

# Challenges of orientalist productions and frames of an imagined other: a media monitoring analysis

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper offers a critical discussion to contribute to sociological work by emphasizing deconstruction(s) of the markers of gendered and racialized borders and epistemological injustice(s) in theory and practice of contemporary global frames of representation and women's intersectional identities and rights. Through a postcolonial, situated feminist approach, the theoretical framework aims to scope and review literature from the South and North.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The research employs a mixed-methodology of a survey paper and media critical discourse analysis of media monitoring frames of Egyptian women's rights post-Arab spring. The content, layout and imageries produced by representations are assessed to explore whether there are lingering subtle and blatant hints of continued orientalism in knowledge canons.

**Findings** – The underlying causes for misconceptions and reductionist sociopolitical attitudes may be styled by patriarchal and orientalist imposition and are highly found to be somewhat maintained by persistent Western-centric epistemologies claiming to define or speak for the so-called other. The above-mentioned structures are evidently channelled through languages which essentialize and control women of the South, urging for further research in knowledge canons which calls oppressive frames into question.

**Originality/value** – More feminist contributions from non-Western gazes are needed to fill gaps in canons of knowledge and deconstruct patriarchal and colonial codes which impose inequalities on women as seen through the survey paper of theoretical representation and media politics.

**Keywords** Global, Frames, Media, Women, Postcolonialism, South

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

The idea of representation is a theatrical one; the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. – Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Interventions against power hierarchies of knowledge which may be subjectively framing an opposed *other* challenge epistemological linguistic canons and cognitions. Said (1978, p. 3) describes “Orientalism” as a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”. Strengthening the potentials of human rights discourse through fairer representation emphasizes recognition of all humans as human, as the imperative means towards enhancing spaces of self-representation, points of contact, enriched encounters and dialogue across stratified borders. Through a theoretical survey review and media monitoring analysis of global frames of the *other*, I therefore seek to critically assess whether and how polarizing frames grow and persist in dominant forces of knowledge



production of non-Western women's rights and realities in the global arena. The theoretical discussion is premised on addressing the contextual abstractions in languages of representation and dialogues with patriarchal-colonial means of othering in newspaper articles. The critical discourse analysis of media monitoring outlines the nuances within representations. It is in these moments of assessing voids and patterns in infrastructures representing *the other* and the *other of the other* – as Egyptians from the non-Western South, as women in patriarchal societies subjected to two-fold patriarchal epistemologies – that deeper knowledge is mined. This work contributes to critical postcolonial feminist discourse analysis to expand spaces where women's accounts are heard speaking from their own situational realms. The endeavour offers channels of resistance against invisibility and silencing and towards truer advance in representations and academic discussions of human rights, the politics of women's rights and feminist and social theory and practice.

*Frames of Oppression* is conceptually drawn from Judith Butler's (2009) *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* I use this term to convey the moulding power of language in not only defining but also creating and subjecting vast multidimensional identities into reduced trivialized frames. Mama (1995) describes the framing acquisition as "enslaving the soul of the Other". In the way the African has been "construed as a subject" (Mama, 1995, p. 17), White supremacy and colonialism may be conceptualized as a "set of discourses and practices that subjugated non-European people and cast them in the position of subjected Others, while it advanced the interests of European nations" (Mama, 1995, p. 17). The occupation of the soul of the produced other depicts the deepest colonialism, one of the very being and essence of humanity, which is imagined and distanced, and never recognized as human. Core theoretical and practical evidence in analysis of global frameworks critically deconstructs the frame to de-orient discourses of homogenized, manoeuvred gazes and unravel how these may subject women from the South and non-Western women to manifold layers of inferiority and exclusion.

Essential to the work is the concept of *double patriarchy(ies)* [DP(s)] which is used to describe the magnified oppressive patriarchal forces of domination imposed directly and indirectly on non-Western women. The term "patriarchal" is seen as the legal, political and moral imposition and glorification of male over female figures. The facade reproduced the patriarchal gaze of the subjected woman which is twofold: imposed by men in the region and discourses of representation outside of it. This term is designed due to finding it insufficient to speak of solely one patriarchy of injustice against women of the global South and to underline the complex dynamics of plural systems of (dis)empowerment. Patriarchies are inquired as non-exclusively stemming from regional and national systems, and additionally from global, paternal, racialized claims of knowledge on women's human rights. Mama (1995, p. 17) illustrates that "enslavement and colonisation did not only materially exploit and politically subordinate African resources and ways of life but at the same time transformed and subjected Africans to the imaginings and caprices of imperial culture and psychology". In its psychological depth, the cognitive objectification of the *other* as an ideology and discourse can be said to justify itself through its centric claims of scientific and moral reasoning. The impacts on the cultural psyche have arguably continued and remain evident in both blatant and subtle frames of oppression.

Colonialism, within the scope of this study, may be defined as the systematic means of control and domination of territories (tribes and ethnic groups) through economic, political, military and social impositions, and consequently, fragmenting people/societies and establishing forms of government/infrastructure in the sole interest of the colonial power. Colonialism has not only dominated lands and cultures territorially but also actively produces and engages in "forms of discursive appropriation: other cultures become appropriated into the imaginary globality of the colonising nation" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 11) within knowledge apparatus. Postcolonial feminism seeks to redress the diversity of women's agency in the South and deconstruct subtle and blatant lingering of the colonial aftermath,

brought through globalization, the struggle between local and global, North and South, and women's bodies as patriarchal and racial markers of emancipation and oppression. The use of the term "postcolonialism" is characterized as not only speaking of the colonial aftermath but also investigating how the remnants of European colonialism persist under different if not similar forms despite formal independence. Postcolonialism transcribes itself in a continuous process of resistance through unlearning and renaming by the non-West, and it criticizes the underlying dynamics of relational race, women's representation and displacement to the West.

## Methodology

### *Sample*

The theoretical discussion acts as a survey literature review which explores the grounds of the subject in terms of postcolonialism, representation and women's rights. Media monitoring aims to assess the practical evidence of global frames of representation. Critical discourse analysis assessed the layout, content and imageries of five newspaper articles chosen from 28, for the purpose of this paper, appearing under the search of the keywords: Egypt, women, rights from *The Guardian* newspaper. Article dates ranged from 2011 to 2018 (the eight-year aftermath of the Arab spring) for spatial, conceptual and temporal specificity at a time of political upheaval and societal resistance.

### *Data collection*

*The Guardian* is chosen as the representative sample newspaper in media monitoring coverage. This well-established newspaper – having been founded in 1821 – is a widely read British newspaper popular both within the UK and internationally. It advocates for diversity among its contributors and aims to present fair and balanced reporting. It is perceived as a left-leaning, centre-left newspaper rather than right-wing in how it presents its views of the world as a globally distinguished media channel. With its digital editions, it reaches a vast number of multi-generational readers and it is one of the most highly regarded and heavily circulated English language news sources. I chose to cover one newspaper for systematic data collection over scope in time on the subject, rather than a cross-analysis of media reports. In this way, the choice in epistemology is consistent in terms of keywords and locational source of specificity of frame. Through this decision, I intend to assess the likelihood of framed conceptions from a homogeneous source, in addition to de-framing media narratives in dialogue with the theoretical framework.

### *Data analysis*

Data is qualitatively referenced, coded and presented. Quotes and imageries have then been analysed qualitatively through my content analysis. While each line and image in frames is independently investigated, the thematic categorization has been carried out with the objective to discern general trends in external frames of representation. I include examples of the analysis as excerpt case studies to present the findings throughout the survey review. The chosen articles are thematically identified as presenting themselves as mostly speaking of Egyptian women, although elements on Egypt and Egyptian women's rights are also present. Titles of articles, content, layout, language and imageries have been assessed to comprehend the formation of the frames and determine the main epistemological and practical centrality of its author's gaze.

## Theoretical survey review and media monitoring cases

A "wide variety of hybrid representations of the Orient now roam the culture" (Said, 1978, p. 285) from normalized violence among people of the South and particularly women, the "other"

of the “other”, and threats of physical and ideological presence in Europe. In the historical trajectory of regional relations presently under debate in human rights expression and practice, – similar to political and media projections of the Arab other connected to terrorism particularly post the 11 September attacks in 2001 in the USA – the element of evil is *Oriented* as a definition of opposite, savage and male.

The research reflects the need for recognizing diverse sociocultural, temporal and spatial situations despite the apparent commonalities under perceptions of the “non-Western” and aims to contribute to spaces defending what is “a matter of rights, a demand for response to previous harm and denial” (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 7). The tension faced in women’s rights frameworks stresses the need for more distinct consideration of the perspectives from which representations are produced. Contemporary knowledge may be seen to continue to “render non-Western knowledge and culture as “other” in relation to the normative “self” of Western epistemology and rationality” (Ghandi, 1998). Efforts towards de-orienting the “mode of address” would learn how to “speak more adequately to the world which it speaks for” (Ghandi, 1998), and interrupt and reassess standpoints of relationality and politics of identity, recognition and representation.

#### *Patriarchy, veiling and unveiling and silenced frames*

The article entitled “Egypt’s women have had enough of being told to cover up” (Tadros, 2012) describes that “politically charged calls from a Coptic bishop to follow a Muslim example have infuriated women already suffering harassment” (Tadros, 2012). The patriarchal impositions from religious leaders are depicted as oppressive towards women. Women, said to have been “already suffering harassment” (Tadros, 2012), focus on the state of injustice subjecting women rather than focussing on controlling men. The image included appears at the forefront of the article seeking to convey the dynamics of power of control over women’s bodies. It is captioned: “the political battles over who reigns over Egypt are not only being fought over presidential and parliamentary seats, but also over who can claim more control over a woman’s body” (Tadros, 2012). This description excludes the resistance of women in control over their own bodies by confirming that politicized discussion appears as competition of control, not likely directed to women’s protection but invisibility and underlines furthermore that political battles remain external to them emphasizing patriarchal imposition.

The image frames a depiction of a burqa-donning woman with a male politician and former presidential candidate in the background, captioned with only the name of the photographer. The woman in the frame is anonymous in name and face, portrayed as a veiled non-face, mysterious, exotic subject rather than her narrative. The over-towering background poster implies relations of disempowerment on women’s bodies and blurrings between public and private realities. Her eyes are barely visible which further promotes disconnectedness from her and the frame, and from her and from her agency. DPs [1] are evident in the background of political propaganda lurking above of a male political candidate who will decide women’s fate. In addition to the title implying women’s subjection to men’s orders, women are said to have “had enough of being told to cover up” (Tadros, 2012) implying women’s infuriation despite translated into compliance in the chosen frame rather than resistance.

The political context is still under extremist influences and manipulations of abuse and bodily and mental violence, described apathetically: “on the streets of Egypt, inch by inch, bit by bit, women’s rights are shrinking. Women, Muslim and Christian, who do not cover their hair or who wear mid-sleeved clothing are met with insults, spitting and in some cases physical abuse” (Tadros, 2012). Descriptions of violent reactions to women’s choice of their own mode of dressing are seen to further inhibit women’s secure presence in the public space: “another told me she had been spat on by men telling her to cover up” (Tadros, 2012).

The contrast of covering-up and nakedness of body, as a space to be monitored and face repercussions, stresses veiling and unveiling as patriarchal enforcement. Describing Egyptian women's experiences using the word "another", the article states "how she was pushed and elbowed by a passerby telling her to cover her nakedness (she was wearing a mid-sleeved blouse and trousers)" (Tadros, 2012). These portrayals may portray Western definitions of emancipation or undressing which are usually framed as women's choice, when these may also be under a patriarchal gaze of society and authority apparatus setting standards of what is acceptable or desired rather than absolutely claimed by the woman herself. This fragments as it depicts women in terms of their religion in a dual spectrum of distinction. How women are oppressed is communicated through unidentified, plural victimization of Egyptian women seen in these direct sentences sourced only as one more woman's account. Exaggerations of nakedness and clothing further highlight the woman's body and sexuality with patriarchal codes and obscures specificity, geopolitical location and city.

In such instances, media frames may be seen to mirror historical projections and manipulations of social consciousness alienating Arab, Black, Middle Eastern women and men of these populations – identified as a "portentous opponent in the Islamic state" (Kabbani, 1986, p. 5). Perpetuating fear, Western discourses are seen to largely act as a tool for self-proclaimed polarized superiority, which fashions a "polemic to check whatever influence such a rival state might have" (Kabbani, 1986). It can be argued that these languages reproduce doctrines of hostility and fanaticism. Ironic dehumanization is evident in the language used here: "thanks to the lax security situation, they have restricted their mobility to all but the most essential of errands" (Tadros, 2012) which frames women as confined in their society, perpetuating DP. The article ends with direct resistance speaking against sacrificing rights for any political purpose: "we will not allow ourselves to be used as pawns by any leader inside the church or out to achieve his own political ends" (Tadros, 2012). In this statement, resistance is portrayed as defying the political pretence, in all spheres of society. Imagery inciting recognition of, if not empathy with, otherwise marginalized and muted people de-oriens oppressive apparatus in that "no single community or part of the world, whatever its economic or political power, should be epistemologically privileged" (Shohat and Stam, 1994, p. 48). Moreover, no geopolitical sociocultural region or group should be defined from a one-point centric focus or produced as epistemologically stunted through violent narratives and mechanisms of silence.

The article "A ban on the niqab won't end the injustices meted out to Egypt's women" (Saadawi, 2015) explores that the "ruling that female voters and university lecturers cannot wear a full-face veil does not address the roots of their oppression: a patriarchal class system bolstered by the free market" (Saadawi, 2015). Male authorities are described dictating whether women should be veiled or unveiled. The main image in the newspaper article depicts a woman's covered half face, fully veiled using the *niqab*. The image conveys alienation and oppression in portraying one visible eye, further concealing the woman's face and her emotions from the frame.

The woman's name and narrative are unidentified, portraying a look of fear and disconnection to her body and surrounding reality. The caption names the photographer and describes that "it is a tragedy that women professors in parts of the Arab world have to hide their faces under the niqab while teaching" (Saadawi, 2015). The tragedy of having to hide or veil women's faces even in spaces of empowerment such as teaching is emphasized in the same way as being forced to unveil faces by male authorities. It is described that "Cairo authorities last week ruled that women wearing the niqab will not be allowed to vote unless they take off their headgear. Female lecturers at universities, likewise, will be banned from wearing the full face veil" (Saadawi, 2015). Clothing impositions on women imply whether and how women are veiled; it is that they are forced to be in order to conduct themselves in

public space and political participation. Abstractive discourses convey estrangement from the notion of their choices of clothing and individual situations.

In this article, the Egyptian feminist scholar argues that veiling and unveiling alike; are patriarchally oppressive of women: “we should remember that concentrations of power — whatever their form or location — can feed off each other even if they might seem opposed on the surface” (Saadawi, 2015). She argues the intersections of patriarchies – despite claims of difference between them – may be reinforcing each other, as in DPs. She declares that “when Eve’s face is no longer hidden, it will challenge all the established powers” (Saadawi, 2015) of the patriarchal class system. She further indicates that global frames must be challenged as “they refuse to examine the roots of their problems: the patriarchal class system which they defend with all their physical and metaphysical powers” (Saadawi, 2015). The word “hidden” describes the imposition of covering women’s face rather than her autonomy to reveal or hide it.

The following article is entitled “Egyptian women: ‘They were doing better under Mubarak’” (Ramdani, 2012). It seeks to reflect upon women’s diminishing rights despite their agency in the Egyptian uprising: “in Egypt, women were at the forefront of the Arab spring, but in the new regime their rights are being eroded” (Ramdani, 2012), emphasizing alienation and hopelessness despite having an active role in the uprising. The opening line implies a frame of regression from revolution in terms of women’s oppression.

The main image of the article portrays women voters of which most (if not all in the frame) are veiled and one woman at the front, dressed in black who cannot be overlooked, is in a burqa. The caption of the photograph is ambiguous: “women line up to cast their vote at a polling station in Cairo” (Ramdani, 2012). This description does not specify where the polling station is situated and abstracts women’s identities and diversities. The lack of location and the homogenization of sameness of women in the depiction may convey a sense of alienation and further concealment from their bodies and societies despite voting. Voting for a system which may increase their victimization – where women “find themselves marginalised, if not ignored” (Ramdani, 2012) – highlights that women are, to some extent, framed as condoning their own politics of oppression.

The contradictions of conservatism are evident even among women, quoting a woman in the saying that men may defend women: “fathers, brothers and husbands to march and protest on behalf of women” (Ramdani, 2012). The conversation is redirected to men:

The notion of male “guardianship” prevails everywhere — from the cafes and restaurants dominated by pontificating men, to the huddles of teenage girls making do with cracked civic benches for their social life as burly male police officers keep an eye on them. One veiled Salafi woman, one of around 300 female candidates in the parliamentary elections, put her husband’s photograph on her campaign poster. (Ramdani, 2012)

The recurring reference to women as veiled, in addition to the ambiguous male protection in society, reflects to some extent the evidence of patriarchal apparatus even within the discourse of representation. Men’s control over women in the public sphere is seen to blur into private confines and into women’s decisions as well, particularly from politicized groups blatantly oppressing them. Women’s opinions are directly shared, largely showing barriers to hope in the national society as “we do want to succeed as independent women. Going abroad may be the only way we can do this” (Ramdani, 2012), and “what the frustrating narrative of Asmaa and thousands like her prove is that Egyptian women are deemed fit to inspire and mobilise, but not to assert themselves in the political process” (Ramdani, 2012). This representation limits women’s agency and capacity to engage in the political process by largely focussing on men’s power, Western comparisons in notions of emancipation and a sense of hopelessness and absence from the politics of their own country.



Linguistic data is thus used to understand “emotionally charged areas like that of sexism and other forms of discriminatory behaviour” (Lakoff and Bucholtz, 2004, p. 39) and the silences these reinforce. Cognitive thoughts guide expression, and discourses influence cognitive thoughts and actions. Thus, attempts to discover linguistic data as diagnostic evidence of the relationship of power pose questions on potentials of language “from the linguistic end of the problem: does one correct a social inequity by changing linguistic disparities?” (Lakoff and Bucholtz, 2004). Scrutinizing naming and definition speaks back to the frame to closely reassess its linguistic use. This further hypothesizes that women “experience linguistic discrimination in two ways: in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language use treats them” (Lakoff and Bucholtz, 2004). This analysis is strengthened with discourses which shift the emphasis to move beyond the way women are subjects of languages to their own eloquences as powerful agents of production, influence and linguistic articulation.

### Continued orientalist impositions

Seeking to bring to light hegemonic forces in analytical frames of both regional state and global media: “state practices of exclusion and hierarchisation vis-à-vis certain groups based on ethnic and national origin are no different from racism even if they hide behind the rhetoric of ‘belonging’” (Herzog, 2004, p. 54). National and global classifications conveying methods of control and exclusion are considerably evident in social and legal systems of naming. In doing so, these claim and renounce power of the subject which is already named by racial or gender subordination, or both. While dominant groups mostly maintain their privilege, not all acknowledge or question their privilege race-thinking through generations. More so, the “structural arrangements that bind them to this conceptual mode, have made the category of race a source of identification, cultural crystallisation, belonging and collective strength” (Herzog, 2004, p. 55). This reiterates critical reassessment of the infrastructures of discriminatory thought and its connections to media as a tool of influence, speaking across vast reductive conjectures in its structural renewal of such codes and in consequence, the potentials to deconstruct them.

Recurring global power relations of exploitation are exercising similar forms of authority when producing reports on the atrocities in the region and deduce the life of whom is framed as less than. This reduces the recognition of women from the South in contexts of violence, chaos and questions of humanity. The moral responsibility the West claims is highly contradictory and hypocritical, in that it is based upon “exclusionary norms by which fields of recognizability are constituted, fields that are implicitly invoked when, by a cultural reflex, we mourn for some lives but respond with coldness to the loss of others” (Butler, 2009, p. 36), or in reactions to violations towards others. Discriminatory exclusion is not limited to the women or people of the region but extends to the supposed South within the North. This includes the people’s tolerance towards visible symbols of cultural/ethnic/religious discourses, e.g. living in European countries, and racialized and other blurred citizenships such as African Americans, refugees, disabled people and LGBTQ lives. Furthermore, this translates in the dismissal of feminist movements which are blamed, silenced or forcibly re-inscribed within different struggles according to different power relations that they could be perceived to serve or sustain. The South within the North therefore conveys that the South is not limited to its region but exists in different forms and on different geopolitical terrains.

The article, “Women in ancient Egypt were more than just mummies” (Fletcher, 2013), is introduced by the following statement: “as my TV series shows, with queens so powerful they were known as kings, women ‘eliminated gender hierarchy for a brief period in classical antiquity’” (Fletcher, 2013). The frame of reference of Egyptian women in ancient Egypt is framed according to a foreign director and researcher’s perspective. Egyptian prehistoric

civilization and culture in terms of women is framed as a further abstracted reality. The article opens by revealing; it is “a little-known fact that ancient Egypt was populated almost entirely by men. Or at least, this is the impression one would gain from reading many of the publications about ancient Egypt in which women appear as some sort of minority sub-group” (Fletcher, 2013). There is no mention of contemporary Egyptian feminist or historian in the article seeking to illustrate Egyptian’s women’s power, reflecting void in history and alienation between ancient times, history and the contemporary moment. The photograph included in the article is captioned: “ahead of their time . . . the women of ancient Egypt achieved an equality that we can only dream of today” (Fletcher, 2013). While seeking to articulate the absence of narratives in history, the writer does not bring forth contemporary women’s agency, causing in this way further absence. Her image takes top front of the article and is domineering. The photographer is named, rather than women leaders in Ancient Egypt or a description of the background.

She describes women’s absence in history publications “in which women appear as some sort of minority sub-group” (Fletcher, 2013) and yet is similarly overbearing leaving the background portraying ancient Egyptian women and speaking for our history as if she is the discoverer or revealer of these truths. Additionally, she states, “now I’m not for one minute saying Egyptian women ran around doing exactly as they pleased, since most were wives and mothers and the most common female title was Lady of the House, meaning housewife” (Fletcher, 2013). She measures the status of ancient Egyptian women as translated by the judgement and assessment of the researcher rather than according to the contextual sociocultural complexities of the moment. These references alienate women from their own history in retelling stories of historical existence and presence of women as foreign researcher’s discovery, claiming it in relative consideration to her own studies and notions of emancipation.

Basic human needs and “other conditions for persisting and flourishing” (Butler, 2009, p. 29) are framed in a way to confirm or revoke these needs for specific peoples. This thus makes “possible the practices of war” through “conditioning and facilitating” (Butler, 2009) structures that reinforce and justify it. Mechanisms of surveillance and access to them, as the “operation of cameras, not only in the recording and distribution of images of torture, but as part of the very apparatus of bombing, make it clear that media representations have already become modes of military conduct” (Butler, 2009). In this respect, the self-validating relationship between the “material reality of war and the representational regimes through which it operates” – thus “rationalize its own operation” (Butler, 2009). Through interpretation and administration, realities and ontological statuses are “compromised and suspended” (Butler, 2009), dictating languages and defining subjects which reflect the necessity of monitoring rights from alternative standpoints.

Frames of violence, war, recognition and irrelevance are reproduced and “contain, convey, and determine what is seen” (Butler, 2009, p. 10) – and thus what is not seen or made invisible. Fear of the foreign overlooks the reasons for distancing classifications as refugees in our soil. Additionally, there is the act of communicating a certain language of force:

The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native. (Fanon *et al.*, 1965, p. 38)

Correspondingly, the global media and human rights discourses may be said to be playing the role of the present-day intermediary in terms of violence, generalizations and vast polarizing images. Media discourses not only frame but also constrain and pretend to define; and their influence does not end at the point of production. Fanon’s provocative comparison between the two peoples and lands describes one as a settler’s town of white people, foreigners, and the native’s as a colonized hungry town (Fanon *et al.*, 1965, p. 39). Such



contrast conveys extremely distressing depictions reinforced by mass generalizations at times apparent in contemporary media coverage [2], where in one area a life is recognizable, celebrated even and grievable upon its loss and another is fated to suffer or be eradicated. This is since the person is born there, but it seems to matter “little where or how; they die there; it matters not where nor how” (Fanon *et al.*, 1965). Discourses of difference reproduce standardization of patriarchal-colonial inequalities which persist. All the while “tradition remains the sacred weapon oppressors repeatedly hold up whenever the need to maintain their privileges, hence to impose the form of the old on the content of the new, arises” (Minha, 1989, p. 106), and by the same token in bolstering doctrines of fear.

Connected to Americanization and global pressure, it is said that a “very large segment of day-to-day professional communication takes place in the international language, English” (Scollon and Wong, 2001, p. 4), and, that communication is between one “non-native speaker of English and another” (Scollon and Wong, 2001). Realities are far too complex to assume that a “language solely determines the thought patterns of its speakers” (Scollon and Wong, 2001). Yet, “many aspects of western culture, especially western patterns of discourse” lead to “misinterpretation in intercultural discourse” (Scollon and Wong, 2001), carried within the parameters and cognitive schemas of language and “transmitted through the process of teaching and learning of English” (Scollon and Wong, 2001). Digitized academic production of public sociology in addition to social media networks engages (and thus excludes) numerous individuals by grouping. As

part of algorithmicveillance and the production of algorithmic identities, people become represented as configurations of others in the social media networks with which they engage and the websites people characterised as “like them” visit. (Lupton, 2015, p. 146)

These structures increase elements of similarity, and ergo, difference in expanding spaces of individuality and urging confrontation against doctrines of fixed identities and languages.

Despite the theory of power which feminist knowledge entails, particularly for women academics, the “university is not free of specificity in history and is marked by gender, class, and ethnic differences” (Okely *et al.*, 2007, p. 228). This is much like knowledge production in the English language, or translations to language second to one’s own which further curtails knowledge. The “global predominance of the English language means that much significant and innovative research, legal and policy reforms, and support work fail to inform international debate” (Dobash and Dobash, 1998, p. 56) which cannot be disregarded from its epistemological production. Contextual sociocultural struggles and women’s global burdens, in addition to access to Arabic education, [3] all impact women entering media and academia from non-Western origins. Translating and producing knowledge in English presumes a limitation in that:

Regional or minority language skills *per se* can be strongly supported by available offerings from kinstates where the language is used, such offerings cannot be a substitute for domestic support for minority language media. If supply from a kinstate is the only contact with media in the language in question, an important link between language and community will be absent. (Moring and Dunbar, 2008, pp. 20–21)

Despite limited access to channels of knowledge, women’s rights research as a field of study entails “vital interdisciplinary connections, in contrast to the strict or even antagonistic boundaries between disciplines” (Okely *et al.*, 2007, p. 244), across other fields and languages. Moreover, women’s visibilities have increased due to “occasional access to academic power” (Okely *et al.*, 2007) gradually enhancing independence and changing power structures of the university and formal and informal spaces in media production. Women remain, nevertheless, arguably limited as culturally rooted yet globally fluid contributing equals speaking in their own languages in national and global frames.

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### Discussion: women's spaces of resistance

Challenging the frame interrogates the relationship between cognitive perceptions of human rights, of each other, of who is subjected into the frame, by whom and how many more DPs are internalized through the frame. It is significant to critically challenge the need to resist all forms of violence not just when it impacts the imperial, or the male, but as validly worth resisting the power dynamics of how value is attributed as well as the notion of polarized fronts. Moghadam (2002) argues that if:

Feminism has always been contested, if feminists should be defined by their praxis rather than by a strict ideology, and if a feminist politics is shaped by its specific historical, political, and cultural contexts, then it should be possible to identify Islamic feminism as: one feminism among many. (Moghadam, 2002, p. 1,165)

To therefore be able to perceive feminisms from other naming(s) would at least relief them of classifications from the sociocultural structures that repress if not suffocate them without claiming full detachment from them. Feminist insights seek to deconstruct in public and private spheres ideas of an essential woman through the acknowledgement if not celebration of difference and its interrelated junctions. Situated recognition acts in defiance to orientalist and imperial discourses, defying the “codes of silence that their own communities impose on them in the name of anti-racism” (Rai, 2008, p. 63). These structurally exclude what falls outside the hegemonic frame. Outlining the question of culture as one which poses challenges in these points of contact and recognition accepts that “even democracy movements create their ideal woman erased of all differences, however — authenticity of culture is inscribed on women’s bodies and roles” (Rai, 2008). Authenticity should be properly addressed in order to challenge and reject discriminatory forms of patriarchal-colonial domination. Delimiting borders through different understandings and productions of knowledge expands fields of references in academic spaces, mirrored through dynamic identities and the knowledge produced by them: “the collapse of borders in scholarship reflects and parallels the collapse of borders in the post-industrial world” (Henderson, 1995, p. 4). In these spaces – despite limited access to academic freedom – their presence has the capacity to impact further engagements across socioeconomic, racialized or gendered boundaries.

Through the diagnosis of spheres of racial, patriarchal and sociocultural belonging and whom they reject, knowledge is no longer considered out of reach for some, when based on the same signifiers of difference outside. Bhabha (1994, p. 85) states that if “colonialism takes power in the name of history; it repeatedly exercises its authority through the figures of farce”, which are revealed for their non-scientific doctrines of exclusion. The ruler “cannot eliminate the distance between mimicry and the source, cannot or does not want to transform the “Other” — the Arab — into one of “us” [...] nor the variations that the female ‘Others’” (Herzog, 2004, p. 74) offer to the claims of exclusivity and moral standards. Such contradictions are reinforced within the realms of civil society and rights for women in the South. From the point of view of the “dominated Other, mimicry is a form of assimilation and self-abnegation, though never total” (Herzog, 2004, p. 75). It “contains a threat to the dominant and hence always bears the potential for subversion or resistance” (Herzog, 2004) in reconstructing foreign language structures. Resistance stems from oppression; history teaches that “domination breeds resistance, and that the violence inherent in the imperial context — for all its occasional profit or pleasure — is an impoverishment for both sides” (Said, 1994, p. 288) – rejecting a polar definition of dependence.

Numerous feminists, scholars and activists contest the false contradictions between human rights and religion and aim to see points of contact with secular feminisms rather than dismissing them as fundamentally impossible in coexistence. These women argue that it is a dangerous premise to say that “religion *per se* is bad for women” (Badran, 2001, p. 51) as there would be nothing “to discuss — or for which to hope” (Badran, 2001). Dynamics are more

complex in terms of women's agency and cannot be reduced or dismissed as incompatible to their societal realities. Information technology for example has produced a great shift in contemporary times for women to collect and articulate these visions. Mernissi (2006, p. 121) asserts that new "technologies have destroyed the *hudud*, the border frontier that divided the universe into a sheltered private arena, where women and children were supposed to be protected, and a public one where adult males exercised their presumed problem-solving authority". These shift the private to the public and internalize public discussions to matters of domestic life and the family, and vice versa, thus blurring the fragmentation of women's spheres within and across societal realms. In urgency to intervene against voids, women's efforts in the monotheistic faiths "subject their religious texts to a feminist rereading, or to locate and emphasize the women friendly and egalitarian precepts within their religious texts" (Moghadam, 2002, p. 1,162). Strategies to advance the status of women and to reassess political thought largely see postcolonial societies to different extents, reverting to nationalism to reinforce the significance of questions of women's role as citizens and the fluidity between the public and private realms.

The word "modernizing" is often understood as deficiencies in imitating the West; as Abu-Lughod (1998, p. 18) describes in "failures of nationalism, failures of enlightened modernity, failures due to the pull of tradition, travesties of modernity". Failures are, according to the perspective of catching-up in vain, due to an inapplicable model which disregards and amplifies vast and increasing divides and socioeconomic situations. Postcolonial theorists challenge standards of injustice by creatively inquiring about the encounter between the East and West. Pursuing "analytical implications of the insight that modernity is a construct and an organizing trope, especially for the national developmentalist successors of colonial regimes" (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p. 18), by asking whom it is benefiting. This resistance urges towards critical assessment of languages and epistemologies of women's rights in the domains in which they are situated and in how they situate themselves.

The rhetorical discourses, in a "comic turn from the high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 85). In working within the structures and yet setting themselves apart from them, women establish an "ambivalent third" space (Bhabha, 1994, p. 149). Rights are "inevitably the product of particular historical societies and are therefore themselves always subject to change and renegotiation" (Young, 2015, p. 125). Through critical assessments of language and framing, knowledge domains would become more effective when recognized and valued if deriving from the South particularly when addressing or speaking for the South.

Shaarawi (1987, p. 42) states that she was impressed because "she used to sit with the men and discuss literary and cultural matters". Learning and access to education empowered women to be "equals of men if not surpass them" (Shaarawi, 1987). When men are gatekeepers to knowledge production and learning, women who exhibit courage venture with men as a route to empowerment as they consider themselves leveraged to speak with them and self-authorize themselves in rewriting their own fate. The same may perhaps be argued across patriarchal-colonial powers. Such binaries must be engaged with to be contested from within. As media culture may manipulate the public sphere and influence social reactions, women's appeal to "repressed, regressive, fantasies" (Henderson, 1995, p. 19) reinforcing inequality have capacities to "deconstruct [...] popular stereotypes, especially when cultural forms [...] embody a self-critique" (Henderson, 1995). Hegemonic power influences knowledge production frames and silences, but creates within itself spaces of resistance, monitoring and self-criticism in academia, media, politics and other representational fields of expression.

If recognizability is claimed as a "universal potential" which "belongs to all persons as persons, then, in a way, the problem before us is already solved" (Butler, 2009, p. 6). It is important to oppose torture in "any and all of its forms" – and to rethink the "we" in global

terms in ways that “counter the politics of imposition” (Butler, 2009, p. 38) and other misleading wordings. As it may seem impossible to assume that change would come out of the good will of global governments, it is up to the people to first recognize that the “Third World does not mean to organize a great crusade of hunger against the whole of Europe” (Fanon *et al.*, 1965, p. 106) as that implies more violence, denial of humanity and a lack of sense of union across patriarchal-colonial markers of segregation. What it “expects from those who for centuries have kept it in slavery is that they will help it to rehabilitate mankind, and make man victorious everywhere, once and for all” (Fanon *et al.*, 1965), more particularly, womankind. Some Western feminisms may likewise stop denying and reinforcing relentlessly the languages which promote exploitation from one’s perspective reproducing the “third world” as a separate, inferior universe as seen in some moral implications from the media articles.

Boundaries and polarizations are further challenged through continuous rebuilding of diverse frames of existence. Identities are therefore not understood as essentialist but as “discursively constructed”, “unstable, fluid, often contradictory, and always in process” (Roseneil, 1995, p. 141) rather than single, fixed categories. Feminisms are increasingly “aware of the shifting sand under the scientific statements and taken-for-granted concepts on which policy recommendations are based” (Scott, 1985, p. 128). Moreover, they improve the capacities of cognitive and linguistic schemas in defining them. Selective acts of recognition and non-recognition reproduce a system of value of one life over another, not restricted to global discourses but regional tensions and resistances. Women thus contest moral superiority on two patriarchal fronts and through alternative means of surveillance and reinvention: “self-confidence and ability seem to be key characteristics of the new Digital Scheherazades. When you start looking for them instead of focusing on the veiled women, as many Europeans do, you are amazed by their rapidly growing number” (Mernissi, 2006, p. 125). Rethinking what is thought to be imported and measured by Western methodology deconstructs imposed languages and patriarchies which define emancipation in contrast to the polarized other. Through online activism, although limited to access and literacy levels, means of self-expression expand beyond qualified, formal channels and are more connected to women’s actual realities. The “digitised body/self and capacity of self-representation” (Lupton, 2015, p. 183) in online spaces for the concept and practices of “reinvention” is “central to both private lives and organisations” (Lupton, 2015). Individual realities and recognition of the woman’s body in being regarded as historically and socially complex and variable infiltrate into “deeply embedded substructures in social and organisational life” (Sayers and Jones, 2014, p. 274).

Focusing on participation of women from the South in academic, political and media discourses, it may be said that “ethical scholarship is socially responsible scholarship that supports freedom, not scholarship that is free from social responsibility” (Mama, 2007, p. 23). Combating oppression and structural silencing through dialogue and occupation of spaces of knowledge, the woman’s body speaks back in the process of “institutionalised argumentation” (Gelber, 2002, p. 134). Women’s own social inter-networks in complex spheres in addition to more global forces framing identities are impacted by the contextual situation from which they are produced. This survey paper proposes expansions of spaces which counter gender and racial inequalities through the female gaze. Women speaking against repeated acts of terrorism – previously unknown as terrorism – on their bodies and social realities, and the retelling of these, are thus observed to have the potential and historical evidence to redefine the moral standard from their situated realities. Such agencies make visible women’s epistemologies of living with dignity to defend their body and soul existence and their essential humanity globally and locally, privately and publicly and the spaces in between these.

## Notes

1. DPs as acronym for “Double Patriarchies” will be used from this point onward.
2. *The Guardian* article describes women’s agency in Egypt from a patronizing gaze: first, discrediting not even questioning whether women have political and social place in the Egyptian revolution, but stating that they do not through the predefining title: “Egypt election: no revolution for women”. Moreover it is evident when Western feminist speaker undermines, slanders and shames women’s struggle describing reluctance to be active in their politics as a “dirty scene” (Tomlin, 2011) with no solidarity, ethics (said to be “buying votes”), full of competition and women’s alienation. She expresses women’s need to claim discussion but ends with a quote from foreign imposition, an outsider perspective, expressing the need for different ways to claim and frame women’s rights by stating it is a patriarchal society as if West is not. This reproduces DPs in framing the women as inferior, from the production of a Western filmmaker (Tomlin, 2011).
3. Education in Egypt also encompasses other realms of access and limitations including the more privatized schooling in Egypt under international schooling systems and languages such as English, French or German.

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