantasy, excess (such as violence or racism) is portrayed as ordinary rather than extraordinary. Moreover, those engaging in excess lose themselves in it, and the façade of neutrality is ruptured by the subjects' loss of themselves in the excess. In *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, McGowan explores how the films of Stanley Kubrick and Spike Lee mobilize violence and racism in particular ways that create a fantasy of excess but do not let the Symbolic off the hook. They reveal the "façade of neutrality" (p. 50) that other forms of fantasy preserve and in so reveal the delusions present in the Symbolic. The use of fantasy in this particular way may engender an encounter with incompleteness, which could include how subjects identify with respect to gender, or a culture or nation, and which may catalyze interrogations relating to policies, political strategies, or discursive moves that are regularly mobilized (in real life) to alleviate the symbolic gap and restore the illusion of ideological completeness. McGowan suggests that a radical resistance or radical politics would not be predicated on bringing the missing signifier (i.e., woman or Oriental Other) into the symbolic order but might be accomplished by turning our attention to the incompleteness of the symbolic and to the impossibility of papering over the gaps through the imaginary. It is the aversion to partiality and the desire to disavow lack that drives representational practices to treat difference as a problem to be solved or an aberration to be resolved.

However, not all films facilitate such encounters with the Real via *objet petit a*, and the Symbolic can be recuperated through the use of another kind of fantasy that supplements

ideology and stabilizes the social edifice (McGowan, 2007, p. 35). The example McGowan uses is the lottery, which provides the fantasy of an escape from poverty through the illusion that the subject is not trapped in a system that is inherently hostile to them. What fantasy gives is perpetual speculation about a realm of 'what-ifs,' and in so doing precludes the subject encountering the Real (however unsettling) and the limits of the Symbolic. Fantasy, as it is used in certain Orientalist Hollywood films, protects Western subjects' idea of themselves – that is, their subject positioning as civilizationally superior – so that they remain unchanged by the horrors of the world or the suffering of others. The subjects' sense of themselves (the Imaginary in the Lacanian system of registers) coheres within the ordering of the West/East binary.

When it does not resort to the tropic, film has the potential to unsettle. Or as McGowan (2015) puts it,

> One might say that every dream is nightmare – or every film is a horror film – because it reveals to us the impossibility of our desire's realization. When we dream the fulfilment of a wish, we do so by dreaming the distortion of the wish in order to sustain the desire as a desire. Desire is traumatic because its satisfaction doesn't coincide with its realization (with obtaining the object), and the dream and film make evident this disjunction through their investment in the obstacle as the source of satisfaction for the dreamer and the spectator. This kind of revelation does not occur in everyday life, and we need the dream or the film in order to experience it. (pp. 6–7)

In the unconscious world of certain films we can see not only the nightmares of the individual (as in the dreamscape) but also the collective nightmares of an imperial power built, not on moral superiority, but through the use of military and economic force. Is the nightmare the threat of the

terrorist or the absence of a terrorist foe? Is the desire to complete the task, or to be continuously constructed as the moral agent in the war on terror?

Mediating the subject and an encounter with the gaze is desire. Gaze, lacuna, gap, or lack – however one conceives of it – is that which cannot be contained or recuperated through social convention and ideology, and that which disrupts the symbolic order.

**Using Lacan to Analyze Representations of Arab/Muslim Women in Hollywood Films**

Reviewing representations of Arab/Muslim women in Hollywood film, over time, reveals an interesting set of stereotypes (Shaheen, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2008). In most films prior to the 1980s, the veiling of women is more erotic in nature. Rather than representing Arab women as burqa-clad and shadowy figures, they are more often presented in diaphanous clothing performing as dancers or as part of a harem. However, these are American films, for American audiences, and one might reasonably assume that Western/American men and women are, in the main, those who are looking at the film. From time to time, one does see a non-Arab/Muslim (read: foreign) male character(s) within the film itself, which creates a strange set of nested representations.

For example, in *Samson against the Sheikh* (4:42) and *Cast a Giant Shadow* (13:09), the Arab/Muslim female dancers (both veiled and unveiled) are dancing for Western men dressed in military garb. Thus, the gaze (both colonial and male) is obscured, and the privilege of looking for pleasure is present in three ways: first, through the male characters' gaze; second, through the film spectator's gaze; and finally in the likeness that is reflected back to the male audience. The veiled woman, but only semi-veiled – or figuratively veiled by her exoticism – maintains the signifying structure by performing her traditional role as object for male scopic consumption, and more particularly for the easy consumption of the Western man.

Notably, as the covering of the Oriental woman increased in films, the white Western woman becomes less dressed before the Arab man. This particular lacuna serves, I suggest, to threaten the position of Western white men in the Western/Oriental binary; filmically, the anxiety is resolved by the heroic actions of (often military or quasi-military) males figures who not only claim the prize (the white woman) but humiliate the Arab/Muslim male in the process. Arab/Muslim women are not only absent in these films, but the suggestion is that they are undesirable as erotic objects.

In the 1990s, depictions of the Oriental woman as semi-veiled were replaced by two new dominant images: the heavily veiled woman, and the unveiled, Western-looking but extremely dangerous terrorist. The documentary *Reel Bad Arabs* (Earp & Jhally, 2006) catalogues Hollywood tropes, including those relating to women. In *Death before Dishonor* (Leonard, 1987), *Black Sunday* (Frankenheimer, 1977), and *Never Say Never Again* (Kershner, 1983) lead female characters are depicted as Arab/Muslim, and they all appear Western (hair, makeup, dress, athleticism, and so on), but each one is absolutely deadly. In *Never Say Never Again*, the Oriental woman is not only unveiled; she is dressed in haute (if revealing) couture – perhaps somewhat reminiscent of the diaphanous veil. She is elegant, beautiful, and cruel. The viewer watches as, using a remote-control device, she blows up a building in the background. As she watches it explode, she barely flinches, her face impassive. In *Death before Dishonor*, the woman (again a terrorist) is hip, cute, and deadly. She not only murders individuals at close range, including a family, but also tortures an American soldier with a drill.

In *Rules of Engagement* (27:11) women (and even young girls) are covered. In the street scenes, they appear in full burka; at a protest outside of the American embassy in Yemen, women and girls are in hijab and burka, faces contorted in anger, and fists raised. The American

marines land on the roof of the embassy in helicopters and look down on the people – their military superiority obvious. The scene is ruptured when the marines fire on the crowd below, apparently massacring innocent civilians, including children. Later in the film, in the course of conducting an investigation for the legal defense of the marine sergeant who was in charge at the time of the of the alleged massacre, the protagonist meets a little girl who lost a leg in the massacre. For a moment, the humanity of the Oriental Other is too much, and the gaze becomes unbearably present. And then, the anxiety of dis-identification – the painful presence of the missing signifier – is resolved in the discovery that those who were killed – men, women, and children – were all bearing arms and actually attacking both the embassy and the marines. When the scene is shown again, replayed in light of this new information, it is as if the veil has been lifted. Indeed, we see cloaks and burkas lifted to reveal hidden weapons. Once again, the viewer is confronted by the deadly Oriental woman (made more deadly by her veil) and her successor, the little girl who points a gun at the marines and, with a steely look, fires – the latter shot happens in slow motion, stopping time, very close up into her face – so what we see is the face the woman/child and the barrel of the gun.

*Figure 2.1* The transformation of the child from innocent victim to terrorist (*Rules of Engagement*, 2000).

It is not enough to sexually or visually possess (via the look) in order to restore distance, to restore the privileged looking position; something must be done with these women. In the dangerous Orient, where even the women and children pose a threat, patriarchy, violent heterosexism, and colonialism/imperialism may all be required (filmically, in this case) to quell the anxiety of having confronted the lost object and to restore the capacity (for the colonial spectator/Western spectator) to look without unease (Razack, 2005). In the end, as in the end of *Rules of Engagement*, the symbolic order is restored and the *objet petit a* is domesticated by the moral and necessary *rightness* of killing masses of men, women, and children.

These films seem to represent, over the course of decades of filmmaking, a kind of ambivalence about the Arab/Muslim woman – semi-veiled she is exotic and an easy sexual prize. Within the construct of Western patriarchy, she is perceived as a threat to the Western woman (also subjugated by and through patriarchy). However, in more current filmic representations, the A/M woman appears, more often than not, heavily veiled. In so doing, she signals the uncontrolled sexuality of Arab/Muslim men and creates much anxiety for uncovered women who fear violence at their hands. As discussed above, this discourse has been mobilized by liberal feminists who use these Orientalist films and other forms of Orientalist popular culture (with support from native informants) to garner support for the continuing war on terror. Within this discourse, the war isn't just about saving *us*; it is also about saving A/M women, children, and members of the LGBTQ2++ community.

In all of these cases, the image of the A/M woman signals lack within lack – *objet petit a* par excellence. Her filmic depictions, no matter how brief and fleeting, veiled or unveiled, signal the insufficiency of the colonial or imperial project. To fulfill the fantasy of completion the desire is " to possess the alien object and make it part of ourselves" (McGowan, 2003, p. 30); we

want to revel in "the disappearance of self in the experience of enjoyment" (McGowan, 2008, p. 11). In either case, the arc of desire, triggered by the gaze, moves towards filling in the lacuna to preserve the (illusory) wholeness and completeness of the symbolic order (for example, patriarchy or colonialism/Orientalism).

## Conclusion

This research pivots on an examination of the construction of binaries and their implications, and in this chapter I describe the nature and political and social effects of the binary ordering of subjects, both at the level of the individual and the socio-political. From Said through Yeğenoğlu to Lacan, I have traced the psychoanalytic and socio-political formation of binary orderings of subjects. In this chapter, I describe how I have used scholarly work in Orientalism, postcolonial feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and psychoanalytic theory to frame this research project, and I outline how I will use it to examine film for the purpose of reading against the grain of Orientalism. I combine Lacan's concept of *object petit a* and his register theory with postcolonial feminism theory to interrogate representations of A/M women at the nexus of Orientalism, colonialism, and imperialism.

In the next chapter I outline my approach to the research, which includes my rationale for adopting a qualitative case study approach within a transformative paradigm. I also explain how I draw upon the work of Lacanian film scholar, Tod McGowan (2007), to analyze the data.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology and Methods

And in the free travel between cultures

Researchers looking for the essence of man perhaps will find

Room enough for everybody.

Here is a margin advancing, or a centre retreating.

The East is not exactly the East

Nor the West exactly the West

Because identity is open to multiplicity

Not a fortress or trenches

—Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*

Prior to beginning this research, I had been using various films in my anti-oppressive education practice as one means of gaining familiarity with using film in an anti-racism/anti-oppressive educational context. After several months, I was struck by the limited value of film for the purpose of understanding why the films affect viewers, or how viewers make meaning in the context of watching a film. While the films catalyzed discussion, they rarely seemed to trigger self-reflexivity in the viewers and participants' Orientalist views remained largely intact and I knew little more about how those views are formed and sustained.

I returned to the literature to seek an explanation for why I had not been successful in using film to increase my understanding of how film works with and on stereotypes, and I came upon an important observation made by Todd McGowan (2007), who argues that the proper approach to a future-oriented film analysis

> is not a reactionary assertion of the text against the context, but a grasp of the interweaving of the two, the immanence of the context within the text. Every filmic text bears internally the manifestations of its historical situation, just as it anticipates the conditions of its reception. We find history and the spectator through filmic interpretation, not through archival research and audience surveys. (p. x)

McGowan's claim for the importance of a deep read of filmic texts, as a prelude to their use in other contexts, is buttressed by sociologist and scholar of cinema studies, Norman Denzin (2004), who writes,

> Accordingly, the visual representations of a society are both methods of research, and resources, or topics to be studied in their own right…I will keep asking "How do these methods represent society?" and "How may sociologists read, interpret and use them?" (p. 237)

Denzin's reflections upon the sociological effects of visual representations and their intrinsic value as objects of research is also borne out by the work of cultural studies scholars, such as Stuart Hall. As Hall (1997) makes clear, representational practices are part of social processes for meaning making. For example, regardless of whether one is reading a set of images, through a Lacanian or Foucauldian lens, one is making meaning based on the arrangement of the images and one's lived experience. Certainly, Edward Said's work corroborates the material effects of systems of representation. In this heavily mediated historical moment, the study of visual representation is particularly relevant given the relentless flow of the visual and their effects. Often hailed as neutral or object or innocuous entertainment, cultural texts (including film) are shaped by and imbued with the "ideological, class, national, gender and racial biases" of our time (Denzin, 2004, p. 237). Therefore, scholars and educators engaged in anti-oppressive work must

learn not only how to read, analyze, interpret, and respond to these representations but to support learners in doing the same.

These perspectives on film as both a method and site of research, coupled with my own experience in the classroom, led to my decision to refine the focus of my study to engage in an in-depth analysis of a filmic case, *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow et al.), to interrogate and destabilize the symbolic orderings of West/East through a postcolonial feminist lens. The objective is to develop a set of analytic and pedagogical interventions and approaches for use in anti-oppressive educational work. Further, these interventions can be adapted for use in other filmic, educational, or transgressive contexts to address representational practices that are complicit in the reproduction of gendered Orientalist (or other racist) stereotypes.

In the first part of this chapter, I describe the approach I developed to collect and analyze the data, largely drawing upon the work of McGowan (2007). In the second half of the chapter, I discuss the reasons for using a qualitative case study to conduct the research.

## Methodology: Looking for the Real

In *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, McGowan (2007) considers how the world of film is analogous to that of a dream world. Of prime importance is that in neither world is the subject able to consciously influence the events therein. In the world of dreams, images and scenarios are presented to the subject who experiences them without intervention of critical thought or consciousness. Similarly, in the film world, according to McGowan, the spectator is presented with the scenario or the story and has no choice but to follow it to its conclusion.

But the filmic path upon which one travels is very different depending upon the intention of the filmmaker, and the Imaginary of the subject. Does the film preserve a particular Symbolic order and therefore the Imaginary of corresponding subjects? Does the presence of lacunae

signal the presence of the Real, portending the possibility of the traumatic? The power of the filmic traumatic is that it "reveals the nonsensical status of our master signifier" (McGowan, 2007, p. 17), and as such holds the key, according to McGowan, to a politically charged cinema. However, not all films are intended to disrupt the taken-for-granted of the Symbolic, and I will be looking for the presence and/or absence of *objet petit a* and fantasies that accompany it. Or in McGowan's words, I will be looking for the Real.

In Chapter 2, I describe the topology of the three registers and the potential destabilizing effect of *objet petit a* and the role of fantasy in remediating or exacerbating the effects of the gaze. These are the elements that I will be looking for in the film and my search will be aided by a set of questions developed by McGowan (2008) to guide film analysis in general:

> Does a particular film obscure the gaze throughout? Does it sustain the gaze as an unapproachable absence? Does it domesticate the trauma of the gaze through a fantasmatic scenario? Does it take this fantasmatic scenario so far as to undermine it from within? And perhaps most importantly, does it allow us to encounter the gaze in its full traumatic import? (p. 17)

The gaze as may be discourse such as the clash of civilizations discourse, or the war on terror discourse, or an Orientalist discourse. If present but obscured, what visual or representational elements obscure it, such as a fantasy triggering *objet petit a*? Fantasy elements are another important analytic signpost in film, especially fantasy that "provides private support for public ideology, covering the ground the ideology cannot. Thus, it necessarily involves the dirty secrets, the hidden obscenity that cannot safely appear in public" (McGowan, 2008, p. 19). Clues to the presence of this type of fantasy include the use of tropes. Tropes may have the capacity to obscure *objet petit a* and buttress the Symbolic. Their presence in film reassures that our

relationship to the Symbolic is both secure and in alignment. In previous chapters, I have discussed the presence of tropes in Hollywood films and other forms of American (and Canadian) popular culture (Alsultany, 2012; Said,1978; Shaheen, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2008; Yeğenoğlu, 1998; Yin, 2010). The collection and analysis of data relating to the significance and effects of these tropes is central to this research.

Drawing upon Lacan and the work of those who have adapted Lacanian gaze theory for the purposes of film analysis (McGowan, 2007; McGowan & Kunkle, 2004; Zizek, 2007; Carlsson, 2012; Krips, 2010), I identify key signposts to enable the collection of filmic elements that would comprise the data. These include tropes, *objet petit a* (which may present as lacunae, distortions, or ruptures), and fantasy of the integrative or traumatic variety (McGowan, 2007). These criteria, or perhaps more accurately filmic elements, were chosen for their usefulness in determining if the film fell into one of two broad categories: films in which the Symbolic order is preserved through fantasy, and films that allow for a traumatic encounter with the incompleteness of the Symbolic (the Real). The former will likely contribute to the circulation of Orientalist discourses and therefore would be a site of study for how this visual economy reproduces itself for the purpose of developing approaches to disrupting it, through analysis or other means. The second type of film would be one in which the filmmaker creates a filmic space in which there is an "utter failure of the spectator's seemingly safe distance and assumed mastery" (McGowan, 2003, p. 29). This might be evident through the presence of filmic devices that reveal the constructed nature of the Symbolic, or that destroy the safe (psychic) distance between the subject and the object of its desire – in short, devices that deprive the subject of both

mastery and desire, thus resulting in an encounter with the Real.[5] This type of film would be valuable, from a pedagogical perspective.

## Qualitative Case Study within a Transformative Paradigm

The aim of this study is not to quantify a phenomenon; that is, I am not counting up how many films engage in gendered Orientalist representation, nor am I cataloging tropes found within films. My research objective is to answer the questions set out for this study through an exploration of the complexities within an exemplar of the phenomenon to develop a way of reading such films. In short, I seek a deep understanding of an example of a social phenomenon, the purpose of which is to gain insight and to apply that insight to enhance a future pedagogical approach to addressing gendered Orientalism. The aim and the site of research led me to determine that a deep read of an excellent exemplar would provide the greatest likelihood of achieving the desired research outcomes. Thus, I chose a case study method within a qualitative paradigm. In this section, I outline the salience of my choices, and what methods I use to conduct the research.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research itself constitutes a form of resistance against hegemony, a

> struggle against neoliberal regimes of truth, science, and justice…The qualitative research community consists of groups of globally dispersed persons who are attempting to implement a critical interpretive approach that will help them (and others) make sense

[5] The later work of Lacan externalizes the gaze and repositions it outside of the subject, a point of encounter "that is, the traumatic point at which Symbolic reality fails" (Flisfeder & Willis, 2014, p. 5).

> of the terrifying conditions that define daily life at the second decade of this new century. (p. xiii)

Since the 1980's, the breadth and depth of critical, anti-oppressive, queer, feminist, and other strands and forms of research and research methods have emerged and flourished. These methodologies refuse the totalizing forms of positivist and earlier iterations of qualitative research. How research is conducted, what constitutes research, and what counts as valid research is being contested and comlexified. Research methodologies generally are "moving in several different directions at the same time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 1). These possibilities are both exciting and daunting: exciting because one can imagine research projects that would have been discounted in a previous research area, and daunting because the frameworks are emergent, tentative, under scrutiny, and experimental. Still, when the research project cannot fit within a traditional paradigm, then the way forward is to choose the paradigm to fit the project.

**Transformative Research and Validity**

According to Donna Mertens (2010), within the realm of qualitative research the transformative paradigm is used to delineate research that focuses on the examination and redress of social and political inequity and injustice. While the "philosophical basis of the transformative paradigm is quite diverse…[t]he transformative paradigm provides a philosophical framework that explicitly addresses issues of power and justice" (p. 25). Postcolonial and postcolonial feminist research and scholarship are situated within this paradigm. Situating one's research within this paradigm shapes decisions regarding methodology as well as considerations relating to validity. Methodologically speaking, transformative research considers historically silenced voices, addresses issues of power, and considers the implications of the research for social action (Mertens, 2010). Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2005) presaged this

perspective when they describe research as a means of resistance "that transgress the boundaries of traditional research and scholarship" (p. 1). In Chapter 1, I describe the socio-political and personal contexts that have shaped and continue to shape this work, and I established that this study is intended to read, speak, and teach against oppressive and damaging representational practices that are both longstanding and widespread. My aims are congruent with paradigms described variously as transformative (Mertens, 2010), anti-oppressive (Brown & Strega, 2005), and postcolonial (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001). All three apply equally to the work and so I locate my project, paradigmatically as straddling all three.

The decision to locate the research within a transformative, anti-oppressive, and postcolonial paradigm necessarily demands that we recalibrate what constitutes validity. Brown and Strega (2005), Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2018), and Lather (2018) describe varying alternatives to traditional notions of validity and rigor. Lather argues for purpose-informed notions of validity within emancipatory (or transformative) research, which she describes as a "series of fruitful interruptions" (p. 36). Lather's reflections and writings about validity require the researcher to "rupture validity as a regime of truth" (p. 34). Thinking beyond positivist discourses of validity is daunting, perhaps more so for a novice scholar. Who am I to ignore canonical doctrine? However, Lather's admonishment rings true and right for this research. And her direction is taken up by Lincoln et al. (2018) in their work on validity. They, like Lather, propose catalytic validity, and suggest that validity exists to the degree that the research points to, supports, or engenders future interruptions and counter-hegemonic endeavours. This kind of validity they refer to as tactical. A second kind of validity that relates to this research, articulated by Lincoln et al. (2018) – and which also echoes Lather – is crystalline validity. Research that reflects this type of validity reveals "the hidden assumptions and life-denying repressions"

(Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018, p. 141). Crystalline validity is reflected in new ways of viewing a scene, a story, a condition, a set of representations; it exists in the complexifying and multiplying of perspectives. These two perspectives and alternative ways of conceiving of the value of and legitimacy of research are consistent with the pedagogical aims of this research. If there is validity in the research, then there will be transgressive, anti-oppressive applications for it in the world of education, ideas, and human engagement.

**Case Study within a Transformative Paradigm**

A case study is "the intensive analysis of an individual unit" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 315), and is well suited to my research aims. Thomas Schwandt and Emily Gates (2018) point out that there is a great deal of variation regarding what is a case study. Cases range from the "micro" to "meso" to "macro" (p. 341). For the purposes of this study I locate the case at the level of the micro in as much as it is an example of a type of film (genre – meso) within a larger scene (Hollywood film – macro). In addition to this description of a case study, Schwandt and Gates offer a summary of other descriptors, and while there are variations about the purpose of case study research, it is clear that all definitions emphasize that the case study involves a close and detailed examination of a case.

While case studies are controversial with respect to generalizability, that is not the intent of the research. However, in spite of the specificity of the case (large or small), what one learns in the process of deep analysis can, and I would argue, will have some applicability for similar phenomenon. And this is more so when the case itself is complex. This idea is echoed in Schwandt and Gates (2018), who suggest that a study done well might be used in another analogous context. That is the intent of this project: to test an analytic frame on this case, with

the expectation that it will prove useful when applied to similar forms of representation. This dissertation is the beginning of a larger study – an idea I will return to in Chapter 7.

### Selecting the case

To select the film for study, I developed a set of criteria with which to establish a longlist of potential films. Initially, I cast a wide net, which is reflected in the criteria. I was interested in screening films that

- had Arab/Muslim (A/M) female characters whose presence was sustained throughout the film (the character need not be the protagonist);
- were available in English or with English subtitles;
- have been distributed in Canada/West/North America; and
- were made and distributed in 1991 or later, which corresponds to the first invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War and thus marks an important contemporary moment in the West's relationship with the Arab/Muslim world, particularly as it relates to emerging relationships between filmmakers and the Pentagon and representations of the war on terror. (See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of this subgenre of Hollywood films.)

The selection process for this longlist of films was iterative: as I identified possible films that surfaced through literature and web searches or through recommendations from other scholars, previewed them, then discarded or added them to the longlist. Initially, I was open to reviewing Hollywood films and films made elsewhere. By Hollywood film, I refer to what McGowan (2007) describes as the filmic descendants of classical Hollywood films that "consistently provide fantasmic support for the ideology of the capitalist society" (p. 17). And by "elsewhere" I refer to films made in the Middle East or by A/M filmmakers.

To expedite the search for potential Hollywood films, I developed a rigorous and efficient selection process. I began with the catalogue of films found in Jack Shaheen's (2003) *Reel Bad Arabs* (both the documentary and the companion book) in which he summarizes the plot and key problematic imagery. This catalogue allowed me to short-list possible Hollywood films. To supplement this process, I drew upon Tung Yin's study (2010), which I cross-referenced with Shaheen's work. Then, drawing upon existing research and using library search engines, I conducted searches for Middle Eastern films using the search terms "Arab" and/or "Muslim," and "Women" and/or "Middle East," and "Hollywood Film" or "Cinema" or "Motion Pictures.

The selection process for a film made by an Arab/Muslim filmmaker required me to perform internet searches (including University of Alberta Library databases) using the terms "Arab filmmakers," "Arab Women and Film," "recent Arabic Language Films," and "women in Arab/Muslim films." In addition, I consulted *The Encyclopaedia of Arab Women Filmmakers*, by Rebecca Hillauer (2005), which includes a catalogue of films made by Arab women from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Recent media coverage of emerging Arab women filmmakers also provided the titles of possible films for selection in this study. While I deliberately included searches for films made by Arab/Muslim women, this was not a criterion for selection.

Finally, in developing a long list of Hollywood and non-Hollywood films (i.e., those made by Arab/Muslim filmmakers), I sought the recommendations of scholars familiar with these areas of study (women, Orientalism, Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, gendered racism). A burgeoning community of Arab/Muslim filmmakers within the Levant (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan), Europe, and North America also made it possible to access dozens of possible films. After reading over 30 synopses and/or critical reviews in trade publications, I developed the following longlist for review:

Table 3.1 Longlist of possible films for analysis

| Hollywood Films | Non-Hollywood Films |
|---|---|
| *Rendition* | *Towelhead* |
| *The Kingdom* | *Mooz-Lum* |
| *Babel* | *Paradise Now* |
| *Rules of Engagement* | *Rana's Wedding* |
| *The 13th Warrior* | *Clay Dolls* |
| *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* | *Amreeka* |
| *Three Kings* | *Sabah* |
| *Kingdom of Heaven* | *Caramel* |
| *The Sum of all Fears* | *Zero Dark Thirty* |
| *Argo* | *Where Do We Go Now?* |
| *Syriana Iron Man* | *The Kite Runner* |
| | *The Salt of This Sea* |
| | *The Time That Remains* |
| | *Miral* |
| | *The Band's Visit* |

I watched each of these films at least once. Some were easy to exclude from a potential shortlist; others I had to watch more than once to make a decision about their inclusion or exclusion. During this phase of the research, some preliminary findings emerged that made this selection process both challenging and fruitful. While I was prepared for the usual filmic tropes – such as harem women, oppressed women in burqa and niqab, backwards women and even women as terrorists – I was taken aback to find that A/M women are largely absent in

mainstream Hollywood films, particularly the subgenres that deal with American military intervention and foreign policy in the Middle East. This lead to my second discovery regarding the emergent Hollywood film subgenre, which has been dubbed "military-media-industry/complex," heralding what Peter Maass (2012) describes as "the problematic offspring of the worrisome endeavor known as embedded journalism." Although Maass is specifically referring to *Zero Dark Thirty*, there are other Hollywood films that would fall under this category, including the much-acclaimed and -watched *American Sniper*. Upon making this discovery, I revised my criteria regarding images of A/M women to include startling or unusual representations of A/M women. While at first glance this is a subjective criterion, taken within the context of the Lacanian framework presented at the beginning of this chapter, this criterion potentially constitutes looking for fantasy, or the Real. I applied the amended criteria to my search and generated the following shortlist of films:

| **Hollywood Films** | **Non-Hollywood Films** |
|---|---|
| *Rendition* | *Paradise Now* |
| *The Kingdom* | *Caramel* |
| *Rules of Engagement* | *Where Do We Go Now?* |
| *Three Kings* | *The Time That Remains* |
| *Zero Dark Thirty* | |
| *Syriana* | |

Table 3.2 Shortlist of possible films for research

After I developed the shortlist, I watched each film once without relying on any specific analytic framework, but just to get a feel for the film. This is congruent with Denzin's (2004)

approach to analyzing film. Next, I began looking for evidence of the Real and *objet petit a* (McGowan, 2007; McGowan & Kunkle, 2004; Zizek, 2007; Carlsson, 2012; Krips, 2010). I developed a simple matrix (see Appendix A for the template) that allowed me to identify and tabulate filmic elements that would signal whether there was sufficient 'data' for the film to be useful in this study. The matrix included the following elements: (a) tropes (which contribute to fantasy); (b) lacuna (which gesture towards *objet petit a*); and (c) traumatic encounters with the Real. These criteria, or perhaps more accurately filmic elements, were chosen for their usefulness in determining if the film fell into one of two broad categories: films in which the Symbolic order is preserved through fantasy, and films that allow for a traumatic encounter with the incompleteness of the Symbolic (the Real).

I surmised that the first type of film might contribute to the circulation of Orientalist discourses and therefore would be useful as a case for this study. The second type of film would be one in which the filmmaker creates a filmic space in which there is an "utter failure of the spectator's seemingly safe distance and assumed mastery" (McGowan, 2003, p. 29). This might be evident through the presence of filmic devices that reveal the constructed nature of the Symbolic, or which destroys the safe (psychic) distance between the subject and the object of its desire – in short, devices that deprive the subject of both mastery and desire, and thus result in an encounter with the Real. Once I was satisfied with the matrix, I tested it using one film from each broad category. I settled on testing the film-watching matrix on *Rendition* and *Towelhead*. The matrix was not only a useful analytic device with which to organize my thoughts and reactions to the film, but it also helped me to navigate some of the more difficult subject matter. Aside from *Sabah, Caramel*, and *The Time That Remains*, graphic scenes of torture, war and/or sexual abuse and violence permeated the films. While it was important to attend to and record my affective

response to the difficult films, the matrix enabled me to broaden my analytic focus to isolate relevant filmic elements and their potential meanings.

I watched each film at least three times. As previously mentioned, the initial viewing was done without any analytic mediation. During the second viewing, I used the matrix to make notes. The third viewing was a repeat of the second, to see if I had captured the main themes and elements. I then watched the remainder of the films and used the matrix as a central organizing tool for making notes. This process took longer than I anticipated, in part, because I had not accounted for my own affective engagement with the films and, on many occasions, it took several days to watch a film because of the graphic and disturbing content. Ironically, I conducted much of this research during the invasion of Gaza by the Israelis in July 2014, which provided a bizarre backdrop for my filmic explorations. The Hollywood films I was reviewing depicted often horrific treatment of Arabs/Muslim, which was represented as necessary to quash terror. The media representations of the invasion of Gaza bore a striking similarity to the filmic fictions.

Once I had watched the shortlist of films sufficiently to evaluate them on the basis of my matrix, I was able to select two films for analysis: one each from the two categories previously outlined. I will begin by outlining the reasons for not selecting *Rendition*, the *Kingdom*, *Rules of Engagement*, *Syriana*, and *Three Kings*. Then I will provide my rationale for selecting *Zero Dark Thirty* and repeat this for the non-Hollywood films made by Arab/Muslim filmmakers.

It bears repeating that the selected films must be useful in answering my central research questions and that these questions were important in guiding my selection of films: What do these representations communicate about the gendered and racialized relations of power that are

knotted together at the nexus of coloniality and patriarchy? What do the Symbolic orderings of these representations communicate about the socio-political location of these subjects?

I began the selection process with *Rendition*, the only film that had a sustained A/M woman character, the protagonist's mother. However, I deemed the role as too one-dimensional to be of use or interest for the purposes of this research. If I had been studying representations of A/M men, *Rendition* and *The Kingdom* would have made interesting choices given the tender representations of masculinity as embodied by the main Arab/Muslim male characters. However, the representations of women were too limited to provide substantial data for analysis, therefore I did not select either of those films to study.

One of my motivations for doing this research was an encounter with the film *The Rules of Engagement*, which I discuss in some detail in Chapter 2. It constitutes one of the more obvious examples of anti-Arab/Muslim bias in Hollywood films. I had thought the scene with the child at the conclusion of the film might make it worth analyzing. However, I felt the girl could not stand in for representations of A/M women. This film would be an excellent source of data in any research on representations of A/M children – research that has importance and value given Canada and the US vilification of Omar Khadr as a child soldier – but it was not relevant to this study.

I have long admired the work of George Clooney, particularly his filmic attempts to critique various aspects of the American establishment and contribute some sort of nuanced representations of Arab peoples in general. Both *Syriana* and *Three Kings* would have been useful with regard to his use of fantasy to disrupt the Symbolic (McGowan, 2003). Had I expanded this study to include a third film, I would have included one of these films. However, I was not able to include this data at the risk of this project becoming unwieldy. And in any case,

even Clooney's films had scant representations of A/M women, and they were incidental and tropic.

Choosing a suitable Hollywood film for analysis was made more challenging due to this unexpected absence of any substantive representations of Arab/Muslim women – an absence perhaps made more unavoidable given the filmic parameters I established for this research. The most limiting yet important parameter included narrowing the type of representations to Arab women who may or may not be Muslim but whose identities become conflated as such. Had I included films about Iranian women or Pakistani women, I might have had a different outcome. I did consider expanding my search parameters, but the more I reflected upon this particular absence, the more it became an increasingly irresistible point of analytic departure, not only for its ubiquity but also for its symbolic richness.

The decision to choose *Zero Dark Thirty* (*ZD30*) emerged out of the convergence of three elements: first, that it has been identified by some, and I agree, as belonging to the war film subgenre media-military-industrial-complex; second, that the absence of images of A/M women in the first two hours of the film is so starkly contrasted with the plethora of images of terrorized and brutalized women in the final 29 minutes of the film; and finally, it utilizes fantasy and the fantasmic throughout the film. While I originally stipulated that one criterion for selection was the sustained presence of Arab /Muslim women in the film, I later amended this to include unusual or startling representations. From my first encounter with the images presented at the end of the film, their Fanonian meaning was apparent, and the richness of their symbolism only intensified with analysis.

In service to my main research questions, a set of sub-questions emerged: What do the symbolic orderings of these absences communicate about the socio-political location of subjects?

What might the Oedipal myth and the gaze of later Lacanian theory reveal about this (and other) popular cultural representations of Arab/Muslim women and their place in the so-called Western psyche? And what might Zero Dark Thirty (Bigelow et al. 2012) say about the gendered and racialized relations that are knotted together at the nexus of coloniality and patriarchy?

The non-Hollywood films made by Arab/Muslim filmmakers were replete with images of A/M women, which in some ways made the decision not to include them quite difficult as many would have worked in this study. I actually came into this research wanting to use *Paradise Now* – a film I've long known about and which utilizes some interesting, unorthodox devices to take up the difficult topic of suicide bombings in Israel/Palestine – given there are two female characters that are presented in such a way as to counter commonly held stereotypes about A/M women. However, after viewing the film for the third time, I began to notice that it employed an uncomfortable amount of didacticism, which subtracted from its more artful subtleties. Political heavy handedness was also the reason I declined to use *The Salt of This Sea*, which is a beautifully filmed and told story with a powerful female lead (played by actor and spoken word artist Suheir Hammad). Both films are well done and ought to be seen by larger Western audiences. They would be excellent choices if I were conducting a study about the film scene in and about Palestine, but they were not appropriate for this study.

Finally, I had hoped to choose a film by one of the many Arab female directors. I did short-list one of Nadine Labaki's films, most notably *Caramel.* Labaki is a Lebanese director and actor whose work is shown in art house theatres in the West. *Caramel* has an abundance of female characters who are rich in nuance and variation, all of whom share the lead (this is wonderfully characteristic of Labaki's films) and are the speaking subjects of the film. While there were essentialized representations of A/M men and women, the centrality of their

characters and Labaki's decision to let them all speak for themselves made this a particularly interesting contrast to and worked well contrapuntally with Bigelow et al.'s *ZD30*. It is mobilized, not in contrast to *ZD30* but for its pedagogical value, which I discuss in Chapter 6.

### Approach to data collection

Denzin (2004) offers a four-phase approach to conducting research on visual materials, including film, each with a number of elements or principles. Coherent with the methodological ethos of this study, Denzin emphases the provisional nature of this approach and recommends that the researcher adapt these principles to suit their specific research project. This suited the exploratory and mobile processes I was already applying to the development of the methodology and the methods.

I identified the following elements as relevant and helpful to guide my data collection, and I merged Denzin's recommendations with the data collection methods I had developed experientially. This framework is adapted from Chapter 5.7, "Reading film: Using films and videos as empirical social science material" (pp. 240–241). Direct quotes are signaled with the use of quotation marks; otherwise, I have taken the liberty of paraphrasing or adapting his recommendations to fit my project.

I had already completed the first step in data collection with the short-listing. However, using Denzin's advice to look and feel, without conceptualizing, pausing, or capturing images or data, watched *ZD30* again. After watching the film, I endeavoured to attend to my affective response to the film and to record these responses along with my initial thoughts. I took note of any questions that arose. After letting the film sit for a couple of days, I revisited my research questions in light of that viewing of the film, and let the film speak to those questions.

After this initial viewing, I then began a series of viewings in which I examined the film for evidence of images, scenes, plotlines, dialogue, and character development that were relevant to my research questions. The next phase of the process was to begin to capture specific images and document key scenes, characters, and other filmic elements. It was during this phase that I began to develop an inventory of the data. At this point, the data mostly consisted of images, with some brief, mostly descriptive notes about each image. Initially, I used NVivo to catalogue the screenshots to enable a searchable record of images.

The next phase of the research, involving what Denzin refers to as microanalysis, took place over many months and consisted of an iterative process of moving from the particular to the whole, and back again. What I mean by that is that I would probe deeply into a scene or a particular representation, then watch it within a larger section of the film to recontextualize it. During this phase of the research, the more salient scenes and images began to emerge. Their importance was signaled by my return to them and by their relevance to larger sets of significations. This naturally led to the next element of Denzin's process: the "search for patterns." In many respects, patterns emerged organically, but my active search for them continued even until the final draft of the research was written. Nonetheless, at this point, key images were persisting in the preliminary analysis, and I printed the most relevant screenshots to create a tactile archive of the images, scenes, and characters that were most relevant to my research questions.

The next phase of the project was a fulsome application and reading of the film through the using the analytic approach presented at the outset of this chapter. This was a recursive process, which eventually included merging these analytic tools with the conceptual framework articulated in Chapter 2. Denzin (2004) emphasizes that "There is never a correct reading of a

visual text. There are only multiple interpretations" (p. 238). The analysis of the data came to a close because these projects have timelines and deadlines. The fascinating aspect of this kind of study is that meaning making can be expanded and extended through the introduction of new analytic frameworks.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I describe the methodology and methods I used to conduct my research. I began with a description of how I use certain concepts from Lacan via McGowan with which to collect data in this case study. I then describe how this research is located within a qualitative and transformational paradigm in service to the critical and social justice aims of the research. Recent scholarship on qualitative research gives the researcher more freedom with respect to thinking through what constitutes validity, but this is a daunting responsibility nonetheless. There is some guidance from those who are engaged in critical, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive research, and I take my lead from them in setting standards for my research.

The remainder of the chapter concerns itself with how I chose the case (the film *Dark Zero Thirty*) and the approach I used to collect, sort, and analyze the data. The spaciousness of Denzin's approach worked well within the qualitative and critical methodology, allowing an extraordinarily deep read of the film. The findings are presented in two parts to allow for the fullness of the research to emerge. And so, the next two chapters report on what emerged from the data.

# Chapter 4

## Nested Binaries of Orientalism

Thus, to set up its boundaries as human, civilized, and universal the Western subject inscribed the history of its others as backward and traditional … It is this order which enabled the West to construe and affirm its difference from others.

—Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*

### Introduction

The many films under consideration for this project were both more and less surprising in their representational practices. While I was prepared for and fully expected to encounter the usual gendered tropes relating to Arab and/or Muslim women – harem women, oppressed women in burqa and niqab, backwards women and even women terrorists – I was taken aback by the *absence* of A/M women in post-9/11 mainstream Hollywood films, especially those whose subject matter is broadly related to Western foreign affairs and the Middle East, and which fall within the genre known as the media-military-industrial complex, a genre I will expand upon in this chapter.

My response to this initial set of findings was to intensify my search. However, when I serendipitously encountered a paper about the last literary offering of Mahmoud Darwish's *In the Presence of Absence* (2011), I recognized that this absence was (and is) a potent phenomenon for this research. This insight served to catalyze a consideration of absence as a compelling site of study – a decision that was further buttressed by Robert Walser's (1993) references to exscription of women in metal music. In his study of the traditionally hypermasculine metal

music scene, Walser found that there was "total denial of gender anxieties through the articulation of fantastic worlds without women" (p. 110). This writing out of women via the writing out of the possibility of the multiple, fluid, and contested expressions of gender identity not only excludes those who identify as women, but sexual and gendered Others as well. Military culture also has a history of hypermasculinity and has traditionally exscripted women and those whose gender expression is beyond the binary. Including women in the military has not, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, led to a remediation of this situation, but rather has co-opted women into adopting a subject position that *does not* threaten the existing pre-dominance of the masculine. This exscription in *ZD30* extends to the representation(s) of A/M women whose psychic presence is hollowed out, even when there is the shadow of a physical presence. Together, absence and exscription have proved to be invaluable additions to the lens I have crafted and with which I examine the representations of A/M women in *Zero Dark Thirty*.

*ZD30* emerges as an important case study into how gender is mobilized to communicate a set of social relations in an historical moment when Orientalism is experiencing a resurgence and is being taken up in sometimes surprising ways and spaces. It is impossible to explore representations of A/M women in popular culture without also examining the ways in which those representations sit in relation to other visual elements of, in this case, a film. Put otherwise, I had to examine the representations of A/M women in relation to representations of other subjects and subject positions. Eventually, in this filmic rendering of the socio-political order, all of these subject positions are represented as dominant to A/M women subjects.

The data presented in this and the next chapter emerged by reading *ZD30* through the framework set out in Chapter 2, specifically as it relates to understanding the effects of the binary orderings of subjects within a Symbolic order constituted through the contemporary clash

of civilizations discourse. It is helpful to think of the following presentation of the data as a nested set of binaries. Beginning with the Lacanian Symbolic, *ZD30* faithfully reproduces the Occidental/Oriental binary, which embeds the clash of civilizations discourse as well as the long history of Orientalism. Within this symbolic ordering, gendered and racialized binary relations play out within the film through a number of nested binaries which constitute various iterations of the Western/Eastern Orientalist binary and the masculine/feminine of the phallocentric ordering of genders.

In this chapter. I present the data on the identities relating to Western subjects (of all genders) and A/M men. In Chapter 5, I present the findings relating to A/M women, subjects who (also via Orientalism and phallocentrism) are regulated and relegated to the subordinate half of various binaries. This chapter proceeds in three parts. First, I locate this film within a broader film genre, the media-military-industrial complex, a location that is salient to this research. Second, I provide a synopsis of the film and sketch out some of the main characters. Finally, I take up the complex sets of binary relations found in the representations of Western subjects and Arab/Muslim men; these relational orderings wind their way around the masculine/feminine binary at the heart of phallocentrism.

## The Media-Military-Industrial Complex

The world of media, including popular culture, has had a long and well-studied relationship to the socio-political context within which it operates, which includes its relationship with corporate and political interests. The potential problems with these kinds of relationships – between various mass media and particular political, economic, and social interests – have been variously noted by Dwight Eisenhower (1961) and Noam Chomsky (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). These thinkers have conventionally referred to this as the military-industrial complex, but

recently other key sectors of civil society have been added to that axis, including *media.* This particular relationship has been dubbed the "military-media-industrial complex" (Sherman, 2005; Eskow, 2006; Vavrus, 2013; Schlossberg, 2017) and refers, in part, to the particular way in which a filmic subgenre represents and is authorized by (to one degree or another) American military operations in the Middle East and parts of the Muslim world post-9/11. According to cultural studies and film scholar Angela Ndalianis (2015), the events and aftermath of 9/11 "were presented to the world through diverse media – newspapers, news and current affair television programs – that repeated and codified the depiction of key events associated with 9/11 and post-9/11" (p. 136). Ndalianis (2015) goes onto say that

> As an event that has been acknowledged as one of the most watched media spectacles in human history, many of its signifying systems were absorbed into the semiotic space of the cinema, influencing the production of "based on reality" films that explicitly narrativized the 9/11 events and US military presence in the Middle East – for example, *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), *The Hurt Locker* (2008), *Home of the Brave* (2006), *World Trade Center* (2006) and *United 93* (2006). (p. 136)

Ndalianis is building upon the work of Stephen Prince who has studied the effects that geopolitics and domestic policies are having on American filmmaking. Prince (2009) claims that "The most significant long-term influence of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and of the Iraq War that followed, is likely to be found in the provision of new templates for genre filmmaking" (p. 286). Indeed, while *ZD30* remains an excellent example of this genre, films continue to be added to the canon.[6]

[6] *Lone Survivor* (2013), *American Sniper* (2014), *Sniper: Ghost Shooter* (2016), *Sniper: Special Ops* (2016), *13 Hours: Secret Soldiers of Benghazi* (2016), *Sand Castle* (2017), *12 Strong* (2018), *The 15:17 to Paris* (2018).

## Background and Synopsis of *Zero Dark Thirty*[7]

*ZD30* takes place in an Orient construed through a colonial past an imperial present. Indeed, it is represented by Bigelow et al. as dark, disturbing, and dangerous to Westerners. The film is made for critical melancholia (Khanna, 2003). Directed by Kathryn Bigelow et al. (2012), *ZD30* is the story of a woman, and perhaps even a nation, obsessed with finding and killing Osama Bin Laden, the man perceived to be the architect of the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City on September 11, 2001. After winning four Golden Globe Awards (Best Motion Picture – Drama, Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Actress in a Motion Picture-Drama), *ZD30* was touted as being a strong contender for several Academy Awards. In the end, however, it was almost completely shut out of the Oscars. Nonetheless, *ZD30* was a worldwide cultural success with box office grosses in the tens of millions of dollars ($95,720,716 in the United States and Canada, $37.1 in other countries, for a worldwide total of $132,820,716). Its popular success and the political valence of the film makes it worthy of study, particularly if one is interested in contemporary Orientalism.

Although it was a popular success, *ZD30* was also highly controversial, drawing both praise and criticism over its treatment of the subject of torture or enhanced interrogation techniques (Levine, 2013), its relationship with the CIA (Densen, 2014), its postfeminist gloss (Hasian Jr., 2013; Eisenstein, 2013), its Orientalism/racism (Azeb, 2013; Hasian Jr., 2014; Reichert, 2013), and a general lack of historical or contextual perspective (Greenwald, 2013; Hasian Jr., 2014; Levine, 2013; Reichert 2013). While these criticisms might otherwise seem

[7] *Zero Dark Thirty* is a military term that refers to the very early hours of the morning. The raid on Osama Bin Laden's family home took place during "zero dark thirty." The film's original title was changed from the script title, *For God and Country*.

excessive for a popular cultural form, the filmmaker's claim that *ZD30* was based upon real events likely established a different set of criteria for evaluating the film.

*ZD30* (Bigelow et al., 2012) opens with a black screen, then words appear in white font: "The following motion picture is based on first-hand accounts of actual events" (0:1:06). This device works to create an element of truthfulness and trustworthiness and lends it an air of veracity. Bigelow et al. continue to capitalize on factual accounts in the next scene when, after the screen fades back to black and silence, a cacophony of ghostly voices emerges and overlay one another. Listening carefully, one hears dispatchers for first responder units, calls from panic-stricken people in high-jacked airplanes, and people trapped in the collapsing Word Trade Centre (WTC) (0:1:14).

At the end of this scene, one conversation comes to the fore: it is between a woman in the WTC and a 911 operator. Tearfully and desperately the woman asks, over and over, "Am I going to die?" The operator assures her (and perhaps even she believes at this point) that help and rescue are on the way. Then the phone line goes dead and we hear the operator ask, "Can anybody hear me?" In a soft and grief-stricken voice, the operator responds, "Oh my God" (0:2:22), and then there is total silence. Thus, the opening two minutes of this film establishes two parameters: this film is based on truth, and the CIA and military activities in the film are the logical consequences of the attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon in September 2011; and the name of God is invoked in prayerful grief. In this way, the filmgoer is provided with Bigelow et al.'s take on the socio-political context that ties together 9/11 and Bin Laden.

The next scene begins with text on the screen: "Two Years Later" (0:2:23). Then a black screen gives way to a strong shaft of light abruptly emanating from the top of the screen. It is an interrogation lamp. We hear the squeaking of a door opening. Script appears on the screen: The

Saudi Group. We are in a black site at an undisclosed location and the viewer is quickly exposed to a brief but brutal encounter between CIA agent Dan (Jason Clark) and the prisoner, Amar (Reda Kateb). Dan is aided by at least four balaclava-clad aids, one of whom is revealed to be Maya (Jennifer Chastain), the film's protagonist. She has only recently arrived from the United States (assigned to the Bin Laden file) and Dan mockingly notes, "You're rockin' your best suit for your first interrogation and you get this guy" (0:04:02). The implication is that Amar is a low-level suspect.

Amar, the torture victim, is a young man whose accent suggests that he is from an Arab country. This is just the first of many scenes in which Amar is tortured by Dan and then Maya. While he is viewed as a low-level operative, we are led to believe that, as the result of the use of torture, Amar eventually provides information that helps advance the Bin Laden case. Amar becomes delusional at some point because of the torture, which tallows Maya and Dan to dupe him into believing he has revealed information, and they are then able to build upon this deception during subsequent interrogations. The filmic action now focuses on Maya's pursuit of any leads that gesture in the direction of Osama Bin Laden, leads she often acquires through torture. This theme is repeated throughout the film and in this way *ZD30* insinuates that torture is an effective means of obtaining vital intelligence.

While CIA operatives in the field are relying heavily on torture to do their work, the political climate in Washington is changing. There is increasing reticence about the use of torture in black sites abroad (in the field, so to speak); Washington bosses find torture less palatable than they once did. At one point in the film, Bigelow et al. use real footage of an interview with President Obama to illustrate this shift, and documentary footage gives the film another gloss of truth. This change in mood and policy direction is greeted with derision by field agents in the

film, including agent Thomas (Jeremy Strong) who points out that their inability to use certain tactics is hampering their intelligence-gathering efforts and putting American lives at risk. The tacit, if not explicit, argument here is that torture saves innocent (read: American) lives. Wittingly or not, *ZD30* establishes the value of torture while sidestepping any engagement with the ethics of it. That rigorous research and field agents have challenged the efficacy of torture is also not engaged with in this film.

Burdened by these policies and growing skepticism about the value of continuing the search for Bin Laden, Maya is forced to continue as a lone crusader, often coming into conflict with her superiors. The film highlights her obsession with capturing Bin Laden, what increasingly appears to resemble a rogue mission marked by a series of false leads and incremental gains, and punctuated by gruesome torture scenes, bureaucratic bungling, and political games (including gendered political games). As the trail to Bin Laden turns cold, Maya's superiors want her to direct her attention elsewhere. However, a suicide bombing that results in the death of her friend and colleague Jessica serves to enrage Maya and she redoubles her efforts in spite of the administration's ambivalence towards the case. Thus, another hurdle is surmounted by the tenacious Maya.

This element of the film is interesting for the gender stereotypes present in Jennifer Ehle's portrayal of the character Jessica. On the strength of an investigation she has been carrying out, Jessica persuades an Al-Qaeda operative to meet with her to provide information. A meeting has been set up at Camp Chapman in Khost, Afghanistan. Jessica, on the telephone to Maya (who is in Islamabad), is frosting a cake and giggling as she tells Maya that she has gone all out and made the operative a birthday cake having discovered their meeting will take place on his birthday. Her giddiness and delight at this domestic offering are bizarrely out of place, given

the context. And indeed, when she catches sight of his car approaching the compound she is almost jumping up and down, clapping her hands together as if to say 'goody, goody, goody.' The whole thing turns out to be a set up and Jessica and her colleagues are killed in a suicide bombing carried out by the informant who was the intended recipient of the birthday cake.

At this point in the film, Maya's character appears part dogged determination and part delusional. Certainly, there are indications that the case becomes more personal. For example, after the aforementioned death of her colleague Jessica, she says to one of the field administrators, "A lot of my friends have died trying to do this. *I believe I was spared* so I could finish the job" (Maya, 1:19:51, emphasis added). This personalization is repeated at the end of the film when she is briefing the Navy SEAL unit that will conduct the raid on Bin Laden's suspected residence, she snaps, "You are going to find him and you are going to kill him for *me*" (46:45).

One the eve of the raid, and as the end of her decade-long obsession reaches its climax, Maya briefs the SEALs, then anxiously follows their progress from the base. The film's penultimate scene, which takes up almost one-half hour, is the Navy SEAL raid on the Abbottabad, Pakistan, residence believed to house Osama Bin Laden, members of his family, and inner circle. The gruesome scene, which furnishes many of the images for Chapter 6, culminates in the death of someone we are led to believe is Osama Bin Laden. The SEALs return to base and celebratory revelry ensues. Their triumphant demeanor is in sharp contrast with Maya's subdued response. She is led to where the body is and the camera shows her face as she slowly unzips the body bag. Maya looks down impassively at the body and studies the face of the deceased. Then she nods her confirmation of his identity and walks away.

In the final scene of the film, Maya is sitting alone on a transport aircraft. The pilot says, "You must be pretty important, you've got the whole plane to yourself! Where do you want to go?" The large door slowly closes on the plane. Tears well up in her eyes and roll down her cheeks. She briefly sobs. The credits roll.

## The Stubborn Persistence of Orientalism

*ZD30* reproduces numerous and predictable racial stereotypes and tropes, views that apparently mirror public perceptions as well as American military and intelligence organizations' perceptions of Arabs/Muslims. Evidence for the latter is twofold: first, in the endorsement and use of problematic text *The Arab Mind* (Patai, 2002) by members of the American military (Hersh, 2004; De Atkine, 2004), and second, via the troubling images of sado-masochism in detention sites.

In spite of Edward Said's (1979) critiques and more recent criticism by professor of gender, sexuality, and feminist studies Francis Hasso (2011), Raphael Patai's book is regarded by members of the military as a legitimate socio-ethnography of 'The Arab World' (which in and of itself is deeply problematic).[8] The perspective of Norvell De Atkines and Patai reflects a depoliticized, ideological, and ahistorical depiction of complex nation states and their citizens.

[8] I deduce that this book was viewed as useful by the American military and American intelligence as the foreword to the reissue was written by noted and respected Norvell B. de Atkine, Col. (res.), who spent eight years in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt, including obtaining an MA in Arab Studies from the American University in Beirut. De Atkine also teaches at the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Centre and School. He cites his own forward to the book in an article defending Patai's scholarship and the book. He writes, the book "is essential reading. At the institution where I teach military officers, *The Arab Mind* forms the basis of my cultural instruction, complemented by my own experiences of some twenty-five years living in, studying, or teaching about the Middle East" (De Atkine, 2004, p. 49).

That the book persists, despite its critics and flaws, is perhaps due to Patai's use of 'modal mind' thinking,[9] which supports the old Orientalist binary that posits Western civilization is the outcome of European Enlightenment where logos has supplanted Eros, to a positive effect. The East, on the other hand, and in this case, I refer to the Arab and/or Muslim East, is pre-Enlightenment and indeed is beyond the effects of Western civilization given its innate resistance to individual and creative actions. According to Hasso (2011), Patai's portrait of the Arab character is

> "the sum total of the motives, traits, beliefs, and values shared by the plurality in a national population," or the "modal personality." These Arab traits include family cohesion and hierarchical loyalties, honour in death rather than humiliation, self-respect, and dislike of subordination to authority. Men, he argued, over-rely on verbal utterances without the ability to follow through because of access on verbalized demand to the mother's breast until age three. (p. 5)

The modal mind thinking reflected in Patai's book is influenced by the science of national character and cultural determinism to which Arabs/Muslims are subject and which precludes their behaving in accordance with Western civilizational standards. *ZD30* reflects this cultural and political worldview in its representations of Arab/Muslims, both men and women – Al-Qaeda or civilian.

Why the fascination with the so-called Arab mind, which is apparently of great interest not only to intelligence and military organizations, but to others as well? When I did a search via the University of Alberta Libraries Academic Search Complete search engine using the term

[9] Modal mind or modal brain refers to an anthropological concept in which biology and geography intersect to create a mind-type, such as the *Arab mind*, that Patai writes about.

"The Arab mind," 7,089 entries were returned; a Google search returned over 50,000 hits. A similar search using the term "The Muslim mind" turned up even more hits. Obviously, this is a question that is often asked and often answered. The trouble is, those providing the answers are often themselves Orientalists like Patai. And the echo chamber continues to reproduce itself, including in works of popular culture, such as *ZD30*.

The Orient of *ZD30* is mostly communicated through the incidental presence of people and their civil infrastructure depicted in the many street scenes. I was curious about where the street scenes were filmed, given their importance in exploring latent Orientalism in this film. I discovered that the street scenes were filmed in neither an Arab- nor Muslim-majority country, but rather in India. This is an interesting choice and one that that is perhaps symptomatic and emblematic of Orientalists' conflations of multiple *Oriental* Others, from Arabs and Muslims, to Indians, and Chinese. This discovery also led me to wonder how actual street scenes in Arab and Muslim majority cities are depicted by those who live there.[10] My search revealed a fascinating world of contrasts and complexity, rather than sedimented essentialism. A number of Facebook sites modelled after Brandon Stanton's Humans of New York (HONY) exist. These include Humans of Karachi (HOK), Humans of Palestine (HOP), Humans of Lebanon (HOL), Humans of Afghanistan (HOA), Humans of Iraq (HOL), and several Humans of Syria (HOS) pages (see Appendix E for some examples from these pages). The images on these pages are in stark contrast to the one-dimensional representations of Arabs and Muslims in *ZD30* (see Appendix D).

[10] I have had my own first-hand experience in Arab countries: Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and very briefly Morocco. My visual experience was nothing like the depictions in the film.

By design or accident, *ZD30* reflects both latent and manifest Orientalism as described by Said and Yeğenoğlu. The obvious visual tropes and explicit dialogue that announce and pronounce what the Orient is and who the Orientals are is but one facet of these representations. However, it is the metaphoric, the seemingly unconscious elements (latent) in the film that are both compelling and telling. Bigelow et al.'s depictions of the 'Eastern street' conjure up the chaotic, laconic, and hiddenness that is part of the Orientalist discourse. The visual search scenes snake through labyrinthine streets that are all at once noisy and vaguely threatening. There is the pretence of presence, but the *real* Orient is always a mystery. This is the heart of the Orientalist's fantasy and is a clue to the "libidinal economy" (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 26) that not only underscores Orientalism but gives rise to the production of binary relations, all of which pivot on the masculine, in this case symbolized by the visible. Concealment, whether through veiling or the walls of the haram, or the mysteries of the street, that both reflects and triggers "fantasies of penetration into the mysteries of the Orient" (p. 39). In Orientalist representations, according to Yeğenoğlu, the visible is co-terminus with the masculine and the hidden with the feminine. If symbols of the hidden and symptoms of concealment function as *objet petit a*, one could say that they are overdetermined within the discourse of Orientalism.

This undercurrent of hiddenness and concealment, represented through the use of music, sweat, close-ups of nervous eyes and nervously tapping fingers, suggest a subcutaneous layer of anxiety and wariness. One must always be on guard in the Arab world. According to the Orientalist, the Orient draws its disingenuousness around itself like a veil: no one and nothing is what it seems (men under burqas, informants become suicide bombers, enemies become informants). In this film, the West is cast as the seeker (of justice) and liberating force, while the East is cast as menacing mystery as the following images suggest. The surveilled and the

surveillers. In Figure 4.1, the contrast and claim that goes with it are (almost) humorous. The West avails itself of the most up-to-date surveillance systems, but in spite of this it cannot penetrate the Orient (al psyche/sphere). It is not a matter of, well, matter. It is a matter of perception – any symbol of the Orient presents as impenetrable because it resists being known (within the discourse of Orientalism).


***Figure 4.1*. On the left, CIA drone headquarters, which has been surveilling the dwelling on the right, the home of Osama bin Laden (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

The subordinate side of the binary, the Orient, is represented in images and metaphors of indecipherability and imperceptibility. This brings to mind McGowan's (2007) discussion of Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*. Like the anamorphic skull in the painting, the symbols of Oriental concealment (including the veil) have the potential to function as lacunae, as the point in the scene that cannot be accounted for, domesticated or captured. For all of their Western (American) supremacy, which can be likened to the Ambassadors' wealth and power, they cannot get behind the *veil.* This paradox signals the effects of *objet petit a*: the fantasy of the all-powerful, all destructive Other drives the incessant desire to find it, to discover it, to master it. But of course *it* does not exist as such, any more than the Orient does. It is a discursive fiction that has, in turn, created its fictional opposite: the West. It is within this Orientalist discursive of the socio-political that we can begin to locate various subjects through complex intersections of racialized and gendered identities and subject positions.

## Masculinities in *ZD30*: The Clash of Patriarchies

The subtitle of this section is a play on Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations manifesto. Of course, Huntington was arguing that the East is antithetical to the West and destined to remain firmly outside of modernity (in the European sense of that term) and ontologically incapable of either developing or adapting to the democratic and intellectual traditions of Europe and the West. I do not mobilize this reference in that way and refuse any claims that situate these patriarchies within a binary (with one form being more benign than the other). This is the claim made by Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2010), Sally Armstrong (2002), and Ishrad Manji (2003). Western patriarchy, their argument goes, is gentler, inherently disposed to granting marginalized and oppressed groups their emancipation. The West is, by its very nature, an evolving civilization, and women have a better chance within Western patriarchy (based on these claims) than outside of it. Western practices of slavery, colonialism, genocide, imperialism, and contemporary rape culture do not seem to persuade otherwise.

The purpose of this section is not to defend either Western or Eastern patriarchy – a pox on both of their houses. However, it is important to unpack these nested binaries to explicate the way in which self-identified feminists come to a) defend patriarchy; and b) reproduce elements of it (via their support for economic, policy, and military practices) that are inherently antithetical to human and women's emancipation. In *ZD30*, Kathryn Bigelow et al. join Ali, Armstrong, and Manji "in conflating the masculine (and Western) with the Universal" (Yeğenoğlu, 1998, p. 106). In so doing, all of the dividing practices of Enlightenment ideology are at play, including gender and race. For masculinity (read Western and white) to preserve its special place within this framework, it must do so by de-masculinizing racialized Others. Yeğenoğlu (1998, 2003, 2014), Sunera Thobani (2014), and Sherene Razack (2001, 2004, 2005a,

2005b, 2007) have written extensively on this subject, pointing out that the war on terror as it intersects with Orientalism has produced the Arab/Muslim man as the monstrous, the perfect exemplar of the castrated subject. Thus, race and gender, which have a complex relationship with one another, are co-mediated and determined at the nexus of Orientalism and phallocentrism. In this film, the following images of male-identified subjects reflect the ideology of Western Enlightenment as it intersects with contemporary Orientalism to create the binary Western man/A/M man.

**Representations of Western Men: Universal Subjects**

The American men in *ZD30* are definitely portrayed as forceful, but not silent. They are given to shows of brute force, strong cruelty, and vocalizations of their dominance. There are two exceptions to this: Jack (the black field agent) and Hakim (the Arabic-speaking translator). The field agents and the Navy SEALs (that is, the frontline of American authority) may have been directed to portray boyish recklessness, but they could turn to cruelty in a moment. Their dress and irreverence may suggest an air of the unconventional, but they are clearly ideologically driven and unquestioning in their patriotism. Evident in Dan's skill as a torturer and the SEALs' ability to kill civilians and terrify children without apparent remorse are but two examples. In spite of these representations, Bigelow et al. faithfully reproduce this violence within the mythical rubric of American exceptionalism in regards to their unchallenged position as principled defenders of freedom and democracy. Within the context of the persistence of this myth, Bigelow et al. can mobilize this sentiment to capitalize on the events of 9/11 to mobilize Orientalism.

Aside from the field agents and Navy SEALs, there are a plethora of suited administrators and members of the political class in the film; again, most are white men, and

there are very few women. These are men who command, demand, provide, and withhold, not unlike the relationship the field agents have with those they torture. Authority circulates in very particular ways and within a carefully prescribed masculinity. Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 reflect some of the range of masculinities afforded American men. They are meant to symbolize positive characteristics associated with civilization, intelligence, ethics, and courage. If we parse the image in Figure 4.2 we see beards, dishevelment, and facial features that reflect stern and even angry expressions. If we compare these representations of American men with the images of A/M men in Figure 4.8 – outward skin colour and clothing aside – there is not much difference. However, a beard on an American military man's face does not signal the same thing as a beard sported by an A/M man.

A similar contrast presents itself with respect to the clean-cut and suited figures of the CIA administration. When such a figure demands the killing of people in an angry voice (see Figure 4.3), it is the voice of moral indignation, not vile terrorism. If similar words were uttered, even by the most clean-shaven and be-suited of A/M men, that call for death would be read very differently.

***Figure 4.2.*** **Representations of American or Western men in *ZD30*. The top images are of CIA field agents. The bottom images are of Navy SEALs. The image on the bottom right is of the agent who plays the SEAL who assassinates Osama bin Laden (Bigelow et al., 2013).**


***Figure 4.3.*** **Frustrated with the low number of Al-Qaeda targets killed, George exclaims, "I want targets! Do your fucking jobs; bring me people to kill!" (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Figures 4.4 shows images of the two American male characters who are not white and or Christian. It is telling that Bigelow et al. avoid exploring their complexity, and thus fail to disrupt the more predominant stereotypes. For example, the CIA administrator, known as "The Wolf," is shown performing Muslim prayers, yet Bigelow et al. never explain this seeming contradiction. It would have been interesting and important to have him reflect upon being a Muslim while enforcing policies that support the various CIA tactics that brutalize Muslims in other parts of the world. As a side note, The Wolf is a filmic depiction of a real CIA agent known as Roger, who converted to Islam when he married a Muslim woman.

***Figure 4.4.*** **The two non-white Americans. Above is Jack, a CIA field agent, and below is "The Wolf," a member of the Pentagon. The film remains silent on his Muslim identity (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

**Arab/Muslim Men: The Most Un-Sovereign Subjects**

If the Western man signifies the ideal subject, then his binary opposite is the abject Arab/Muslim man. Long viewed as embodying undifferentiated and unmediated sexuality, the A/M man has been represented (in film and more recently in news media) as posing a sexual threat to white women (Said, 1979; Shaheen, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2008; Yeğenoğlu, 1998). The hysteria underlying this discourse has found its way into the psyche of the West (Europe and North America) and was recently mobilized in Europe as a means of closing borders to Syrian refugees who were thought to pose a sexual threat to European women (Binkoski, 2016). Fanon (1965) noted that the colonial estimation of the Algerian man was that he possessed a "sadistic and vampirish attitude toward women" (p. 38) – an estimation that is well documented in Said's Orientalism. This imagery and these discourses map onto the gendered racism that plays out in the United States relating to black and Latino men and to black and Indigenous men in Canada. These perceptions of men who are not white rely upon discourses relating to race and monstrosity (McWhorter, 2011, Razack 2005a, 2005b; Thobani, 2014; Said, 1979; Fanon, 1965, Du Bois, 2018/1903). Some of this aversion can be specifically linked to prohibitions against miscegenation; however, ultimately this is yet another outcome of raced thinking and the hierarchical ranking of races.

By and large, the A/M men in *ZD30* conform to these archetypes, which continue to haunt the Western imaginary via latent Orientalism. Depictions of dusty and dirty A/M men are interspersed with various depictions of terrorists, who are seen in the context of graphic torture where they are subjectified and their abjection is enunciated. In Figure 4.5, Dan has just finished a round of interrogating Amar during which Maya is present but she is covered, so she appears to be a man. It is her first encounter with torture. Outside the cell they look at the hamstrung Amar

who is monitored and watched on a computer screen. It is not the last time we see, through a screen, the images of tortured or dead A/M men. From his (both literal and discursive) position, the American man – the embodiment of masculine universality – looks at the epitome of lack, but he does so through a veil (understood metaphorically), through his silence and his refusal to give up what he knows. In Figure 4.6 Amar is reminded that his fate is tied to his own capacity to subjugate himself to his torturer.


***Figure 4.5.*** **Dan: "Just so you know, it's going to take a while. He has to learn how helpless he is" (Bigelow et al., 2013).**


***Figure 4.6.*** **Amar after several minutes of water-boarding. Dan: "When you lie to me, I hurt you" (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Amar is just one of a pantheon of terrorists/monsters. In the operation centre where Maya is stationed, there is a wall of terrorists. In one scene, Maya is looking intently at the wall as ominous music plays in the background. The camera pans across the wall to reveal more photos of male terrorist faces. The x across their faces indicates they have been killed. A new field agent, Debby, is speaking to Maya, telling her how much she admires her. Maya gives Debby the following advice: "Don't eat out, it's too dangerous." The implication is that these men, and their way of life, imperils all Westerners.

***Figure 4.7.*** **Wall of terrorists: the limits of representation (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

There are two clean (live) Arab men represented in the film, each of whom falls into the realm of the tropic: the greedy Arab Sheikh/Kuwaiti prince, and Hakim. The Kuwaiti prince may be handsome and he might even be clean, but he is so unethical and so disloyal that, in spite of his wealth, he is willing to sell out a fellow Arab for *another* Lamborghini. He makes a very brief appearance, but it is enough to confirm the greedy Arab Sheikh trope.

Hakim is another story. He presents as gentle and perpetually haunted and sad. His character first appears performing his role as a translator in a black site. This is about a third of the way into the film. He then reappears several times, including during the final raid on the Abbottabad residence. It was not until I read the script that I was able to determine his background, as film viewers are not provided with any context for Hakim. According to the original script, Hakim is Afghani and he is a translator of Pashto and Dari. He was a prisoner of war, who now is working for the CIA. Additionally, the film omits an interesting exchange between Hakim and Maya just before the Abbottabad raid, an exchange that reveals Hakim's dry sense of humour and hints at a deeper friendship between the two characters. It belies a very different relationship than what is presented in the film.

Maya: Thank you for coming with me.

Hakim: Of course. I'll go with you where ever you want.

Maya: Fuck Hakim, what if I'm wrong? I wish we could have just dropped a bomb.

Hakim: Please don't drop it while we're in the house.

Maya: I'm serious.

Hakim: Me too. Don't drop anything while I'm inside.

Of course, directors make all kinds of decisions about what to leave in and what to take out. However, the intentional writing out of these very human aspects of this particular character robs the film of its one opportunity to humanize an Arab. That decision combined with the filmmaker's conflation of nationalities, regions, languages, cultures, and so forth belies either a profound disrespect, shocking ethnocentrism, American jingoism, and/or anti-Arab/Muslim racism, or perhaps a troubling combination of all of these.

## Dutiful Daughters: Western White Women of *ZD30*


***Figure 4.8.*** **During a high-level briefing, Maya is asked to stand at the back of the room (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

In this section, I map the multiple positionings of the American women in the film. They simultaneously occupy three positions. They are in a subordinate position to their American male counterparts (see Figure 4.8), in a dominant position to A/M men, and occupy the dominant half of the gendered Orientalist binary (Western women/A/M women). In this film, the characters of Maya and Jessica achieve their emancipation via their participation in Orientalist practices, including imperial wars. As Thobani (2014) observes, "If sexual difference alienated the white

woman from the white man, racial affinity helped suture over this sexual difference, masculinizing both as sovereign and imperial subjects – albeit asymmetrically" (p. 488).

Maya may have to stand at the back of the room when she is with powerful (white) American men (Figure 4.8), but her civilizational or racial superiority locates her differently with respect to A/M men. In the two images below, Maya learns to occupy her position with relation to the A/M man, and in so doing attempts to secure herself a position within the culture of a masculinist military. She cannot be Dan, but she can be like Dan. But to be like Dan she must overcome any aversion she has to the effects of torture.


***Figure 4.9.*** **Maya is initially overcome by the smell of Amar and covers her nose. Her repulsion is obvious (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Maya collects herself and takes her place in the binary; standing in for Dan, she occupies the dominant half of the binary of the Western white woman/Arab Muslim man. This image (figure 4.10) is reminiscent of the images of prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The filmic depictions of torture, alongside the heroic depictions of both Maya and Dan, serve as an attempt to recuperate the civilizational superiority of the Occident while re-situating the Orient as the site of depravity. Maya's feelings of repulsion for Amar are derived in part from his degradation, a condition that she and Dan attribute to Amar's barbarity, not the effects of his

torture. Through these tactics of sexual humiliation Orientalist ideas about Arab male sexuality as both undifferentiated and unmediated. In figure 4.10 Dan asks, rhetorically, "You don't mind if my female colleague checks out your junk, do you? Good" (19:35). This is the topological functioning of the three registers, par excellence, which I will discuss further in Chapter 6.


***Figure 4.10.*** **The barbaric A/M man and the civilized Western woman (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

These gendered representations of Maya in relation to the masculine are an attempt to suture gendered differences so that Maya can perform within masculinist systems and structures. She can only ever perform as a semblance, however. It is this very limit that exerts a challenge to claims made by some that *ZD30* is a feminist film, a claim based on the presence of a female protagonist in a male-dominated profession who achieves what no man before her has been able to: find Osama bin Laden and have him killed. However, this interpretation of the film relies upon an expression of feminism that sidesteps the masculinist logics of imperialism and its practices, such as torture, extrajudicial murders, and the harming of women and children in the war on terror, and rests on the co-option of the language of feminism and emancipation in support of imperial practices and Orientalist policies (Razack, 2008; Thobani, 2014; Yeğenoğlu, 1998, 2014).

**Hierarchies of Femininity: Maya and Jessica**

There is one more binary that presents itself in this film and that is the Maya/Jessica binary. Bigelow et al.'s portrayals of the main female characters, Maya and Jessica, reflect two facile female stereotypes: the driven woman (Maya) and the sensitive maternal figure (Jessica). Jessica's character concerned about the well-being of others: she worries about Maya not getting out and not eating properly, and she has a perpetually cheerful and/or concerned countenance. When a lead she has been following yields her an interview with a high-level informant, and when she finds out that the meeting will take place on his birthday, she bakes him a cake.

***Figure 4.11*. Jessica bakes a birthday cake for the high-level informer she is about to meet with, because "everyone likes cake!" (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Unfortunately, she never has the chance to sing happy birthday, as the informant has a bomb strapped to his body and he kills her and her team in a suicide attack (see Figure 4.12). What meaning can be made from this series events? What might it mean when this two-

dimensional rendering of the feminine is bisected by the violent death of Jessica at the hands Arab men?

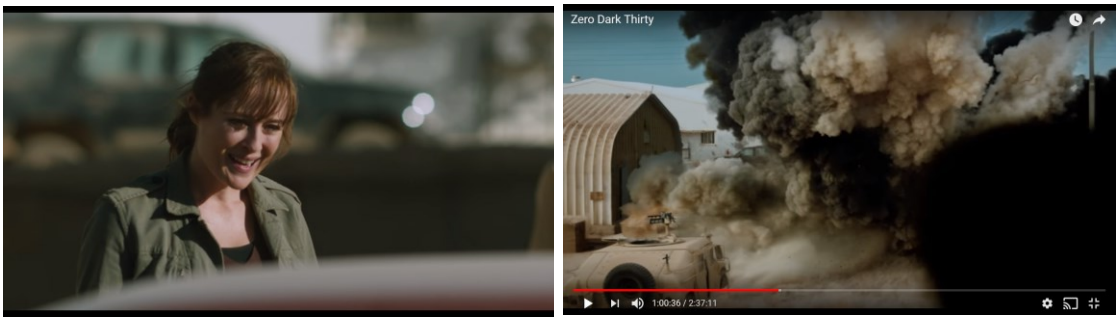


***Figure 4.12*. Jessica smiles in greeting when the informant arrives. Moments later, he detonates his bomb belt, killing her and her colleagues (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Conversely, Maya's capacity to engage in torture and to mobilize the assets of empire to penetrate the mystery (get information from detainees and invade Bin Laden's home and kill him and his close colleagues) results in her safe return home. In the binary ordering of things, Western women – especially those who mobilize Western masculinism – can achieve some semblance of gendered privilege, through the careful preservation of the Symbolic and the valorization of phallocentrism. She rides off on the transport jet, alone, the emptiness of the transport jet emphasizing her solitary nature. But, after all, is that not a fitting set of symbols for a Western heroic figure?

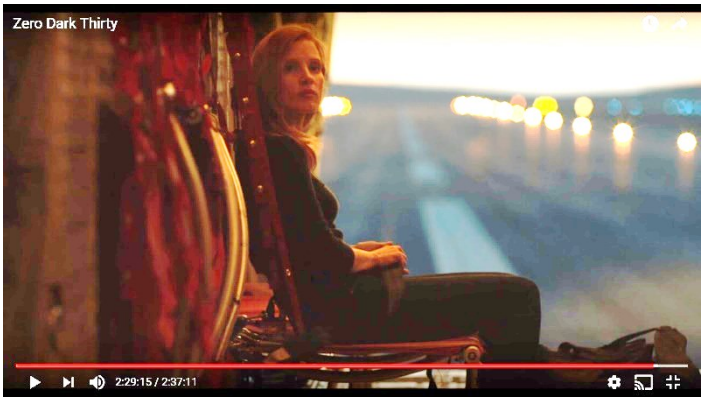

***Figure 4.13*** **At the end of the film, Maya is flown home in a transport plane dispatched for her private use – a representation of the triumph of Western liberal individualism over the chaos of Oriental collectivism (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

## Conclusion

*ZD30* is a film that captures, in a most fascinating way, the Occident/Orient binary via the hyperpresence of the neoliberal feminist figure, Maya. The claim that the film is feminist serves as a screen to deflect from the more obvious interpretation: that *ZD30* is a profoundly masculinist and Orientalist tale. In this chapter, I present the data relating to representations of a number of identity binaries and, through those representations, describe the way in which the West is represented as superior to the East and the masculine as superior to the feminine. These binary orderings are made manifest through character portrayals and the use of tropes to hail the presence of complex discourses that remediate lacunae and buttress the Symbolic. This set of data creates a context with and against which to read the data in chapter six where I take up Bigelow et al.'s filmic representations of A/M women.

# Chapter 5

## A Present Absence: The Unveiling of the A/M Woman in *Zero Dark 30*

This enabled the colonial administration [in Algeria] to define a precise political doctrine: If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and, in the houses, where the men keep them out of sight.

—Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*

## Introduction

The policies Fanon refers to in this epigraph reflect ongoing colonial and imperial practices and doctrines as relates to A/M women (Said, 1979; Yeğenoğlu, 1998, Kabanni, 2008). Though perhaps not always phrased as crudely as the colonial bureaucrats Fanon invokes, the sentiments and positionings of both liberal feminists and conservative ideologues such as Sally Armstrong (2002), Ishrad Manji (2003), and Raphael Patai (2002) converge on their calls to save women from the veil, religion, culture, and/or A/M men. Saving A/M women almost always entails some sort of eradication or de-authorization of A/M men often through the production and reproduction of stereotypes in popular cultural media or other media.

In this chapter, I turn to Bigelow et al.'s representations of A/M women, whose fidelity to Orientalism yields rich data for analysis. My reading of these representations draws upon postcolonial feminism, including recent work relating to femonationalism, and the concept of *objet petit a* as used by Todd McGowan (2007) in his work with film. This framing helps to illuminate the psycho-political dynamics of contemporary Orientalism, including its relationship

to certain feminisms that neglect intersectionality or use the rhetoric of nationalism in service to gendered hierarchies. It also provides a useful rubric with which to explore *ZD30*, especially as it relates to the production of gendered Orientalism and the binaries inhered therein. I explore the filmic depiction of the Western woman/Eastern woman binary achieved through the de-authorizing of A/M women – their depiction as spectral, the menace of the veil and all it symbolizes, and the inevitable unveiling.

## De-Authorizing A/M Women

In the previous chapter, I discussed the hyperpresence of the character Maya and her representation as an autonomous and emancipated subject. The plethora of visual representations of Maya as an emancipated woman is particularly salient to this study because her power communicates more than an abstracted triumph of Western feminism. Indeed, when examined alongside the anemic depictions of A/M women, the representations present a stark visual binary that is hard to escape. In contrast with the absence of Arab/Muslim women, Maya's hyper-agency deftly reproduces the Orientalist view of the Arab/Muslim woman and the gendered Orientalist binary embedded in that view. Bigelow et al.'s depiction of A/M women as a largely absent subject in their homelands is not the result of documentary reporting, but a Western-authorized fictional portrayal.

In an exchange between Maya and her colleague Steve, Bigelow et al. provide an excellent example of the Orientalist authorization of the East and recalls Patai's *The Arab Mind*. The conversation takes place around the one hour and forty minutes into the film when Steve summons Maya to Predator Bay, which is the site of control for the CIA drone program. When Maya arrives, Steve begins a surveillance update on a place of interest. The full transcript for this

exchange is found in Appendix C; however, the most salient remarks are provided here with my comments in italics:

| | |
|---|---|
| Steve: | So remember we've got two males, two females, seven kids. |
| Maya: | Who's that? (*Maya points to a figure in the surveillance tape*) |
| Steve: | I'm saying that's Bushra, the brother's wife. |
| Maya: | How do you know the gender? |
| Steve: | (*He points on screen, to a thin line*)<br>Well, this is a clothesline here, for the laundry. Men don't mess with the wash. |
| Steve (Cont'd) | It takes her about four seconds to move from there to the front door. So she's on the older side. |
| Maya: | What's that up there? (*Pointing to the other shapes*) |
| Steve: | Those are kids. They're shuffling around, sword-fighting or something with sticks. (*pointing again*) You can see their height relative to this – these are cows – so they're probably between seven and nine. Boys.<br>(*Another figure comes out of the house and moves to the clothesline and grabs some of the laundry*) |
| Maya: | Your female is moving fast. |
| Steve: | That's what I wanted to show you…Can we pause please?<br>That's not the same lady. That's female #3. |
| Maya: | So you found two males, three females? |
| Steve: | That's correct. |

Maya: (*Suddenly Maya gets it*) You're missing a male.

Steve: Yes we are.

Maya: Wow.

*Cut to Washington*

George: If there are three females, there ought to be three males. Observant Muslim women either live with their parents or with their husbands. We think there's a third family living in the house.

In true Orientalist fashion, Bigelow et al. provide a complete treatise on the nature of gendered identity (within Arab and Muslim culture) and its all of the associated implications in about two hundred words: women do the laundry, boys play with sticks, women only exist in pair bonds with husbands or as offspring tied to their fathers. That those playing children might be girls is never considered. That the slow-moving person might have a mobility issue is never considered, nor that the fast-moving person might be a spry elderly woman. That the extra person might be a sibling, visiting friend, or relation who lives with their family is never considered. Nor is there consideration that those 'shapes' they are surveilling might be eight or ten different people. Arab and/or Muslim people are so undifferentiated, so *blob-like* that they (and especially the women and children) have no specificity, unlike their Western counterparts, each of whom is imbued (within the film) with a distinct personality. This facile set of pronouncements, or gloss, recalls observations made by Said (1978):

> The Orient and Islam have a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the orient could not do was to

represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work. (p. 283)

Within the context of this text, the use of the term *observant* as a modifier for Muslim is laden with a sense of expert knowledge about Islam. The speakers, and the system for which they speak, insert themselves as authorities on the social and religious lives of millions of culturally and religiously diverse people. When Said drew our attention to the phenomenon of the Orientalist, that is the Western authority on the Orient, it was to point out that this was *the* voice of authority. Not only was this the vehicle through which the West would learn about the East, but also the conduit through which the East was allowed to know about itself. These filmic marginalia used to quickly explain something as complex as *Arab, Muslim, woman, family*, and *children*, tells us something about where and with whom the writer and director of this film (and other films from this genre) locate authority about the Middle East, Arabs, and Muslims. In *ZD30*, authority is not located in Arab and or Muslim subjects.

The images of A/M women are few – both in range and in number – until the penultimate scene, which portrays the Black Hawk invasion of the home of several Arab families and including that of a person we are led to believe is Osama bin Laden. Indeed, until the invasion scene, the film viewer is given only brief glimpses of A/M women: cloaked, covered, and barely visible. Perhaps their presence does not overly register with the viewer, given that they occupy no meaningful place in this Orientalist tale (in spite of the fact that the story takes place in the so-called Orient). There is only a brief reference to the materiality of their lives as human beings, and their speaking parts are limited to anguished cries and utterances during the Navy SEAL invasion of their home. After two hours of absence, Bigelow et al. then flood the visual field with Arab/Muslim women up close and uncovered as they and their husbands and children are

brutalized and murdered. The violence perpetrated on the unveiled and nightdress-clad women in the alleged home of Osama bin Laden, provides a Fanonian filmic climax to the film recalling Fanon's (1965) "Algeria Unveiled." The epigraph that opens this chapter wound its way through my head throughout my first viewing of that 29.5-minute scene, especially the phrase, "we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and, in the houses, where the men keep them out of sight" (p. 38).

## Absented then Unveiled

The work of Yeğenoğlu (1998) and Farris (2017) as it relates through and to McGowan's (2007) scholarship on Lacan and film have provided a rich framing with which to explore these filmic images. Yeğenoğlu's and Farris's work describe the ways in race and gender work together through what they respectively refer to as Western feminism and femonationalism, to re-circulate Orientalist discourses and to legitimize Western and European nationalisms. Both Yeğenoğlu and Farris's examine the effects the "assumption of the Muslim man and woman as the main representatives of the binary oppressor and victim" (Farris, 2017, p. 5). Superimposing an analytic frame that includes Lacan's three registers (Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real) serves to re-focus the analysis on discursive and political preoccupations with Arabs and/or Muslims (men, women, and Others). I use this analytic framework not to interrogate the subject positions of A/M women but to reveal what these representations tell us about Orientalism and its proponents.

Finally, it is important to note that I have deliberately avoided writing about or drawing upon literature relating to the veil, per se. This research is not about veiling, or women's relationship to or with veiling practices. Rather, this project directs its attention to the signifiers, Symbolic orders, and ideologies that mobilize the veil and the subjectivities of A/M women to

buttress binary orderings of subjectivities. It is about how sartorial objects and other elements of dress and appearance function as *objet petit a.*

I present my findings in three parts. In the first part, I examine the images of A/M women before the invasion. In the second part, I discuss depictions of veiling. Finally, in the third section, I explore images of A/M women during the invasion.

**Fleeting, Veiled, Silent: The First 90 Minutes of *ZD30***

The stereotype of the Arab/Muslim woman as always hidden (via the veil) and absent from public life is barely interrupted in this set of filmic representations. There are no A/M woman at all until 23:46 (see Figure 5.1) into the film when we see two terrified and terrorized women, cowering in fear during an attack perpetrated by men whose language, clothing, and physical characteristics lead the viewer to conclude that they are Arabs and/or Muslim.

***Figure 5.1.*** **Women in hijab caught in a terror attack (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

The next images of A/M women, which occurs approximately 80 minutes into the film or 60 minutes after the first images of women, are of two young A/M girls in hijab and several black burqa clad figures (Figure 5.2).

***Figure 5.2.*** **Two women in burqa (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Beginning at 1:17:37 there is a brief scene in a facility where people make outgoing phone calls. As the CIA operative Hakim moves through the centre in search of Abu Ahmad, who they believe is a messenger for Osama bin Laden, Hakim passes cubicles in which these female characters are making calls (Figure 5.3).

***Figure 5.3.*** **People in a long-distance call centre: women/people in hijab (left) and burqa (right) (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Between 1:23:43 and 1:29:36, a number of street scenes function as a backdrop for a concerted street-by-street search for a person of interest to the CIA. By slowing down the speed of the film to 0.25 normal speed, I discerned at least 13 unique locations. Within each of these locations, I counted the number of women and took note of what they appeared to be wearing. I

counted 36 images of women, or what might reasonably be interpreted as images of women as many of them were very small and fleeting. Seventeen of these individuals are in hijab where their hair, but not face, is covered, and six are in burqa with their face covered and a lattice across the mouth. Finally, I counted fourteen images of women that were neither in traditional hijab nor burqa, or for whom I could not easily assign a gender. It is important to note that in the crowd scenes this count can only be approximate due to the size and focus of these background figures. Significantly, I missed many of these images when I viewed the film at regular speed, even after watching this film dozens of times. A theatregoer might not be expected to register these images at all. I have documented all of these images in Appendix D in table of images and with the corresponding images themselves.

This set of data highlights the exscription of A/M women during the first one hour and 29 minutes of this film; women are a fleeting presence and there is something of the spectral or ghostly in this set of representations. The images of women are so brief and the women are often covered (or partially covered), which communicates a kind of absence that has a critical function in later Lacanian gaze theory. In this theoretical framing, absence is not a visual absence per se but rather, functions as *objet petit a.* In the case of *ZD30*, the Oriental Other in all of their slipperiness – either in the guise of a veiled or similar woman or the elusive Arab/Muslim terrorist – cannot be directly apprehended, or brought within the existing order. Women remain stubbornly covered or hidden in the home to which the Westerner (within the narrative or the Orientalist tale) is denied access. The wily Arab/Muslim man (e.g., Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein) evades capture, in spite of his civilizational deficiencies. As understood through Orientalism, the Western subject in the Orient may possess all of the spoils of either imperialism or colonialism,

but, like the Ambassadors in Holbein's painting, still cannot see the Oriental woman, nor find the Oriental man.

The next images of A/M women appear during an attempt by the CIA to engage in surveillance work inside the suspected home of Bin Laden and his family. Under the guise of a children's immunization campaign, an operative gains entrance into the courtyard of the home. Three individuals in burqa are depicted. At one point, there is a voiceover narrative of the CIA operative reporting on the surveillance of the compound. We hear the voice of one of the women who appears to be asking the man posing as a doctor to leave. Although the language she is speaking in is indecipherable – it doesn't appear to be Arabic – she is the most agentic A/M woman, until the invasion scene.

Without careful viewing and critique, this dramatization implies an air of factual accuracy and communicates a view of Arab and/or Muslim women as largely absent from daily life. Obscured, either by virtue of her absence from public life, or via some form of sartorial concealment, this one-dimensional representation begs the questions: Why manufacture this absence? What does it communicate about the filmmaker and the ideology reproduced through this absence? These questions are taken up in Chapter 6.

**Veil(ed) Menace**

In *Colonial Fantasies*, Yeğenoğlu (1998) writes,

> In the Orientalist chain of signification, the veil signifies not only (Oriental) woman, but also the Orient itself...The veil is central to the discursive constitution of the referent, namely what the Orient is; it constitutes the condition of possibility of the cupula "is." But this is a unique strategic rhetorical move, precisely because it is

> assumed to conceal not only Oriental woman but also, through her, the very being of the Orient. (p. 48)

The veil signifies both the Orient and its inscrutability. That is, the Orient (in this case the veil that stands in for the Orient) functions as a screen onto which Occidental fantasies can be projected. Further, the veil as screen protects these fantasies from scrutiny. The veil has been the subject of so much anxiety and inquiry. A search on the University of Alberta Library website yielded over 29,000 books and journal articles relating to Muslims/Islam and the veil, burqa, and niqab.

In the context of this film, my research interest in this topic centres on the cause of its fascination for the West. It is hard to recall any other item of women's clothing that has caused such a furor and received so much attention. That is not to say that the veil, veiling, and other issues pertaining to gendered identities are not important for and to Muslim women; it would be disingenuous to deny that wearing some kind of veil is always the woman's choice. Leaving aside the notion of choice, which itself brings up a complex set of philosophical considerations, the West does not habitually respond with such widespread intensity to the sartorial practices of other cultural and religious groups.

As Fanon (1965), Yeğenoğlu (1998), Abu-Lughod (2002), Razack (2004), and Zine (2006, 2012) have observed, the veiled A/M woman has signalled much anxiety. Once seen as concealing an excess of the sensual and forbidden, lately various forms of veiling signal something more menacing. Does one rip it off and reveal the monstrous, or leave it and ensure perpetuation of the fantasy? After all, what if, beneath the veil, there is nothing (but a simple human)? Both the perceived act of hiding and the fantasy about what is hidden co-constitute an unbearable gap: epistemic and ontological. Who are these people and what are they thinking

(about us)? What are they planning to do to us? Bigelow et al.'s and others' filmic representations of absence via the veil or burqa function to accomplish the gendered Orientalist task of signalling both absence and the threat of too much presence.

Bigelow et al. mobilize the burqa in a couple of ways that communicate this perception of veiling as a form of absence, which manages to convey a menace or a threat. In one scene, Bigelow et al. engage in some veil play and draw back the burqa to reveal all manner of hidden threats. During a CIA operation to capture a key Al-Qaeda figure (Abu Faraj), black burqa-clad figures are actually men, carrying weapons. Of course, this corroborates Western anxieties about veiling: beneath the folds of the billowing garment there may be guns, there may be bombs, there may even be men. That is the danger of veiling: one never knows what (or who) is being concealed. This kind of anxiety has been mobilized by certain ideologues to buttress claims about the necessity for policies in Canada (and elsewhere) to ban the burqa and/or niqab in public places because the body beneath cannot be surveilled (Rygiel, 2006; Razack 2008; Farris, 2017). Bigelow et al. capitalize on anxiety about the veil and the desire to subjugate the A/M man by putting him beneath the niqab. In the scene from which the following images are taken, those veiled subjects are A/M men with guns.


***Figure 5.4.*** **The man in the vest and white shirt is Abu Faraj, a person of interest to the CIA. He is going to meet his courier (Bigelow et al., 203).**


***Figure 5.5.*** **Anxious Looking: Abu Faraj is intercepted by the Pakistani police (disguised in burqa) acting in concert with the CIA (Bigelow et al., 2013).**


***Figure 5.6.*** **The Arab/Muslim man in sartorial defeat: the quintessential Oriental symbol used against the Oriental himself (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

The one other striking use of the black burqa appears in the scene I have already referred to – the scene that takes place inside the Bin Laden family home when the CIA operative gains entrance under the guise of conducting a vaccination program for children. This scene can be read as a form of penetrating the veil – getting inside the protected, private space. In an extension of that penetration, while the supposed doctor is in the process of his faux examination of one of the children (he literally has a tongue depressor in the open mouth of the child) – the camera cuts to a billowing black figure who approaches the child with great rapidity.


***Figure 5.7.*** **Alerted to the presence of a stranger, this burqa-clad figure rushes to intervene (Bigelow et al., 2013)**


***Figure 5.8.*** **The viewer is alerted to the presence of the burqa-clad figure by the look in the child's eyes (Bigelow et al., 2013)**

These last two images reveal how the director slipped in a projection of her fantasy of the menacing burqa. Bigelow et al.'s direction to the child actor is obviously that he should look frightened, but why would the child be frightened of a member of this household? This production of the veil as menacing, produced cinematically by the director is at risk of being misread as a representation of a cultural fact in film like this, which contextualizes itself as being based on truth.

Bigelow et al.'s use of the burqa produces a dramatic effect. These flapping, vampirish representations recall Brian Desmond-Hurst's (1951) filmic depictions of the third spirit in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1842). Ebenezer Scrooge's (the character whose sinning ways the spirits attempt to redeem) encounter with the veiled spirit can perhaps be mapped on to Western anxieties about the burqa:

> The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery…It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded…It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black. (pp. 69–70)

The anxiety results not from what the veiled figure is or is not, or what it does or does not do. The anxiety is the result of what Yeğenoğlu (1998) describes as "the European imagination at work in the field of the other. The veil attracts the eye, and forces one to think, so speculate about what is behind it" (p. 44).

***Figure 5.9.*** **Spirit of Christmas Future (Hurst, 1951).**

Yeğenoğlu explains how the veil turns the Arab/Muslim woman into an enigma, which itself "a multilayered signifier" (p. 47) bent this way and that in service to Orientalist discourse. Now it exerts power over the West by concealing the East from it. Now it oppresses the A/M woman by keeping her hidden. Now it signals subjugation, and next it signals control through withholding:

> The reference of the veil thus exceeds its sartorial matter, it is in everything that is Oriental or Muslim. The Western eye sees it everywhere, in all aspects of the other's life…[I]t stands in the way of his desire for transparency and penetration. (pp. 47–48)

In scenes where the burqa figures prominently (the sting operation and attempt to penetrate the home), Bigelow et al. begin to pull back the veil. A shoe, the end of a gun, and black gloved hand all suggest there is a secret to be revealed: that an entity that might be known. While the hijab is less obviously concealing, both historic and contemporary ideas regarding the veil have produced tropes that conflate and collapse all forms of head coverings, which

(re)produce discourses that (mis)inform the West about gendered and other socio-political roles taken up by those who identify as Arab and/or Muslim. These pieces of cloth obscure not only the visual gaze (as in the earlier Lacanian notions of the gaze), but also serve as lacunae. Their presence is a visible reminder of the failure of the Symbolic (that is the idea of the West or Occident) to account for everything. In these instances, the burqa signals the presence of something outside of the discursive West. As an unruly object that interrupts and disturbs the seamless functioning of the symbolic (West), the burqa signals that the re-establishment of the Symbolic order can only be achieved through its removal. Only then will the mystery(ies) be revealed and the East known and through that knowing be subdued.

**Echoes of Algeria Unveiled**

I began this chapter with a quote from Fanon in which he cites the colonial doctrine of subduing the Algerian uprising via the mastery of the Algerian man through the forced unveiling of the Algerian woman. By design or through the unconscious reproduction of these deeply embedded colonial and Orientalist discourses, Bigelow et al. provide the viewer with an image that uncannily recalls Fanon's "Algeria Unveiled."

***Figure 5.10.*** **The woman on her knees, unveiled (Bigelow et al. 2013).**

Returning to *ZD30*, the image in Figure 5.10 depicts the SEALs' first encounter with a person from inside the home. A woman, whose husband has just been killed, opens the door after they have fired many rounds of bullets into their home. She is forced outside and onto her knees (unveiled and in her nightdress) sobbing. As the eye travels through the door, we see her husband lying dead on the floor. "You've killed him," she says in perfectly spoken English. This scene is repeated over and over again, as the SEALs move methodically through the home. The women are found unveiled and in their nightdresses, and the Navy SEALs, who are themselves symbolic of American/Western military potency, force them into submission to watch helplessly while their husbands are murdered and their children traumatized (see Figure 5.11).

When the walls of the A/M home are breached, the spectator is witness to a violent unveiling. Bigelow et al. have structured the whole film to end in a bloody unveiling via the device of a Navy SEAL raid on the alleged home of Bin Laden and his family. It is a scene saturated with American exceptionalism. By the end of this 29.5-minute segment, all of the adult men are dead. At least one woman is dead, another is gravely wounded, and the remaining women (and children) have been traumatized and terrorized.


***Figure 5.11.*** **"Shut that fucking kid up, please!" (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

Bigelow et al. offer two perspectives during the raid: the safe space of the third person limited and the perspective of the Navy SEAL. The latter perspective is signalled by the switch to the green glow of the night-vision goggles, which render the men and women ghostly figures in their white night clothes. In the darkness, sans night vision green, it is difficult to see anything on the screen, thus recalling the tropes of the menacing mysteries of the Orient. With the night vision, the A/M subjects are hyper visible to the SEALs and yet ghostly at the same time. Whatever the perspective, it is a view from the West, not the East, and it manages to portray the slaughter of people and the terror of children stripped of any sense of the horrific or the tragic. From the first to the last of the 29.5 minutes, it is a tale of American heroics.

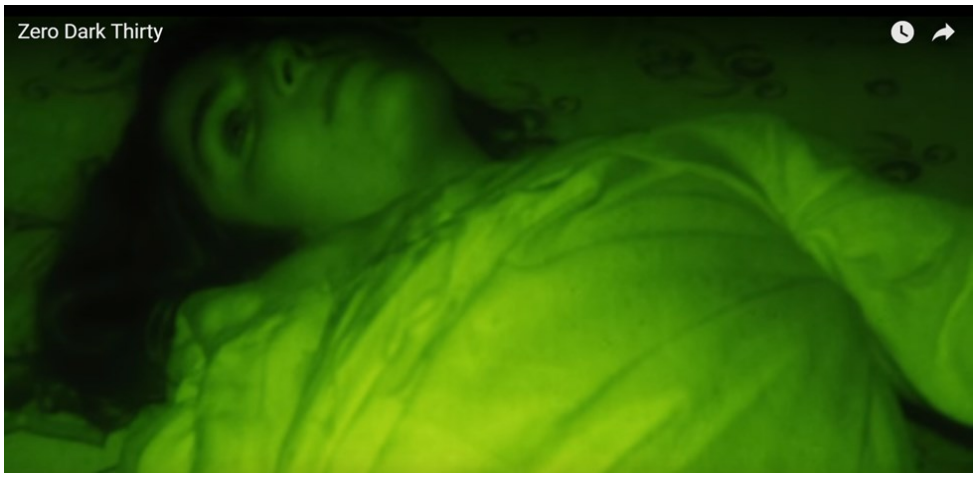


***Figure 5.12.*** **Justin: "I fucking smoked Abrar and his wife." (Bigelow et al., 2013)**

At the end of this scene, the SEALs reach a room where they find an elderly man and his family. They quickly kill him and then begin a rough interrogation of the women and children to determine his name. A sobbing, frightened woman says that his name is "Al Noori Hussein" and clearly, he is beloved to her and to those near him. We never fully see the face of deceased except through the viewfinder of the camera lens when one of the SEALs takes a series of photos with his camera. The sobbing woman is dragged away, calling his name, or an endearment.

*Figure 5.13.* An image of the dead Al Noori Hussein. "Geronimo: For God and Country," (2:18:22).

In the midst of the women and children who are weeping and wounded, the SEAL who killed the man says into his radio, “Geronimo: For God and Country” to signal that they have accomplished their mission. In the command centre, Maya hears this and gasps. Her eyes widen, mouth opens, and she sinks slowly into the chair.

***Figure 5.14.*** **Maya expresses relief that the SEALs have been successful (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

This is the moment the film has been driving towards: the East is fully unveiled and Maya’s obsessive desire to possess this lost object is met. This is the ten years of dreaming come to fruition. But as Lacan (1998) observed,

> The phantasy is the support of desire; it is not the object that is the support of desire. The subject sustains himself as desiring in relation to an ever more complex signifying ensemble. This is apparent enough in the form of the scenario it assumes, in which the subject, more or less recognizable, is somewhere, split, divided, generally double, in his relation to the object, which usually does not show its true face either. (p. 185)

For Maya, the CIA, and all who are invested in the fantasy that is the clash of civilizations (a discourse that is but another articulation of Orientalism), the Western desire to defeat the Arab/Muslim enemy is sustained. Represented in an ever more complex and shifting set of signifiers, this desire is not sustained by the presence of the enemy. Rather, it is excited and compelled by the sartorial, religious, linguistic, and other practices of the enigmatic and dangerous Oriental. A thousand women may have their veils removed, Bin Laden, and Sadam Hussein, and Yasser Arafat, and a host of other terrorist enemies may be killed, but there will always be one more – because there must be one more to ensure the continuation of the Western subject. There can be no West if there is no East.

## The Veiled West: Monstrous Visage

I would like to return to the scene when the CIA first encounters the family at home. In the first encounter, the women are veiled and the CIA is unceremoniously ushered out of the house. Thwarted, Maya and her colleagues (backed by military and political bosses) feel justified in the use of violence to penetrate the home and kill those inside. They return with stealth helicopters, and heavily armed and trained Navy SEALs. Night-vision goggles give them sight, where the family stumbles in the dark.

***Figure 5.15.*** **On the top, the agent posing as doctor is ushered out of the home. On the bottom, the woman opens the door and surrenders accesses to her home after her husband has been killed by the SEALs (Bigelow et al., 2018).**

In sorting through images for this chapter and section, I eventually decided to turn my attention away from the A/M women and towards to the faces of the SEALs during the invasion. I do not think Bigelow et al. considered or intended this, but there is something of the monstrous in these images and there is a flip: the woman are unveiled while the faces of the SEALs are veiled via night-vision goggles, helmets, and various other kinds of armour. Now the Oriental is unveiled and revealed and the Western subject is hidden behind a uniform and goggles that conceal his face, his humanity. There is something of the monstrous in the visages of the SEALs. Without the constructed monstrosity of the Orient, perhaps the West would have to face its own monstrosity. Only the strongest fantasy can protect a filmgoer, or an actor, or a director, from seeing themselves in the eyes of the Other.

***Figure 5.16.*** **Western monstrosity (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

**A War to Liberate A/M Women?**

I conclude with a set of images that speak back to claims that the war on terror is in part a war to liberate A/M women. In each of these images, the dialogue and sound reflect grief and horror at the deaths of their husband and kin. They begin with the young wife on her knees with the rifle's laser sight trained on the back of her head. Next, the SEALs move into what we assume are another family's quarters, where a young wife and her husband are together. The woman tries to shield the man, perhaps thinking the SEALs will not fire on a woman. They open fire and the bullets penetrate both of their bodies. The film's script reveals that this female character was pregnant and the SEALs left her alive to bleed to death. In another room, a woman watches while her husband or kin is riddled with bullets and while the children watch sobbing and terrified. They drag her away as she struggles to get back to the man who lays dead on the floor. In the next image, a woman is choked and pushed against the wall.

**Figure 5.17. Although all of the men (and at least one woman) are dead, extreme force is used on these women (Bigelow et al., 2013).**

In the last 29 minutes of the film, these images reflect another observation made by Fanon. Although he was speaking about the relationship between the European colonial and the Algerian woman, it is fair to draw a comparison as it relates to the Navy SEALs and the A/M women in this part of the film. Fanon (1965) writes,

> But there is also in the European the crystallization of an aggressiveness, the strain of a kind of violence before the Algerian woman. Unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty; it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure. Hiding the face is also disguising a secret; it is also creating a world of mystery, of the hidden. In a confused way, the European experiences his relation with the Algerian

> woman at a highly complex level. There is in it the will to bring this woman within his reach, to make her a possible object of possession. (pp. 43–44)

## Conclusion

In this and the preceding chapter, I present images that highlight key themes related to the representation of A/M women within the context of *ZD30*. I included images of Western subjects and male subjects to highlight the visual production of binaries. The agency of Western subjects' functions in contrast with the (scripted) absence, then brutal domination of Arab/Muslim women, succinctly articulates the gendered Orientalist binary: always, already emancipated Western woman/always, already subjugated A/M woman. These representations perform a useful role in representing a set of relations that are set into motion through signifying practices that begin with phallocentrism embodied in these fathered metaphors and end (in this historical moment and in this film) with a representation of gendered Orientalism.

In Chapter 6, I explore and discuss the meaning of these images as they relate to the notion of gendered Orientalism, and for their pedagogical implications.

# Chapter 6

## In the Presence of Absence

Were it not for absence, their absence, I would not be present. For them to not to be, is for me to be.

—Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*

## Introduction

The epigraph from Mahmoud Darwish's (2011) last literary work, *In the Presence of Absence*, articulates the essential relationship in the Occident/Orient binary. The self-presencing of the Occidental/Western subject can only achieve its place of exceptionalism and self-narration in relation to the double move of discursive elimination and exscription wherein the A/M (regardless of gender) becomes the *written about and written out*. Once absented (epistemically and ontologically), the Oriental, the Arab, the Muslim cannot self-narrate because they are both always already monstrous and relegated to the status of the absent. Orientalism has produced the abject Arab/Muslim in order to serve its (Western subjects') own claim as the quintessential self-actualizing human subject.

Identifying Orientalism in popular culture, calling attention to its presence and the absences it effects, is part of an educative process for mapping out strategies of resistance, developing counter narratives, and refining methods of critique. In Chapters 4 and 5, I described (a) constellation(s) of images and representations, which by default, design, or via the unconscious, (re)produce a nested set of Orientalist binaries, including that of gendered Orientalism. In this chapter, I make use of these constructions and representations to address the questions guiding this research. While this discussion has broad relevance at this particular

historical moment, it is most acutely salient for those engaged in addressing problematic forms of Orientalism that find their way into feminist thinking, art, literature, scholarship, and popular culture.

The chapter proceeds in two sections. In the first section, drawing upon the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5, I summarize my argument against claims that *ZD30* is a feminist film and explore how images in the film represent a series of orderings of gendered and political relations that are at once Orientalist, patriarchal, colonial, and imperial. In the second section, I draw upon elements from the first section, with an eye to pedagogical interventions – specifically, the educational challenges of teaching and learning to interrupt the integrative fantasy (McGowan, 2007) of developing robust critiques of contemporary (gendered) Orientalist discourses, and of dismantling popular cultural representations of complex and problematic binaries.

## *Zero Dark Thirty*: A Case Study in Gendered Orientalism at the Movies

*Zero Dark Thirty* is not an exemplar of feminism in film. It is a masculinist war story that uses a woman to deliver its message. The presence of the totemic masculine is epitomized in the declaration uttered upon the killing of Osama Bin Laden: "Geronimo: For God and Country" (2:37:11). Indeed, *For God and Country* (Boal, 2011) was the title of the screenplay upon which *ZD30* is based. The phrase *For God and country* is viewed, in the United States, at least, and perhaps elsewhere by some ideologues in the West, as a noble and legitimate clarion call. Conversely, the Arabic corollary, *Allahu-Akbar* (literally, *God is great*), is synonymized with terrorism.

This original title, and the exclamatory upon which it is based, recalls Slavoj Zizek's (2007) discussion of the objectivization of the big Other in his essay "From Che Vuoi? To

Fantasy: Lacan with Eyes Wide Shut." Zizek observes that "the central mystery of the big Other [is] the point at which the big Other, the anonymous Symbolic order, gets subjectivized" (p. 41) – that is, the point at which the unrepresentable becomes represented. In the case of *ZD30*, the big Other is subjectivized in the metaphysical Father (God) and the Fatherland (Country: USA), which are reproduced and mobilized through nationalist and militarist discourses and practices. What does this mean with respect to gender as it relates to Orientalism? And what does it say about representations of A/M women in the context of foreign military policy that both recalls a colonial past and hails an imperial present?

I will navigate the waters of this discussion using the analytic framework set out in Chapter 2, calling upon the various postcolonial and feminist theories (Lacanian-inspired and otherwise) to read against the grain of *ZD30*. Read this way, *ZD30* is an exemplar of the media-military-industrial Complex, Western phallocentrism, and Orientalism, all of which pivot on the universal subject (given by European Enlightenment), which is masculine and racialized as white. I draw upon the exscriptions, distortions, fabricated absences, and exaggerations depicted and deployed in this film to discuss the web of signification (wrought by Bigelow et al.) in which Arabs and Muslims (women, men, and those beyond the binary) are caught and bound to essentialisms and hierarchical relational orderings that produce the A/M as abject. It is critically important to understand that this caughtness applies to Western subjects as well. The production of West and East as the deadly (and inevitable) antithesis of one another gives rise to not only ideological polarizations but to the drafting of subjects into impossible positions of purity and abjection. Representational practices that rely on dichotomous essentialisms and reductionist assessments of geopolitics are hard pressed to lay claim to emancipatory ambitions.

## Women at War: Gaining Access to the Masculine

While *ZD30* has been (pro)claimed as a feminist film, it does not stray from the tropic and reveals a particular fidelity to stereotypes and essentialized representations found in any number of war (on terror) films. Further, its claims to feminism sidestep questions about what constitutes a feminist project (filmic or otherwise). Is it the presence and participation of a certain kind of body in occupations formerly closed to women-identified-subjects? If that is the sole requirement, then the case will only hold if there is never any interrogation of the identity marker *gender* (hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984; Anzaldúa, 2002, 2012; Butler, 1999; Shotwell, 2012; Heyes, 2000). Even if the alpha and omega of feminism pivots on the admission of women into phallocentric orders – and the issues of race and class, and ability are discounted – then we have circled back to the earliest iterations of European and North American feminism when it was white, landed, and married women who were permitted partial entry into the realm of self-authorizing subjects, which constituted the totality of feminist discourse.

However, if a more intersectional feminism is predicated on interrogating not only the problematic production of binary understandings of identities but also on the gendered (and raced, and classed) relations of power, then *ZD30* falls far short of being able to lay claim to a feminist ethos. And indeed, this is what identitarian understandings of feminism are prone to – the elision of interrogations of relations of power, both structural and discursive, that pivot on the idealized universal masculine (racialized as white, in the structuring myths of Western supremacy). Liberal or identitarian feminism(s) calls for obedience to certain existing social orders and does not concern itself with dismantling interlocking systems of oppression such as racism, homophobia, and neoliberal capitalism. Such an anemic feminism allows limited entry into its fold, to protect the Symbolic order and to ensure that power continues to circulate and

function as it has. This understanding of feminism is articulated in and through *ZD30*; it is a feminism that calls for Maya to perform as a woman-identified subject but in a way that reproduces a particular ideation of masculinity. This is not the mimesis of Bhabha, where mimicry has the potential for subversion (in the slippage), but rather the dutiful reproduction of the ordering of subjects within phallocentrism (Irigary, 1985; Yeğenoğlu, 1998). Within this logic, however, since the subject position white male is not fully available to other subjects (because their otherness in psychoanalytic terms signals lack), Maya can only approximate the masculine and any access to power is partial, and always provisional. She can only be accepted as a white male, as long as she faithfully reproduces that subject position. But she can never *be* a white man. Of course, because other systems are interpenetrated with phallocentrism (heteronormativity, class, ableism), the subject position white man is always provisional.

Bigelow et al. offers two versions and visions for woman-identified subjects in the characters of Maya and Jessica. While both attempt to gain access to the Symbolic masculine by participating in the American war on terror, how they perform their identities are themselves produced in a binary with Maya and Jessica offering two versions of the feminine. Jessica's performance is more mimesis, and as such contains the threat of subversion (of the masculine order). She wears the mantle of militarism, but at a jaunty angle. She signals this slightly disobedient performance by smuggling the tropic feminine into the CIA. Her affability, maternalism (represented via a problematic set of essentialisms), and her concern for the material and social well-being of others signals the incompleteness of her performance of the masculine. Indeed, Jessica is the perfectly reductive foil for Maya. Unlike Jessica, Maya can go without food, sleep, and the company of others. She endeavours to reproduce the masculine as faithfully as possible and, in a filmic gesture that recalls the images from Abu Ghraib, she can engage in

humiliating torture alongside her male colleagues. In the fantasmic world of *ZD30*, Maya figures out that this is *the* route by which women can access (partial) emancipation and approval from authorizing figures (in psychoanalytic terms – The Father). And as is often the case in the real world, repetition (compliance and complicity) is rewarded and mimicry (subversion via leaky subjectivities) is punished. Bigelow et al. deliver this message clearly when Jessica perishes in a suicide bombing (moreover, at the hand of the person for whom she baked a birthday cake) and Maya is spared so that she can complete the mission – an object lesson in obedience if ever there was one, and a vivid affirmation of the Orientalist discursive. *ZD30* faithfully valorizes the narrative that women can gain emancipation via social and political systems and structures that map onto and service to reproduce phallocentrism. The film also delivers the message, never trust an A/M man. Ultimately, according to the Symbolic of *ZD30*, hierarchy and a combative, Manichean vision of the world is called for if the West is to survive.

**At the Intersection of Gender and Race: Western White Women/Arab and Muslim Men**

The issue of torture, and Maya's participation in torture, is significant in unraveling the complex relations implicated at the nexus of Orientalism and geopolitics (including imperialism and neo-colonialisms). While Bigelow et al. deny that their film excused torture (Child, 2013) and only represents it as a fact of the war on terror, her representation of it is not only uncritical but, more importantly, a device whereby Maya proves her worth as a member of that iconic mission. The mobilization of gender as a means of ameliorating a focus on and critique of the uncritical representation of torture is examined by Coco Fusco (2008), Sherene Razack (2008), Melisa Brittain (2006), and others. A focus on the gender of the torturers in Abu Ghraib (as revealed in the scandal relating to the photographs of graphic sexualized torture of Iraqi prisoners

in the Abu Ghraib prison) enabled the mobilization of a number of dynamics that diffused and deflected from other critical issues at play in the escalating destruction of Iraq.

In Fusco's (2008) research on the American public's response to the Abu Ghraib pictures that implicated women torturers, she concludes that images of women torturers tempered pubic criticism of the Bush administration's position on torture. Equally troubling and important are her observations regarding the co-opting of feminism and quasi-feminist language in service to institutions like the military. Fusco (2008) writes,

> equal opportunity for women in the twenty-first century has been interpreted as obtaining access to hierarchical institutions and power structures that perpetuate male dominance, racism, and American political hegemony. Of course, few who gain access see their involvement in these institutions; on the contrary, their induction and training is designed to make them identify with conservative power structures as legitimate entities. (p. 60)

Brittain (2006) has argued that the sexual nature of the photographs became the site of illicit enjoyment *because* the torturers were women. She writes, "the fact that racist fantasies of demasculation of brown and black men contribute greatly to their erotic appeal: after all, they depict a white woman torturing Arab men" (p. 89). This idea is echoed by Razack (2008), who observes the effect of this torture on A/M men thusly: "Sexualized violence accomplishes the eviction from humanity, and it does so as an eviction from masculinity" (p. 71). The Arab/Muslim man is emasculated via the sado-sexual forms of torture.

While A/M men are evicted from the genus human and the masculine, Western white women simultaneously attempt to gain access to universal subjectivity by performatively adopting the masculine. What is rendered invisible within these contexts is the impossibility of any woman's admission into the position of universal subject via their participation in militarism.

The presence of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of women (and other subordinate subjects such as queer and trans folks) that takes place within these military and other paramilitary organizations indicates the degree to which the masculine order has not been subverted and the partiality of non-male, non-white-identified subject's admission into that Symbolic order. It is deeply ironic that Bigelow et al. (and others) have mobilized gender in the character of Maya when the very way Maya is gendered pivots on *lack* within the logic of phallocentrism. Of course, Maya herself is propelled by desire, the object cause of which is lack (itself a fractal of the privileged Symbolic ordering) as embodied in the body of Osama bin Laden and men like Amar. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998) so astutely, if controversially, observed, "Western feminism is inevitably caught and empowered by masculinism and imperialism" (p. 11). There is no universal emancipation via structuring relations predicated on hierarchy and abjection – not even for white women; not even for white women in the military. Perhaps this partiality contributes to the strange antipathy that emerges between some Western women and A/M men.

If the Western woman is subordinate to the Western man, and the A/M man is made subordinate to all Western subjects, then what is the relationship between the Western woman and the A/M man? And what does *ZD30* communicate in relation to this? Concurrent with Maya's entrance into emancipation via the masculine is Amar's decent into the monstrous. The more he is degraded, the more he is relegated to the abject and inhuman. His mistreatment construed in the film (as in the wider discourses about torture, at that time) is a direct result of his unwillingness to help Dan and Maya capture an even bigger monster: Bin Laden. Indeed, Amar's monstrosity is responsible for the civilizationally superior (embodied in Dan and Maya's characters) having to degrade themselves by resorting to torture.

## The Veiled Orient: From Sensuous Mystery to Menacing Threat

Early depictions of Arabs and Muslim women in Hollywood film were strongly sensuous and sexual in nature, reflecting the Orientalist notion of the East as a space of easy access to physical pleasures and unmediated desires. Mystery was often symbolized in Western (mis)understandings of veil and the haram (the women's domain within the home and ostensibly forbidden to outsiders). Although the partial truths of these perceptions are beyond the focus of this chapter, it is important to recall the Orientalists' focus on the hidden delights of the Arab/Muslim world. In those filmic contexts, the veil signaled a kind of pleasure that was tantalizingly forbidden within the context of European/Western mores; therefore, unveiling signifies gaining to the sensual and the forbidden.

Those historical (mis)understandings are forgotten in the twenty-first century, overwritten by geopolitics that require another kind of Orient. In *ZD30* the Symbolic West is enunciated through a historical location that is problematically a-historical. While the geopolitical tensions represented in the film have histories that date back to the rise of the British empire (Said, 1978) – and the history of humans in the Levant and the Middle East obviously dates back to antiquity – *ZD30* would have the viewer understand that the political context emerges fully formed at/on September 11, 2001. Not only does this betray a problem with the filmmakers' accounting of history, but it also signals a kind of collective narcissism reflected in the American post-9/11 mantra that signaled this day as the *day everything changed* (Margulies, 2013).

Of course, one would not expect a film of this nature to begin at the literal beginning (which itself is not the beginning, as such). However, by stating categorically that the antagonisms represented in the film were set into motion at/on 9/11, the film is immediately in service to a specific Symbolic order, as are its characters. The viewer is literally dropped into an

ordering of cultures and relations that are represented as both inevitable and universal. This Orient is savage and uncivilized – not in the way of indolence, but in the way of violence. This contemporary Orientalist discourse produces as it obscures. It produces and presumes a particular history, it obscures complexity via its various binary orderings, and erases the lived and varied experiences of A/M subjects. Maya, as the protagonist, is located within that discursive frame, and is propelled by an arc of desire, the object cause of which is the Orient (and symptomatic in the body of Bin Laden). The film is produced in such a way that the viewer propelled through the chaos of the Orient towards the inevitable triumph of the West over the East. However, unlike the Hollywood films from the early part of the twentieth century, which mobilized sensual desires, films of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century are animated by darker desires.

In this particular historical moment, the veil as lacuna is not only located in the literality of the burqa, hijab, and niqab, but in the very notion of Eastern opacity in ways that conceal an existential threat to the West. In that regard, figures such as Osama bin Laden (so elusive) and the impenetrable domestic sphere that hides such dangers also constitute lacuna. Even children (as depicted in *The Kingdom*) hide deadly threats. Yeğenoğlu (1998) has observed that the veil (and other symbols of veiling):

> conceals and reveals; it conceals the Orient's truth and at the same time reveals its mode of existence, its very being – a being that always exists in a disguised and deceptive manner, a being which exists only behind its veil…The truth of the Orient is thus an effect of the veil; it emerges in the traumatic encounter with its untruth, i.e., veil. (p. 48)

Of course, this is the discursive Orient – produced as impenetrable by the West. The failure to apprehend the complexity of the Orient is a failure of Western ontology and epistemology: the

failure to account for historicity, complexity, fluidity, and its own insufficiency. In Lacanian terms, this Symbolic order is constantly at risk of collapsing in the face of its insufficiency. Recalling Trinh Minh-Ha (1989), all categories leak, including the meta-category that is the Symbolic. This leakiness portends intrusions by the Real and are symptomatic of it in *objet petit a* located in various symbols of Oriental opacity, each one an uncomfortable reminder of the insufficiency of the Symbolic West to account for and/or possess everything.

## The Present Absence: A/M women in *ZD30*

*ZD30* proceeds as a long unveiling, though not a sensuous one. There is much violence utilized to uncover the secrets of the Orient. And what of the exscripted A/M women apparently absented by design by a Western feminist filmmaker? The unveiling of the women is saved for the last, for the final triumphant scene when all of the secrets are revealed at once: the women are unveiled, the domestic space is violated, and the Symbolic patriarch is dead. Even the children, robbed of their childhood in this Orientalist tale, are taken from the safety of their nurseries and thrust into the bloody battle between East and West. This scene echoes Fanon's observation about the tendency towards violence in the face of the Algerian woman whose veiling, or whose not quite Western demeanour, hails the unassimilable qualities of the always-mysterious Orient. Why such aggression in the face of difference? What does this kind of difference arouse in some Western subjects? Well, it arouses a kind of ceaseless, tormenting desire of something that is always, already out of reach. Orientalist lacunae proliferate and elude: there is always another mystery; there is always another dark threat, because the Orient *is* mystery, one that threatens the ontologic and epistemic West. There is always another terrorist, always another corner around, which hides another inscrutable Oriental, behind whose eyes is a mind so unlike the Western mind that it cannot be known, only conquered.

In this conflict, where the Oriental man is cast out of the realm of the human, what of the woman? Given her Symbolic importance (in the constructed fantasy of the Oriental social structure) as the prized *property* of the A/M man, within the Orientalist discursive her capture and her conversion (to a Western way of life) serves as having a castrating effect on the A/M man. The role of Western women (or in this case woman) in delivering the A/M woman has a history that predates contemporary liberal feminist emancipation projects, having been a trojan horse in early colonial efforts to Westernize women and thereby domesticating men, and in *ZD30* the Navy SEALs are Maya's proxy in the unveiling of the women.

What does the spectator make of the weeping grief-stricken women? What is made of a woman throwing herself between her beloved and several monstrous figures with guns? Can it all be explained away as Stockholm syndrome? There are (at least) two levels of violence in these scenes: the corporeal violence of broken bodies, and the ontologic violence embedded in the filmmakers' refusal to hear the voices of those objectified and reified in this tale, which functions to buttress the leaky category West against the imaginary category East. There is much trauma and terror in these scenes, but the spectator is only given two views, neither of which puts them at the proximity of the men or women or children. The first is from a safe distance, that from the position of a highly manipulated third person limited. The second is from the perspective of the Navy SEALs. Bigelow et al. use the green glow of night-vision goggles to signal the point of view of the Navy SEAL and regular lighting for the third-person point of view. Both are uncomfortable, but the regular lighting is so dark it is hard to see what is there – hidden and lurking in the dangerous space of the hidden domestic sphere. The night vision is a relief, causing everything to become visible but distorted and monstrous: an uncanny unveiling.

American Literature scholar Soltysik Agnieska Monnet (2014) studies digital aesthetics with a particular interest in "the uncanny green appearance of night vision technology…a visual shorthand for those wars (Iraq and Afghanistan)" (p. 70). Of particular interest here (and for this film) are Monnet's observations regarding the effects of this visual technology:

> It creates an atmosphere that assumes invisible dangers and insecure situations. People look odd and distorted, uncanny and interchangeable. Monsters that lurk in darkness threaten to loom into visual range at unpleasantly close distances. (p. 70)

Whatever the lighting, we are always looking at the East. The East never looks at us. And in a reversal of sorts, all is revealed while the West becomes hidden, itself concealed behind the horrors of military technology. Faces concealed, bodies armoured, and the blinding light of the night-vision goggles obscuring the vision of the surviving women and children.

The film does not disappoint with respect to its adherence to tropes and predictability. In the end, the A/M men (masculine threat) are dead and the women are made visible and subject to the hyper-masculine, military gaze of the scopic drive. Western patriarchal ordering prevails, and the Orient is domesticated: the veil is removed, the mysterious inner sanctum of the Arab is penetrated and conquered. Thus, Bigelow et al. opt for the fantasmic: the West is triumphant, Bin Laden is killed, "For God and country" (Boal, 2011) and in service to the Symbolic.

However, there is perhaps one unruly thread that nags at the back of the mind, and which could be read as a stain. That is the directorial decision not to allow the spectator to see Bin Laden's face directly. We see it twice, but through a veil darkly, to borrow from *The Bible*. The first viewing is through the camera view-finder and the second is from a very low angle – and from the back of the body. Neither clearly allows the spectator to identify Bin Laden; we must

rely on Maya's account that this is indeed him. But is it? Has the Orient been penetrated and subjugated, or has it managed to elude the West, again?

In summary, reading images from *ZD30* against the grain and through the conceptual framework set out in Chapter 2 reveals a nested set of binaries and a complex of unconscious desires, all of which are co-terminus with interlocking systems of structural and discursive oppression (patriarchy, Western/white supremacy/Orientalism). This alternate reading begins to unravel what those who read the film with the grain see as a heroic tale of nationalistic and gendered courage and triumph. I have argued that, whether unconsciously or not, Kathryn Bigelow et al. have produced a gendered Orientalist tale, complete with a fantasmic unveiling at the conclusion. From the two-dimensional rendering of Western/American women (Maya and Jessica) to the exscription of A/M women, *ZD30* simply offers a variation on an old set of tropes, drawing upon the basic premises of Orientalism. In her twenty-first-century rendering of an Orientalist tale, the Western woman not only saves her country from the savagery of the East but orchestrates the unveiling of the A/M woman in a grisly act that recalls Fanon's (1965) "Algeria Unveiled." Playing on American and Western fears relating to Arab and Muslim terrorism and the clash of civilizations discourse, *ZD30* glosses over the complexities (ethical and otherwise) of torture and extra-judicial executions. Bigelow et al. give the viewing public a tale about American exceptionalism in service to God and the United States of America. It is a resolutely uni-perspectival film, having denied any self-authoring of the Other. Arabs and Muslims are represented in service to, broken by, and/or in opposition to the North American protagonists.

Reading against the grain is a necessary and critical first step in the process of interrupting the flow of image and affect; however, this strategy is not always sufficient to unravel a discourse. In the following section, I propose a number of strategies that either directly

or indirectly disrupt these problematic orderings of the Symbolic. Not all of these strategies are directed at those who hold onto Orientalist views. Some of them are meant to address the liberatory and generative possibilities of A/M women speaking and organizing with one another and with Other folks, of all genders and gender identities.

## Pedagogies of Liberation

How does one go about thinking, talking, living, theorizing, or resisting an original, prodigious, and ongoing first world cultural expansion, indeed this imperial neo-colonization of all citizen subjects, when the nature of this very expansion functions to take in any thought about it?
—Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*

### Introduction

Sandoval's epigraph poses a critical set of questions for educators who are undertaking a commitment to read, write, teach, paint, talk, and sing against the grain of colonizing paradigms and away from totalizing discourses (and their effects). But how do we engage in teaching and writing and reading without reverting or resorting to other reductive premises and practices? How do we persist in the face of a seemingly insurmountable network of oppressive systems? I have come to some provisional conclusions, and I use the term *provisional* because this work is always provisional and always in process. For the moment, for this historical moment, I offer four approaches to the work of unravelling the discourse of Orientalism – gendered and otherwise. However, none of these are sufficient on their own, and I am absolutely sure that there are countless other ways people can and are teaching, creating, and studying to undermine the insidious effects of Orientalism.

When I began this research, I had hoped it would contribute to a curriculum that could be the basis for informal and formal educational contexts: from conversations to university classrooms. I still think that resources for hosting such conversations are invaluable, and I will make some recommendations in that regard because it is important to develop and disseminate techniques for watching (and listening) against the grain of oppressive popular cultural forms. Film, as I and others suggest, is a powerful site of pedagogy, both as a site of social reproduction but also as a transgressive site (Giroux 2004a, 2004b; Zine & Taylor, 2014). As such, it is important to address the ways in which film buttresses social values that contribute to the objectification and abjection of human beings (and other beings). I propose four approaches to interrupting and addressing gendered Orientalism: watching against the grain, remembering against the grain, reading against the grain, and flourishing beyond the grain. The first approach is for teaching film with students and others who are not aware of gendered Orientalism. The second pedagogical approach is a form of autobiography. Remembrance and memory are rich with analytic possibilities and offer a productive way to re-authorize experiences and histories produced within oppressive contexts and the confines of Orientalism. The third and fourth approaches reflect the importance of curating and disseminating individual works and bodies of scholarship and art (of all varieties) that are produced outside of the Orientalist discursive, which function as *objet petit a*, and thereby enunciate the impossibility of the Orientalist Symbolic and its discursive stranglehold.

I have come to appreciate, more than I did at the outset of this research, the value of generativity – that is, the importance of concurrently addressing oppressive structures and discourses while participating in the enunciation of our own ideas about what it means to be in this world today. The latter works to interrupt any tendencies to invert binary orderings or to

substitute one oppressive Symbolic order for another. Yeğenoğlu (1998), inspired by Luce Irigarary, reminds us that a reversal of the binary ordering constitutes neither "a subversive politics" nor a radical turn in popular cultural representations (p. 64). In that vein, I offer some general considerations and applications of these research findings, before discussing the four pedagogical approaches. I touch on the importance of feminist intersectionality (and intersectionality in general) as a means of resisting the tendency to recreate other binaries and/or identity-based hierarchies, while acknowledging and addressing the uneven effects that certain systems have on humans and other beings.

**Lessons Learned**[1]

When addressing gendered Orientalism, perhaps the most overarching consideration is to maintain the focus on global patriarchy and its structural co-dependents: heteronormativity, race, class privilege, ableism, and so forth. With this consideration in mind, one of the most helpful approaches to thinking through and addressing gendered Orientalism is feminist intersectionality.

The underpinnings of an analysis guided by feminist intersectionality will require a complex simultaneity that is not, I argue, impossible. The continued decolonizing of feminist theory through the use of an intersectional approach might mean the articulation of a set of organizing principles that does not take as its starting point the inevitability of the phallic Symbolic order (systems of patriarchy) that we have inherited. Borrowing from Walter Mignolo (2011), the ubiquity of patriarchy does not mean that it is a natural or inevitable state of affairs.

[1] Parts of this section are from E. Hamdon, (2018). Lessons in dismantling the master's house: An adult educator's reflections on intersectional feminism, in D. Wallin & J. Wallace (Eds.), *Transforming conversations: feminism and education in Canada since 1970* (pp. 171–187). Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

We can trace its origins and map its genealogy, recognizing that, while we have inherited it, it does not have to be our legacy. Thus, the first requirement of an intersectional feminism would be to include a clear elucidation of the non-inevitable nature of patriarchy, and to interrogate the effects on all human beings of this political system.

An intersectional feminism keeps its focus on the Symbolic and phallocentric privileging of masculinism distributed throughout social and political structures through various fathered figures (God, political leaders, church leaders, heads of families, etc.). In a patriarchal system, forms of authority are conflated with the masculine (which is understood in very specific ways and is symbolized by specific performances of masculinity). In this way, over time, heteronormativity, whiteness, and standardized notions of ability have become markers for phallic authority, and these systems of privilege are also intersectional feminist concerns. Simply put, the dismantling of phallocentrism or patriarchy will necessitate and include the dismantling of other binary orderings of subjects and related systems and/or structures of oppression. This is the intersectional nature of a future-oriented adult education practice: one that takes as its starting point the consideration of how these logics are at work in curriculum, pedagogy, and systems of adult education practices. Addressing gendered Orientalism in popular culture, the academy, and other public institutions/policies requires an intersectional approach if it is not to regress into the individualism of identity politics. As Chandra Mohanty (2003) and Bernice Johnson Reagon (2000) pointed out almost two decades ago, identity politics (despite the naming of the phenomena) problematically diverts attention from the politics of identity – that is, from the systems and structures that mobilize identity to reproduce normative and essentializing regimes. The following pedagogical interventions are predicated on an intersectional feminism and intended to dismantle binaries and problematize essentialisms, while simultaneously

acknowledging the production of subjects and their subjectivities within particular social and political contexts.

**Watching against the Grain: Interrupting Narrations of the Body**

The original impetus for this research was to explore popular cultural representations of A/M women. I was interested in discovering what was being represented in various media with the aim of learning how to read them and read against their discursive fields. In a close read of several films and the case study of *ZD30*, I learned these films mobilize both historical and contemporary ideologies and discourses, including the discourse that A/M women need saving. Additionally, there is a tendency to write out A/M women entirely or at least deprive them of the status of agentic subject. The trouble is, sometimes these discourses are smuggled in via the trojan horse of liberal feminism. The latter makes it more challenging to read against the grain because one has to simultaneously address Orientalism and liberal feminism, critiques of which elicit charges of abandoning the sisterhood. These claims of betraying the sisterhood fail to acknowledge that the sisterhood has had a problematic history. Feminisms have variously neglected black women, Indigenous women, poor women, queer, lesbian, and trans women, and so forth. The exscription and abjection of A/M women is but another variation on the ways in which liberal feminism had been selective in its membership.

Building on the idea of the Bechdel test for gender equity, the Deggens test for racial equity, the Vito Russo test for anti-LGBTQ bias, and other tests for assessing representational practices in film and other media, I propose the following criteria, which set minimum standard for redressing the long history of gendered Orientalism in film. I propose the Hamdon test as a reviewing mechanism to surface the presence of gendered Orientalism and/or the presence of remediating features. Not all films would be vetted against this test; however, given the frequent

and gratuitous use of problematic A/M stereotypes in film (Shaheen, 2001), it might have wider application than expected. Its primary value is in countering claims about a film's innocence in contributing to Orientalism through its use of racist and Orientalist tropes and stereotypes. It also serves to point out the absence of fair and humanizing representations of Arabs and/or Muslims of all genders in all kinds of films. However, films that are most egregious in their use of troubling representational practices tend to be those set in the Middle East, North Africa, or other Arab country; films about the war on terror; and films that include a A/M terrorist character or other suspicious A/M characters.

For a select film to pass the Hamdon test, and merit some worth in regards to its value in addressing Orientalism, it must meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Is there positive Arab/Muslim character who has a speaking part and who is not working for the American military or intelligence service?
2. Is there a queer A/M character who does not express hatred for their culture or religion?
3. Is there an A/M woman character who has a significant speaking part, is agentic, and whose A/M identity is incidental to other significant aspects of their character?
4. The use of Arabic is in the context of everyday conversation, or sacred practice, or the production of art and literature.

Like other tests of this nature, it is not that I expect any formulaic Hollywood films will meet these criteria, but I hope that thinking through the absence of these elements highlights the (at best) one-dimensionality of these representations. The pedagogical value of this rubric is that using it to review Hollywood films offers a provocative and evocative starting point for discussions, including a focus on why representational practices matter and to whom they matter.

**Remembering Against the Grain: Double Consciousness and Autobiography**

When I was beginning this research, I encountered a paper by Sara Ahmed in which autobiography is used as a device for the tracing of implicated relationships. Ahmed (1998) observes, "writing of the self in the form of an individuated memory may serve to de-stabilize the boundary between the subject and its other, and so to dramatize the inseparability of the subject from the realms of the social and political" (p. 153).

Educators, activists, and scholars who are teaching against the Orientalist grain, who are subject to the weight of gendered Orientalism and especially in the context of feminist organizing or collegial environments, are often trying to unpack the comment, the raised eyebrow, the disavowal. Remembering as self-authoring helps to displace gendered and racialized notions of who can have authorial privilege:

> the importance of the 'who' that writes: not the author as individual here, but the author as located in a context (which is at once text) which involves the demarcation of boundaries between self and other that are implicated in both gendered and colonial histories. (Ahmed, 1998, p. 137)

It is possible to use autobiography to unpack a moment, an exchange, an institutional structure and our encounter with it. A student who mobilized their racialized or gendered identity to interrupt that process through both intellectual and embodied processes of talking back would be 'returning the gaze,' as Himani Bannerji (1993) would say.

In Chapter 1, I unpacked a memory from childhood. For me, it was a powerful way of looking back at that teacher, that textbook, and those students. I drew upon the concept of double consciousness (Du Bois, 2003; Moore, 2005) to make sense of and celebrate my own capacity as

a child to navigate those relations of power. It also served (or allowed me) to give a long overdue naming to the racism I experienced. It's a strategy I continue to employ, though I do not always choose to share my autobiographical reflections. If one does share, it is important to direct the reader in their role as witness. Reading autobiography of this type requires the reader to witness without reducing the experience or laying claim to the ability to be in this skin of the experience. Following Ahmed (1998), I am asking the reader to witness with a clear "recognition of the limits of what can be got across" (p. 140).

I do not recommend this in a classroom setting: the terrain is too uneven and there is always the temptation to ask people to risk beyond what is equitable. However, as an individual one might use one's own autobiography to teach the process and to demonstrate its value for sense making.

**Reading against the Grain: Teaching to Disrupt**

I was recently listening to a rebroadcast of the 2012 Massey Lectures by Neil Turok (2012) titled "The Universe Within: From Quantum to Cosmos." Turok is a theoretical physicist, who takes the listener on a journey through key moments in the history of physics as a way to trace our increasingly complex knowledge at the level of the micro (the nature of energy) and the macro (the physical laws). It is a brilliant and riveting set of lectures, which takes the European Enlightenment as its unapologetic starting point. This would be less of a problem if Turok had not offered a couple of brief nods to the philosophers of the Greek Enlightenment. In doing so, he bypasses hundreds of years of the Islamic Enlightenment, during which important scientific progress built on the work of the Greeks. This exscription is by no means unique. University reading lists and course syllabi have historically neglected scholars whose subjectivities and

subject positionings or scholarly interests locate them outside of accepted canon. Epistemically and ontologically, academe has a tradition of mono-culturalism.

Given this context, it is not surprising that Arab- and/or Muslim-identified feminist scholars are usually excluded from university reading lists. This exclusion contributes to the effect of being written about, of being narrated by others (ironic when those very narrations cite religion/culture as the sources of subordination). A relatively simple corrective is to recognize and utilize the scholarly and literary insights of A/M feminists, through their inclusion in university syllabi, popular reading lists, and on expert panels (including media panels). This will require the authorizing of these scholars and texts by those who, like Turok, are either unaware of these bodies of work, or who dismiss the possibility that significant feminist and other forms of research and scholarship are possible from A/M women and others (in and outside of the West). While this is a fairly simple remedy in that it only requires the addition of a paper or a book to syllabi, the epistemic challenge is more daunting. It is important to emphasize that this recommendation to add A/M feminists/scholars' voices into the feminist canon is not meant to supplant Indigenous, black, queer, and other feminists. Recognizing and requiring these works be read amplifies the breadth and depth of these processes of exclusion while simultaneously focusing on the wealth of scholarship available to feminists and other generative scholars.

To counter the predominant, one-dimensional figure of the A/M woman, and the toxic discourse of Orientalism in general, I propose the addition of the following scholars and authors to various reading lists, academic and non-academic. These authors could be mobilized in university classrooms and excerpts of their work can be used in workshops or feminist reading circles. These authors may or may not be writing explicitly about Orientalism or gendered Orientalism, but their work and their voices trouble essentializing and liberal notions of

feminism that have and continue to authorize the kinds of problematic policies and analyses I've presented in this research. This is only a fraction of possible readings, but they serve to interrupt taken-for-granted ideas relating to the availability of A/M voices in ways that interrogate oppression and enunciate liberatory alternatives.

The reading list I propose is meant to complicate, transgress, enrich, and extend feminist analyses of legal, educational, and socio-political contexts. While exposure alone does not engender conscientization (Freire, 2002; Kumashiro, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006; Simons, 1992) this writing-in might function as a lacuna in the Imaginary of liberal feminists. Persistent insistence on the verifiable fact that feminism is not the sole dominion of Western women is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for a flourishing intersectional feminism. Exposure to the breadth and depth of scholarship contributed by A/M scholars (women, queer, and Other) will over time result in the canon being amended, as is evidenced by the now iconic status of black American scholars such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Kimberlé Crenshaw. The persistent fact of racism in the United States substantiates my claim that while expanding the university reading lists is important for reaching socio-political goals, it appears to be insufficient for the purpose of achieving ontologic or epistemic justice.

In terms of the corrective this offers in the face of problematic popular cultural representations, I look to the abolition of ignorance regarding the complex economic and political histories of East–West relations, including colonial histories. If a-historicity and lack of cultural nuance in films like *ZD30* are a problem, then knowledge of history and an anti-essentialist orientation to cultural identities are part of the solution. This ignorance is not the purview of those outside of the academy; Sally Armstrong and Kathyrn Bigelow et al. are

products of Western systems of education who brand themselves as feminists and use this branding to buttress gendered Orientalism in media and popular culture.

Yeğenoğlu (1998, 2003, 2014) is an essential and foundational scholar for this reading list. Her feminist reading of Said's *Orientalism* has made my own and many other's work possible. Yeğenoğlu traces all of the strands of Orientalist discourse and expands our understanding of "how representations of cultural and sexual difference are constitutive of each other" (1998, p. 1). *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Yeğenoğlu, 1998) is a necessary companion piece to Said's (1978) *Orientalism*. Rana Kabbani's (2008) *Imperial Fictions* is another significant contribution to exposing the effects of Orientalism, which, she writes, "should have died a nasty death with empire; or with the lethal blow administered to it by the late Edward Said in his seminal book*, Orientalism*" (p. 13). While both Yeğenoğlu and Kabbani highlight the intersection of gender and Orientalism, their works provide important scholarship about imperial practices in general.

Civilizational myths give rise to myths about subjects and identity. Reading against the grain of those myths requires reading about identity/subjectivity and then reading from multiple subject positions without privileging any one particular position. Sara Ahmed's (1998) early work is invaluable for her nuanced thinking about passing. She has argued that it is too simplistic a view to only speak of it as a form of transgression, of appropriating otherness of rupturing borders/binaries. She writes, "when the enunciative power to decide upon criteria for identification remains the very basis of forms of sexism and racism," then passing ceases to be a form of resistance (although it is an essential strategy for one form of survival) and lands passing squarely back within "a complex set of social antagonisms" (1998, pp. 91–92). Other readings, from various feminist-identified subject positions could include Fatema Mernissi's (2001)

*Scheherazade Goes West*, Lila Abu Lughod's (2013) *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* and Amina Wadud's (1992) *Quran and Woman.* There is an excellent anthology of feminist writing edited by Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone (2008) called *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era* that includes essays by Mernissi, Ahmed, Abu-Lughod, and other important feminist writers and scholars.

A number of Canadian and other feminist scholars write about the relationship between gender and nationalism(s), which includes the mobilization of identity (gendered and otherwise) for policies such as immigration and the sanctioning of war. From a European perspective, Sara Farris's (2017) *Femonationalism* provides a current and comprehensive examination of Western and European women's complicity and participation in racist and nationalist projects. Canadian scholars such as Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Sharzhad Mojab, and Sherene Razack are researching and writing about subjectivities as they intersect with statist policies and practices. Of particular salience are Bannerji, Mojab, and Whitehead's (2001) *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism*, Razack's (2009) *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*, and Abu-Laban's (2008) *Gendering the Nation-State: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*, and (2009) *Dangerous (Internal) Foreigners and Nation-Building: The Case of Canada* (with Rita Dhamoon).

No reading list would be complete without the inclusion of Jasmine Zine, whose writing addresses issues relating to A/M children, youth, and women within the Canadian scene and with a focus on education. In 2007, she co-edited an important volume on Muslim women, transnational feminism, and the ethics of pedagogy (Zine, Taylor, & Davis, 2007b), which focused on answering earlier questions she posed (and cited elsewhere in this dissertation), "Can the subaltern be heard?"

**Flourishing beyond the Grain: Untethered Generativity and Public Pedagogy**

Reflected in public policy, foreign policy, public opinion, and popular culture, Orientalism continues to dominate the narrative scene in the West, and importance of interrupting these discourses in policy and curricula is self-evident. It is perhaps not as apparently important in the context of popular culture. Over the years that I have been researching and thinking about representations of A/M women in popular (and other cultural forms), I have used what I have learned to interrupt Orientalism where and when I find it. And here is what I have learned: it's so pervasive, extensive, and intensive that the classroom cannot be the only site of its undoing. Initially, I dismissed the value of various cultural representations as being unable to displace the plethora and predominance of the Orientalists' discourse. I have reconsidered that original position and, in this section, I will discuss the existing and emerging counter discourses that circulate within the sphere of the public and are aimed not at a politics of convincing, but at an aesthetics of expression. There is an exciting possibility that this aesthetics of expression may have the same pedagogical potential as other expressions of culture.

This proposal is inspired by the work of Alexis Shotwell (2012, 2016), who examines the deadening and damaging effects of normativities and normative processes (like that which flows from the Symbolic) that foreclose on the possibility of generativity and difference. So, while it is important to read against the grain of racist and gendered Orientalist texts and other cultural artifacts (Simons, 1992; Ng, 1995), it is also important, as I stated in the previous section, to nourish, nurture, and enable other voices to articulate beyond the grain of dominant discourses and oppressive Symbolic orders. This kind of flourishing, as Shotwell (2012) so eloquently writes, is a call for

> the contingent, without-guarantees, partially shared world that recognizes both ethical entanglement and irreducible difference…Creating open normativities as a collective and nonvoluntarist endeavor to proliferate flourishing means that norms that flatten complexity and close down flourishing for others are rejected. As Simone de Beauvoir argues, if we take seriously the idea that our freedom consists in willing an open future for ourselves and others, then we open freedoms to one another. It is inconsistent to argue that freedom is taken from us if we are unable to oppress others; our freedom consists in willing freedom for others, not only ourselves. (p. 1004)

This idea for a widespread flourishing began to take hold when I was in the thick of data collection. There were times when not only the popular cultural forms I was studying reeked of Orientalism, but current events would result in an upsurge of Orientalism in news and social media, constituting a relentless barrage of an Orientalist Symbolic, undisturbed by any counter narration. On more than one occasion, throughout the entirety of this project, proxy wars have been fought in the Middle East and the concurrent reportage is often about as nuanced as the war films I was analyzing. As an antidote, I developed a set of materials to read, watch, and listen to. These were the voices and the art and the music of Arabs and Muslims of all genders and abilities and sexualities who are engaged in scholarly, artistic, and popular forms of inquiry and expression for the intellectual, spiritual, and creative joy and fulfillment that comes from their endeavours, which contribute to what Shotwell (2012) refers to as "widespread flourishing" (p. 990). This harkens back to Giroux, Jubas et al., Zine & Taylor and others who have documented the pedagogical power of cultural and popular cultural forms. That forum which has, in the past often worked against Arabs/Muslim of all genders, may indeed hold the key to a powerful, alternative culture scene.

Thus, I conclude this section and this chapter on a joyful and hopeful note. I began this discussion about teaching against the grain of films that flatten and deaden the representations of A/M people, especially women. I alluded to a coping mechanism I developed as an antidote to the mind-numbing tsunami of hateful film I was studying. At the conclusion of this project, I have come to realize that this coping mechanism is probably the most important strategy to mobilize in this time of mass media that defies our capacity for concerted response. What I have been doing, for myself, is attending to the multiplicity of voices singing, speaking, writing, painting, filming, photographing, dancing, and teaching. They are not (for the most part or overtly) correcting, critiquing, responding, apologizing, excusing, defending, or any other such thing of that sort. Nadine Labaki is making films, Amber Fares is making television, Leila Fadel is being a journalist, Yuna and Marcel Khalife are making music, and Mahmoud Darwish wrote poetry. These artists facilitate encounters with A/M worlds and people through beauty, grace, and playfulness. It is not only that there is too much of Bigelow et al.'s *ZD30*, but there is not enough of films like Labaki's *Caramel*. To illustrate the value of the aesthetic, I would like to highlight three very diverse examples, not as a politics of convincing but an aesthetics of expression: Ghada Alatrash, an emerging Canadian Syrian poet and educator; Nadine Labaki, a highly successful Lebanese filmmaker; and Ikhlas Saleem and Makkah Ali, who host a podcast (their story told on NPR by the aforementioned Leila Fadel).

When I originally conceived of this research project, I was looking for an American film, preferably a Hollywood film, that would speak back, as it were, against *ZD30*. In the absence of a Hollywood film that met this criterion, I looked to arthouse and foreign films. I considered, then decided against, Labaki's films because they were relatively light and not American. But the more I watch *Caramel* in particular, the more I think it is a great antidote. It does confound the

Imaginary and the Symbolic of *ZD30* and films like it, in a number of both overt and subtle ways: it is filled with Arabic, and colour, and tenderness and the most mundane and ordinary bits of life. Moreover, it takes place in Beirut, and Labaki's Arab street, filmed in Lebanon, is the Real (Lacanian pun intended) thing.

*Caramel* is remarkably (overtly) apolitical. The film follows the lives of several Lebanese women – married, divorced, straight, single, engaged, lesbian, aging, elderly, and suffering with mental health issues – as they negotiate their work and private lives. However, by entirely casting the film with Lebanese characters, Labaki radically alters the discursive field. One cannot enter into the film from the position of patriarchy or coloniality without encountering absence: the absence of English, the absence of Western subjects. There is no space within this film for the liberal feminist or imperial military hero to rescue or to control through domination. While I do not think this film produces the type of filmic trauma that McGowan references in his work on film, there is enough slippage, enough absence, to catalyze some reflection on the difference between what we see in *Caramel* and what we believe to be truths about Arab/Muslim folks, including women.

Closer to home, I recently had the good fortune to experience a spoken word performance, featuring the work of Ghada Alatrash. Alatrash is currently completing a PhD in education at the University of Calgary. Alatrash is originally from Syria and her latest work, *Stripped to the Bone: Portraits of Syrian Women*, "explores issues of identity, love, strife, courage and resilience in seven fictional portraits of Syrian women" (2016, back cover). During her reading, she was accompanied by an Oud player and a violinist – also from Syria. While the work was not political, the effects it had upon the audience was notable. What was the audience to make of a self-narrating woman, mobilizing the beauty of the spoken word, including the

Arabic word, to trace the complexities of Syrian lives? For an hour we experienced a poignancy and sweetness that enunciated the fact of Syria as well as, if not better than, any political documentary I have seen or currently available.

In the realm of radio broadcasting two women, Ikhlas Saleem and Makkah Ali (2018), are drawing wide attention. Saleem and Ali are quoted as saying that “we're producers of culture. That we contribute to art and the aesthetic of what it means to be an American" (Fadel, 2018). Saleem and Ali are part of a radio documentary (2018) Leila Fadel produced that focuses on a new wave of self-enunciation. In Fadel’s words, “Rather than defending themselves, they are defining themselves. In a tense political climate, they are worried less about explaining Islam to others and more about contributing to the American tapestry through their unique perspectives” (2018). This motif of self-representation as an affirmative action, rather than a defensive one, marks a hopeful shift, even as the rhetoric relating to Arabs and Muslims continues to heat up globally.

Saleem and Ali host a podcast*, Identity Politics*, where they make space for conversation about what it means to be women/black/Muslim/American/etc./etc./etc. in contemporary America. While their topics run the gamut from art to politics to relationships, the podcast does not include what they call “Islam 101.” That is, their podcast community is not a space in which they become objects of curiosity or interrogation. Like Labaki and Alatrash, Saleem and Ali (and by extension documentary producer and NPR journalist Fadel) have escaped the world of tropes. They have also lodged themselves in the landscape of the Western psyche through an auditory refusal to engage neither in faithful repetition nor in the memetic.

I have outlined four possibilities in which a pedagogy of affirmation might work to function as lacuna in the psychic field of the Western subject. Each approach, in its own way

announces a presence – even if that presence curves around the negative space of what has been absented. Two approaches are an expression of the aesthetic as an affirmation of life and subjective agency. The latter recalls another spoken word artist, Afeef Ziadah (2011), who wrote the poem "We Teach Life, Sir" in response to an interviewer who asked whether "don't you think it would all be fine if you just stopped teaching your children to hate?" (Ziadeh, 2011). The interview in question took place during the bombardment of Gaza that happened over a three week period in December 2008 and January 2009. Ziadah, a Palestinian Canadian, was part of a media response team. Perhaps mobilizing the protective veil of double consciousness, she performed the requisite politeness in the face his audacity, and then later wrote a searing poetic response to his deeply Orientalist question.

I remember both her poem and the bombardment vividly. I was screening and analyzing films for this research. Ironically, I was being assailed by these images of war and violence on the small screen of my computer and the small screen of the newscast. The weight of Orientalism was palpable. At times, I felt I would suffocate. Then I heard Ziadah recite,

> Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word limits and move those that are desensitized to terrorist blood…
>
> Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.
>
> Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word limits.
>
> Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word limits filled enough with statistics to counter measured response.
>
> And I perfected my English and I learned my UN resolutions.
>
> But still, he asked me, Ms. Ziadah, don't you think that everything would be resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children?

Pause.

I look inside of me for strength to be patient but patience is not at the tip of my tongue as the bombs drop over Gaza.

Patience has just escaped me.

Pause. Smile.

We teach life, sir.

Rafeef, remember to smile.

Pause.

We teach life, sir….

In this poem, Ziadah (2014) was annunciating the monstrous absurdity of the Orientalist discourse. And in responding poetically she mobilized a pedagogy far more powerful than the sound bite in that interview could ever be. The corporate news media and the media-military-industrial complex might be able to constrain some forms of narration. Yet Ziadah, Labaki, Alatrash, Fadel, and so many others continue to prove that countless spaces from which to stare down the Symbolic exist (remain or are open), and countless ways to write oneself into the discursive scene and thus begin remediating the problem of being *written* about and *written* out.

# Chapter 7

# Conclusion

Therefore do not look for yourself in what is written about you. Do not search for the Canaanite in you to prove that you exist. Grasp your own reality and grasp your name and learn how to write your own proof. You, you and not your ghost, were the one driven out into the night.
—Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*

## Retracing My Steps

This research grew out of my fascination with the interstitial/borderlands as those concepts relate to human subjectivity. From Homi Bhabha to Gloria Anzaldúa, theories relating to the lived realities of human complexity are at the heart of this research. Encounters with anti-essentialist identity theory compelled me to explore my own and others' responses to hybridity, fluidity, and the impossibility of human categorization(s). In the *Borderlands*, where "enemies are kin to each other" (Anzaldúa 2012, p. 216), the danger of being cast out (Razack, 2008) is ever present. I read this casting out as a play on words with two meanings. It refers to being ejected from society, but I also read this as being ranked and sorted in a hierarchical ordering of subjects: to be made Other by being assigned to a cast or being racialized in such a way as to signal the presence of a deficient or dangerous subjectivity. In contemporary societies, where globality and mobility (by choice or through catastrophe) are ever and increasingly present, the casting out of *enemy kin* can be dangerous, not only for those being cast out but for those doing the casting out. Demarcations relating to the identifying of us and them are based on shifting

ideological sands, and a fluid and fickle abyssal line (de Sousa Santos, 2007). There is always the possibility that one might find oneself on the other side.

Thus, my fascination with enemy kinship grew into a fascination with the ways in which subjects are made abject. I was and am particularly interested in the interplay between the intrasubjective and the socio-political or ideological. Lacanian concepts helped illuminate processes by which some small thing on a body becomes lacuna: the shape of a brow or nose, the shade of the skin, a piece of fabric, the slip of a tongue all have the potential to be read as dangerous slippage between subjects – slippage that signals the impossible fiction of absolute sameness and absolute difference. That is, these lacunae become not the site of simple phenotypical differences, but signal something symptomatic of the (horrors of) the always, already incompleteness of the Symbolic (or ideology) and the always, already present of the Real (or all that escapes being accounted for via reductive explanatories). Simply put, these stains in the perceptual field (lacunae) remind that all ideology – all perceptual and conceptual mappings of fields of experience and meaning – are partial, contextual, and contested(able).

The production of Arabs and/or Muslims (of all genders) as abject is an old project, but it is being reanimated on a global scale and in increasingly violent ways. The use of popular cultural and mass media to engender support for the divisive and flawed clash of civilizations discourse has contributed to Western ambivalences relating to wars on terror, the use of torture, xenophobic immigration policies, and the proliferation of daily micro-aggressions, such as racial profiling, against those who are read as Arab and/or Muslim. While this is of concern in general, it is more disturbing when self-identified feminists and liberals enthusiastically marshal these discourses in service to the emancipation of women and to temper equity and diversity initiatives. This particular subset of supporters of the clash of civilizations discourse have

apparently failed to discern the ethical and theoretical problems at the root of their thinking. This failure compelled and continues to compel me to develop and refine ways to engage with their claims regarding the intractable nature of this civilizational/subjective divide and to proliferate another discursive possibility. This research has provided valuable insights about the relationship between liberal feminism and (neo-)Orientalism and the role of film in sedimenting these discourses.

## Salient Contributions from the Research

There is, unfortunately, a wide array of sites in which to study abjection communicated through contemporary Orientalist discourses and as they relate to Arab/Muslim subjects (regardless of their gendered identity). There is evidence of Orientalism in every aspect of the communication landscape from policy documents (foreign and domestic), educational curricula at all levels, news media, mass entertainment media, including television and now sites like Netflix and YouTube, and of course film. Many of these sites of cultural production and reproduction, such as news and television medias, have received more scholarly attention, possibly because they are taken more seriously as having influence. However, as I discussed in Chapter 6, film has long been viewed as being influential and pedagogic, a view that is buttressed by the military's interest in films like *ZD30*.

News media and films are often cited as where people learn about those of whom they have little or no firsthand knowledge and of these two, film has been the more neglected site of study regarding representations of A/M women. Indeed, if it were not for the impressive body of work left by the late Jack Shaheen, there would be little to build upon. And while Shaheen's work is invaluable for those of us examining film, a nuanced gendered analysis was not his focus.

One option for remediating this lack was to conduct a broad review of films and map the tropes therein, but this would not have served my specific research topic and questions: What do these representations of A/M women communicate about the gendered and racialized relations that are knotted together at the nexus of coloniality and patriarchy? And what do the symbolic ordering of these representations communicate about the socio-political location of these subjects, particularly for their possible relationship to the presence and production of Orientalist discourses (gendered and otherwise) in Canada?

The decision to focus on one film, *ZD30*, emerged after I had reviewed the films discussed in Chapter 2. Reading the literature relating to gender, racialization, Orientalism, femonationalism – all within the broad rubric of postcolonial and anti-colonial feminist literatures – led me inexorably towards wanting to deepen the research and writing on gendered Orientalism. This phenomenon, which is not new but which is more institutionalized, requires urgent attention and redress. This decision made the choice to study *ZD30* compelling for all of the reasons stated in Chapter 4, but the most compelling reason was the filmic presence of femonationalism and liberal feminism.

The decision to focus on *ZD30* as a case study in the popular cultural reproduction of gendered Orientalism yielded results beyond my expectations. This particular case demonstrated how popular cultural forms that lay claim to feminism employ signifying practices that begin with phallocentrism embodied in various fathered metaphors and ends (in this historical moment and in this film) on a spectacularly gendered Orientalist note. Thus, *ZD30* provides an important filmic space in which to reflect upon the ways in which presence, absence, and unveiling work together to produce and reproduce a number of problematic binaries that, in turn, are in service to a particular symbolic order. It is these flaws, paradoxes, and fault lines that make the film an

invaluable (con)text for exploring and unravelling these structuring myths (the Symbolic of Lacan) into which Maya is interpellated and by extension into which Bigelow et al. drags A/M women and other subjectivities.

Like other popular cultural sites that are purportedly feminist and liberal, gendered Orientalism, is a subtle presence. Bigelow et al. mostly resists didactic generalizations about abjection. Rather, she relies on popularly accepted essentialisms and essentializing tropes to shape the viewer's reading of the film. Representations of the women in this film are limited to a conflation of whiteness and Westernness with emancipation, while Arabness/Easternness/Muslimness are portrayed as being synonymous with abjection/marginalization/erasure. Bigelow et al. accomplishes this with the foregrounding of the characters of Maya and Jessica (described in Chapter 4). Their narrative importance and their instrumental presence in the finding and killing of Bin Laden sit in contrast with the backgrounding of all A/M women, who are barely incidental and whose only speaking parts are limited to several anguished cries and terrified words at the very end of the film, when their husbands are slain, their children terrorized, and their own lives threatened. The relationship between these simplistic and one-dimensional representations reflect and relate to the overarching West/East binary, which includes the ordering of gender along an axis of West and East. Nothing need be scripted textually; the subtext delivers the message.

A surprisingly important finding relates to the way in which Orientalist representations A/M women/men/Others are produced in service to a binary of degradation and stagnation. Let us unpack this statement. Recall that not only *ZD30* but Orientalist discourses in general locate the A/M man as the abject of the abject, yet one who has the capacity to subjugate A/M women through the enforcement of barbaric cultural and religious norms and laws as well as brute force.

Ironically, Western liberal feminisms that subscribe to Orientalism themselves engage in discursive productions of women as abject through their inability to be self-emancipating, unlike their Western counterparts. The production, through cultural and other processes, of A/M men as barbaric and A/M women as always, already oppressed, serves to legitimize their rescue as not only legitimate but also necessary – even if the rescue constitutes an act of violence. This is not a new discourse; Said reported this in *Orientalism* and Fanon in a *Dying Colonialism*, and an examination of it continues to be expanded and contemporized by Alsultany (2012), Kabbani (2008), Razack (2001, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008), Zine, (2009, 2012), Yeğenoğlu (1998,) and others. My research adds to that body of work and expands upon it by focusing on film as a powerful site for the production of gendered Orientalism. Further, by drawing upon Yeğenoğlu and McGowan's use of the Lacanian registers and later gaze theory, this research probes and clarifies the relationship between intrasubjective and intersubjective processes of abjection and binary production. This is useful in amplifying the meaning, affect, and effects of filmic discourses, and in leveraging these insights to support teaching and learning in post-secondary classrooms, institutional change processes, public fora, and beyond. Geopolitics as they are, regions where Arab/Muslim people live will likely be of interest to imperial powers for some time to come, and for that reason mobilizing them as the enemy will also continue to proliferate. And so, the work continues.

## Emerging Research

The passing of time has not diminished the presence or the effects of Orientalism. As evidenced in a range of sites, from public policy to popular culture, A/M women's bodies remain the site of much struggle and anxiety. This gendered expression of Orientalism is a subset of both Orientalism and femonationalism, intersecting as they do on and through Arab and Muslim

women's bodies. This contextual reality makes this and future research an ongoing necessity. In the concluding section of this chapter, I reflect upon future research and continued pedagogical approaches in service to challenging and dismantling these discourses and binaries. A number of questions and/or projects present themselves.

Subsequent to this research, it is important to engage in in-depth analysis of films made outside of the Orientalist discursive and, following that, to engage in a comparative study between the Hollywood film(s) and films (such as *Caramel*) that escape this discursive net. A third project is visual in nature – a filmic collage that would emerge out of the comparative study – and fourth is a project I have long envisioned: a flipbook that would represent over a hundred years of filmic veiling and unveiling of A/M women in Hollywood films. The final future research project emerged as a persistent intrusion into my thoughts. Throughout the long hours of examining *ZD30* I could not help but constantly recall the figure of Emmanuel Goldstein from George Orwell's *1984.* There is an uncanny set of similarities between that figure and Osama bin Laden. Eventually, a set of question emerged, which I will elaborate on later in this section.

**Films beyond Orientalism**

In my original research proposal, I was going to conduct a comparative study looking at both Hollywood films and a film made outside of the Orientalist discursive. The study took a different direction but, given that I have already engaged in a preliminary review of a number of interesting films of this type, I would like to engage in an in-depth analysis of one or more of them, not to compare but for the purpose of exploring and reporting about what happens when Arabs/Muslims self-author(ize) through the film arts. The brief comments I offer about *Caramel* (Labaki, 2007) suggest that the conceptual framework developed to examine *ZD30* might be of use in these other filmic contexts, but it would be interesting to see what the data from non-

Orientalist films demands with respect to analysis. I would then amend the framework to make sense of representations of A/M women, men, and those beyond gendered binaries.

Once data is collected and analyzed on the non-Orientalist film(s), it would be interesting to compare those findings with the findings from this study. If one reflects upon the characters from *Caramel* and the representations of A/M women and men in *ZD30*, the contrast becomes almost absurd. A deeper interrogation of their differences could itself become a useful data set of the Occidental/Oriental in contemporary film. In the context of classroom (upper-level undergraduate or graduate seminar), the comparison would be a useful catalyst for discussion. If *Caramel* were the film used as a comparator, I would be interested in knowing how students are identifying with the various characters in the films (*ZD30* and *Caramel*). It would be interesting to host a discussion on the following questions: Whose politics are you relating to? Whose ethics? What scenes feel most familiar or safe, and why is this so? Where are you experiencing a sense of intimacy with the characters and their feelings? Where do you feel a sense of disconnection? Who are you 'pulling for?' Who do feel antipathy towards? Do these responses and feelings shift throughout the film? If so, what prompts the shift?

Comparing the psychodynamic and feminist elements of the films will yield one set of data for discussion; however, a project that produces a set of visual comparatives might also prove fruitful and a catalyst to other kinds of learning. Developing a montage of excerpted clips to create a filmic collage of the binary orderings could be both instructive and disruptive. I also think that a project that catalogues the depictions of A/M women since the beginning of the film industry in Hollywood would be instructive in this longstanding objectifying fantasy about A/M women.

Towards the end of my data analysis, I became quite fascinated with the monstrosity of the Navy SEALs. I went back and took a cursory look at some of the other films I originally reviewed to see if there were other images that suggest the monstrous; this is an area I would like to explore further. Given that the A/M man is overtly produced as a savage and beyond the bounds of Western decency, how is it that these images of the noble Western solider have escaped this type of interrogation? What is it about the way these films are produced that enables the filmgoer to look past the monstrous or to not experience it? McGowan's (2007) work on Stanley Kubrick's use of fantasy to bypass affect would provide a fruitful analytic entry point. Although fantasy in this regard works for Kubrick, according to McGowan, because he "stages fantasy without a corresponding emotional response to it…[which] allows us to partake in the fantasy without the disguise within which it usually appears (p. 44)". Whether this holds for (some) films from this particular genre remains to be seen. In any case, I am interested in how this form of monstrosity seems to escape notice.

Finally, I would like to engage in research relating to the figure of Osama bin Laden (and others who come and go in his place, such as Saddam Hussein). Like the fictitious figure of Emmanuel Goldstein, Bin Laden seems to function in the American psyche as *objet petit a*. Certainly, he seemed to achieve mythic status, or as Hasian and McFarlane (2013) describe it, he became "a phantasmagoric future. In other words, Americans were hunting for more than just a mere mortal – they were searching for U.S. redemption, revenge for 9/11, proof that special operations forces were indeed some of the best of the best" (p. 5). In light of ongoing military involvement in the Middle East, a study such as this could be useful not only for a retrospective understanding of how subjects such as Bin Laden are mobilized to buttress a discourse in service to foreign policies (including decisions to go to war), but also to anticipate similar mobilizations

in future and to develop responses to these problematic representations and the equally problematic meanings attached to them.

Watching a war film for a couple of years changes a person. Especially when the film reflects an ongoing imperial project in the lands from which one's grandparents came, lands to which one has travelled, and in which one still has relatives. Watching people who look like me and my family reduced (albeit filmically) to one-dimensional subjects, with little to redeem them, is not an easy thing to do. However, watching a thinly veiled propaganda film through the protective lens of thoughtful conceptual framework results in much more than a soporific effect. Perhaps a carefully wrought set of explanatories reveals the structure into which the filmmaker hopes the spectator will be interpellated? Perhaps, as I discussed in Chapter 5, the truly monstrous reveals itself and the story's pretext is made absurd. Unfortunately, most people do not enter the theatre or binge watch Netflix with an analytic framework in one hand and popcorn in the other and given that widespread improvements to curriculum to remediate the current state of media illiteracy are not likely, one has to proceed in this media(ted) war differently.

If the de-Orientalization of pedagogy and curricula are unlikely to affect immediate and/or radical social transformation, then perhaps the more liberating project is to advocate for the freeing of subjects from the bonds of internalized oppression. In the presence of absence and monstrosity, the mass proliferation of representations of beauty, and complexity, of the ordinary and the extraordinary relieves Arabs and/or Muslims – women, men, and Others – of the burden of carrying around distorted images of ourselves, given to us by those whose ideology demands our erasure. Hollywood can churn out a dozen sniper films a year, filled with hatred and death, masquerading as American exceptionalism, but all of that carnage cannot eradicate the long history and rich presence of those who tell another story. That is the future project, a project not

only of recuperating our memories of ourselves but also to pay tribute to the impossible and beautiful complexity we have yet to live into.

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## Appendix A: Film Reviewing Matrix

| Film Title | Sustained Female | Powerful or Unusual A/M Woman | Tropes | Fantasy | *Objet petit a* | Traumatic Encounter |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## Appendix B: Film Synopses

| Title / Year | Director / Country | Synopsis |
|---|---|---|
| *Amreeka* | Cherien Dabis | Dabis tells the story of a Christian Palestinian woman and her son who emigrate |
| 2009 | USA | to the United States. They move in with her sister's family, and the events of 9/11 take their toll on both families. There are two strong female leads and the main A/M male character is complex, unlike most tropic representations (a doctor, gentle and soft spoken). The successful integration of the family is signalled by the lead female character beginning a relationship with an American man. |
| *Babel* | Alejandro G. Iñárritu | One event has repercussions around the world. There was potential for this film |
| 2006 | USA | given its aim was to show how similar people are, regardless of where they live. However, tropic representations of A/M men, including hypersexuality and passive women characters, leave stereotypes intact. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Caramel* | Nadine Labaki | All of the main characters are Lebanese women, from a variety of backgrounds. |
| 2007 | Lebanon | Labaki explores themes of aging, mental health, queerness, and relationships. The film takes place in Beirut, Lebanon, and examines the challenges facing everyday Lebanese women. English subtitles. |
| *Iron Man* | Jon Favreau | It is a cross between a fantasy superhero film and a war film. Terrorism is the |
| 2008 | USA | animating element in spite of the fantasy-like nature of the film. No A/M women; there is one 'good Arab' who dies early on in the film. |
| *Miral* | Julian Schnabel | This is the story of the founder of the Dar Al Tifel institute – a school and |
| 2010 | France, Israel, Italy, India, USA | orphanage in Palestine. The second story line focuses on young Palestinian girl who is raised in an orphanage after her mother is killed. Her life and future are shaped by Mama Hind, the founder of the Institute. |
| *Munich* | Steven Spielberg | No Sustained A/M women; brief appearance by Haim Abbas as the wife of a |
| 2005 | USA | member of the PLO whom the Mossad is plotting to assassinate. However, there |
| Hollywood | | is a very sympathetic portrayal of that character. He is depicted as an erudite man and as a loving father and husband. He is assassinated. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Paradise Now*<br>2005 | Hani Abu-Assad<br>Palestine, France, Germany, Israel | Two Palestinian men are recruited for a suicide-bombing mission in Israel. They confront their own ambivalences and agonisms about living under occupation and finding ways to resist. There are such interesting representations of men and women and life in Palestine. Unfortunately, there are a few heavy-handed moments in the films narrative script – a bit didactic. |
| *Rendition*<br>2007 | Gavin Hood<br>USA | The story arc is similar to the real events faced by Maher Arar and his wife Monia Mazigh and is based on the case of Khalid El-Masri. Like Arar, El-Masri is arrested under the suspicion of being linked to terrorists, after an attack on Americans overseas. He is taken to a black site and tortured into a false confession. His American wife is relentless in her efforts to find and have her husband freed. The husband is a sympathetic character, but there are A/M men who are not. |
| *Sabah*<br>2005 | Ruba Nada<br>Canada | Sabah is a 30-something Syrian Canadian woman who falls in love with an Anglo Canadian man. This unleashes a chain of events that unsettles her family and leads to their identities becoming more hybrid. That the hybridization |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | occurs via a relationship with a white man signals a problematic reliance on the West to recuperate the backward East. Similar to *Amreeka*. |
| *Towelhead* | Alan Ball | This story focuses on a teenaged Arab-American girl struggling with the trauma |
| 2007 | USA | of sexual violence, a father she can't relate to, and racism. The film represents this teen victim of sexual abuse as 'sex-obsessed' after she is raped by an adult (American) neighbour. It is clumsy and deeply problematic in this regard. |
| *The Band's Visit* | Eran Kolirin | An Egyptian band arrives in Israel for a cultural event and has to navigate the |
| 2007 | Israel, USA, France | country on their own. No A/M characters, but an extraordinarily sympathetic and engaging set of portrayals of Egyptian men. |
| *The Time That Remains* | Elia Suleiman | A Palestinian living in exile travels home to visit his ailing mother and traverses |
| 2009 | France | the history of his family since the Nakba. The story is deftly wrought: Suleiman uses humour, supersaturated colour, and some elements of the absurd. This film is filled with interesting, quirky characters (who also could be symbolic of aspects of the psyche or of a national psyche). It is funny even as it is poignant. |
| *Where Do We Go Now?* | Nadine Labaki | Muslim and Christian women in a Lebanese village work together to ease |
| 2011 | Lebanon | tensions when conflict threatens to interrupt their peaceful lives. There are |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | numerous, fully developed women characters. There are some tropes relating to the men: tendencies to conflict, easily influenced by the possibility of sex, etc. |
| *Syriana* | Stephen Gaghan | Portrayals of A/M men and women are largely tropic. Most women are fleeting |
| 2005 | USA | and burqa clad, with the exception of Prince Nasir's wife, who dresses in Western-style clothing and speaks without an accent (or rather with what sounds like an American accent). Prince Nasir himself is portrayed sympathetically, because is sympathetic to the West and wants to Westernize Saudi Arabia. At the end of the film, he and his wife are killed when their car convoy is attacked. There are many scenes of Arab barbarism and duplicitous Arabs. |
| *The Kingdom* | Peter Berg | The film begins with a terrorist attack on American civilians in Saudi Arabia. |
| 2007 | USA | The remainder of the film is about the Americans trying to investigate the attack and find and punish the terrorists. No sustained images of women: all fleeting. Many depictions of Arab-on-Arab brutality. One scene of an Arab man being violently dominated by an American woman. There is a disturbing scene where an Arab father makes his son watch the brutal killing of Americans. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *The Lone Survivor*<br>2013 | Mark Wahlberg<br>USA | While on a mission to kill a key Taliban official, the special SEAL unit is attacked and many are eventually killed by Taliban. One SEAL survives and is found and protected by Afghani villagers, who not only alert Americans at a nearby base but also defend him from the Taliban at great risk to themselves. Much Afghan-on-Afghan brutality and graphic violence when the American SEALs are killed. |
| *Three Kings*<br>1999<br>Hollywood | David O. Russell<br>USA | This is the one film from before 9/11 that I reviewed. There was some historical contextualization and also more positive depictions of A/M men. Women were still mostly shapeless and veiled until the very end, when a village woman is killed in an attack (by other Arabs). There is a great deal of chaotic Arab infighting and Arab fighters masquerading in burqa to deceive the Americans. American saves the Arab child and attempt to save the life of the woman who is killed. |

## Appendix C: Pages 78–80 of *Zero Dark Thirty* Script

The following scene takes place at International CIA Headquarters Afghanistan/Pakistan Division briefly at Maya's desk, but mostly at Predator Bay. According to the script, "The Langley Predator Bay is an impressive sight, a command centre bristling with high-tech equipment. The room is filled with technicians…The big screen displays a single image: The overhead satellite image of the compound in Abbottabad." An internet search amends this information to include that it is a control centre for the Drone program. An article on the film in *Business Insider* (Ingersoll & Kelley, 2012) notes, "The movie shows Langley's 'Predator Bay,' a really cool control room for the CIA drone program, even though the CIA has yet to acknowledge its drone program.".

The following is from the script and details what is said about Arab/Muslim women.

Steve: (*To Maya, over the phone*)
Swing by, I want to show you something.

*Maya leaves her desk and walks into where Steve is: "International CIA Headquarters – Predator Bay"*

Steve: This is from a few minutes ago. We've got two males, two females, seven kids.

Maya: Who's that?

Steve: I'm saying that's Bushra, the brother's wife.

Maya: How do you know the gender?

Steve: *He points on screen, to a thin line.*

Well this is a clothesline here, for the laundry. Men don't mess with the wash.

*We watch that shape move away from the clothesline and back to the house.*

Steve (Cont'd) It takes her about four seconds to move from there to the front door. So she's on the older side.

Maya: What's that up there? *(Pointing to the other shapes).*

Steve: Those are kids. They're shuffling around, sword-fighting or something with sticks. *(pointing again)* You can see their height relative to this – these are cows – so they're probably between seven and nine. Boys.

*Another figure comes out of the house and moves to the clothesline and grabs some of the laundry.*

Maya: Your female is moving fast.

Steve: That's what I wanted to show you…Can we pause please? That's not the same lady. That's female #3.

Maya: So you found two males, three females?

Steve: That's correct.

*Suddenly Maya gets it.*

Maya: You're missing a male.

Steve: Yes we are.

Maya: Wow.

*Cut to Washington*

*George is on one side of a conference table. On the other side is the Deputy National Security Advisor, the Special Assistant to the Deputy National Security Advisor, and the National Security Advisor.*

George: If there are three females, there ought to be three males. Observant Muslim women either live with their parents or with their husbands. We think there's a third family living in the house. (Boal, 2011)

**Appendix D: Table of Images of Arab/Muslim Women in Street Scene Sequence between 1:23:43 and 1:29:36**

| Figure # | Time | Hijab | Burqa | Other | Notes/Image |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1:23:43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Large street scene with many people |
| 2 | 1:23:51 | | | 1 | Large street scene with many people; one woman no head covering |
| 3 | 1:23:58 | 7 | | | |
| 4 | 1:24:07 | | | 1 | Small, blurry image of what might be a woman with her head uncovered |
| 5 | 1:24:08 | 6 | | 4 | Six women in hijab and 4 women uncovered |
| 6 | 1:24:12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Large street scene with many people |
| 7 | 1:24:28 | 2 | | | Street scene, two women in hijab |
| 8 | 1:24:42 | | | 1 | Appears to have no head covering |
| 9 | 1:24:46 | | | 1 | Woman pushing a stroller, with a different sort of scarf draped over her head |
| 10 | 1:26:18 | | | 1 | One gender-ambiguous individual in hijab |
| 11 | 1:27:39 | | 2 | | Two women in burqa |
| 12 | 1:27:52 | | | 1 | Woman, shot from the back, in a headscarf, jeans, and blouse |
| 13 | 1:27:59 | 1 | | | Woman in hijab |
| 14 | 1:28:53 | 1 | | | Woman in hijab |
| 15 | 1:29:07 | | | 1 | Woman in profile, looking out of a window. Hard to tell what is on her head |
| 16 | 1:29:22 | | | 1 | A very strange form of hybrid between burqa and hijab |
| 17 | 1:29:34 | | 2 | 2 | Two women uncovered walking ahead of two women in burqa |
| 18 | 1:29:36 | | 1 | | One woman in burqa |
| Total | | 17 | 5 | 14 | |

**Images Corresponding to Table**


*Figure 1*

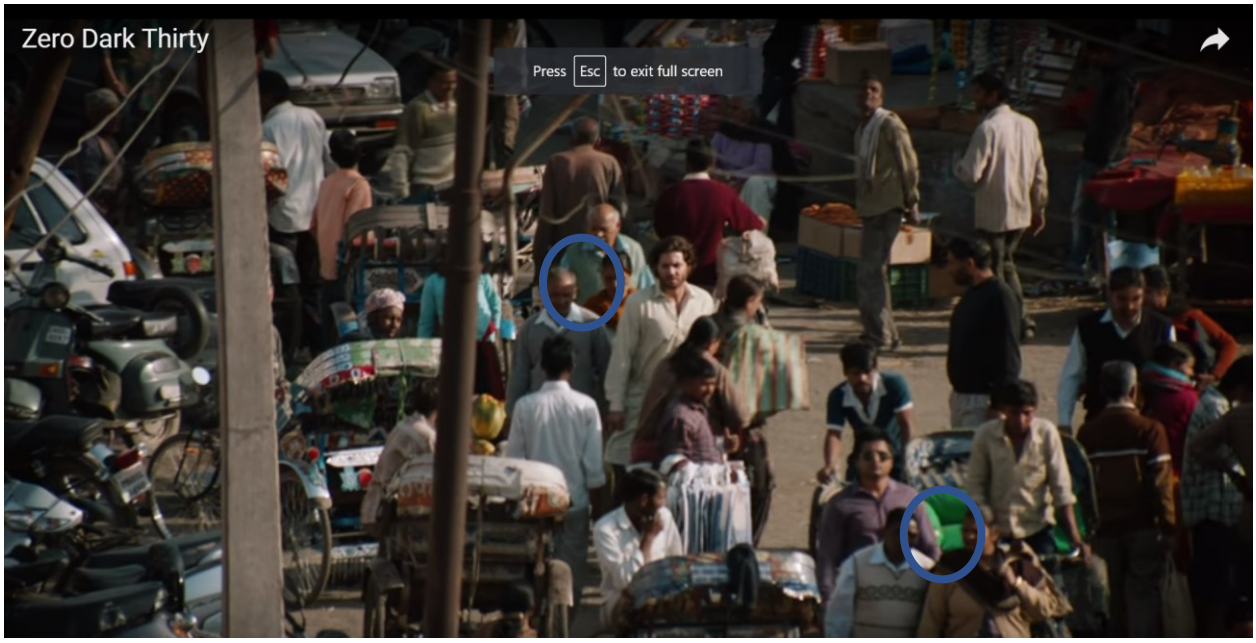


*Figure 2*


*Figure 3*

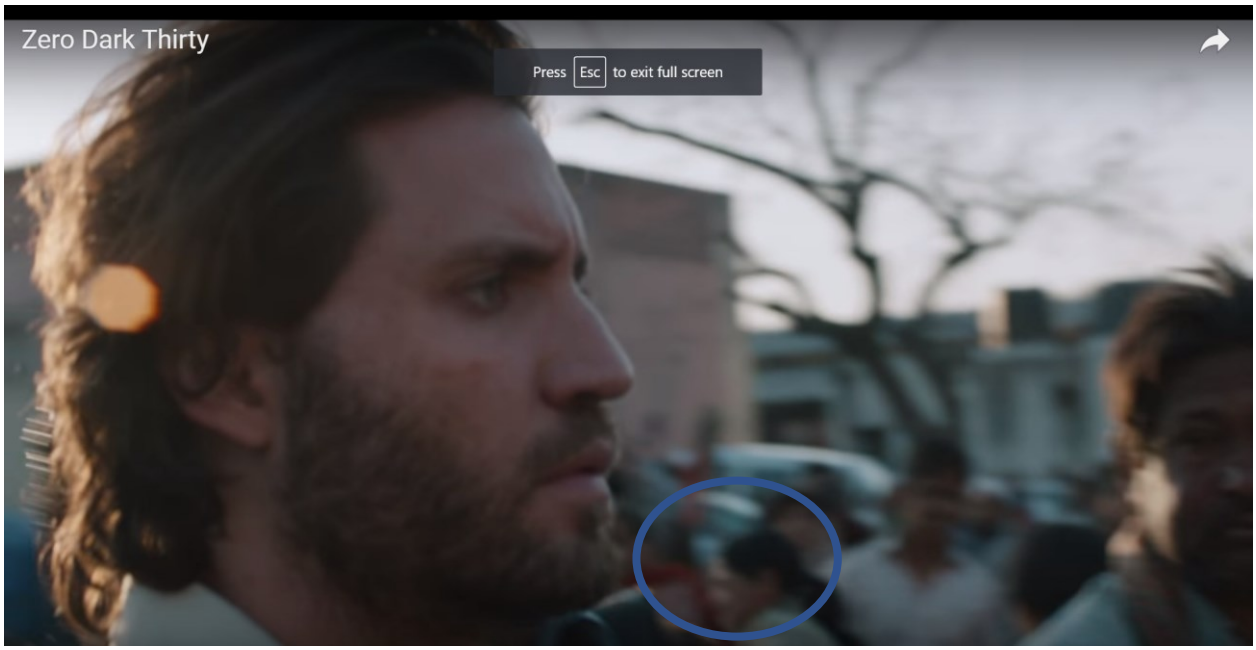


*Figure 4*


*Figure 5*


*Figure 6*


*Figure 7*


*Figure 8*


*Figure 9*


*Figure 10*


*Figure 11*


*Figure 12*


*Figure 13*


*Figure 14*


*Figure 15*


*Figure 16*


*Figure 17*


*Figure 18*

**Appendix E: Images from Humans of Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan**

*Figure 1*. Two sisters in Beirut Lebanon. From Humans of Lebanon FB page. https://www.facebook.com/HumansofLebanon/

*Figure 2.* Small child, on the streets of Beirut. From Humans of Lebanon. https://www.facebook.com/HumansofLebanon/


*Figure 3.* An author and teacher from Afghanistan. FB page: Humans of Afghanistan https://www.facebook.com/HofAfg/


*Figure 4*. Afghani master artisan. FB page: Humans of Afghanistan https://www.facebok.com/HofAfh/


*Figure 5.* Self-taught Iraqi street food vendor. Humans of Iraq. https://www.facebook.com/HumansOfIQ/


*Figure 6.* Retired teacher. Humans of Iraq. https://www.facebook.com/HumansOfIQ/


*Figure 7.* Three Syrian school children. https://www.facebook.com/The.Humans.Of.Syria/


*Figure 8.* Happy Easter, from Damascus. https://www.facebook.com/The.Humans.Of.Syria/

*Figure 9*. Merry Christmas from Bethlehem.
https://www.facebook.com/HumansofPalestineAEI/

*Figure 10.* Selling shawarma in Beit Sahour, Palestine.
https://www.facebook.com/HumansofPalestineAEI