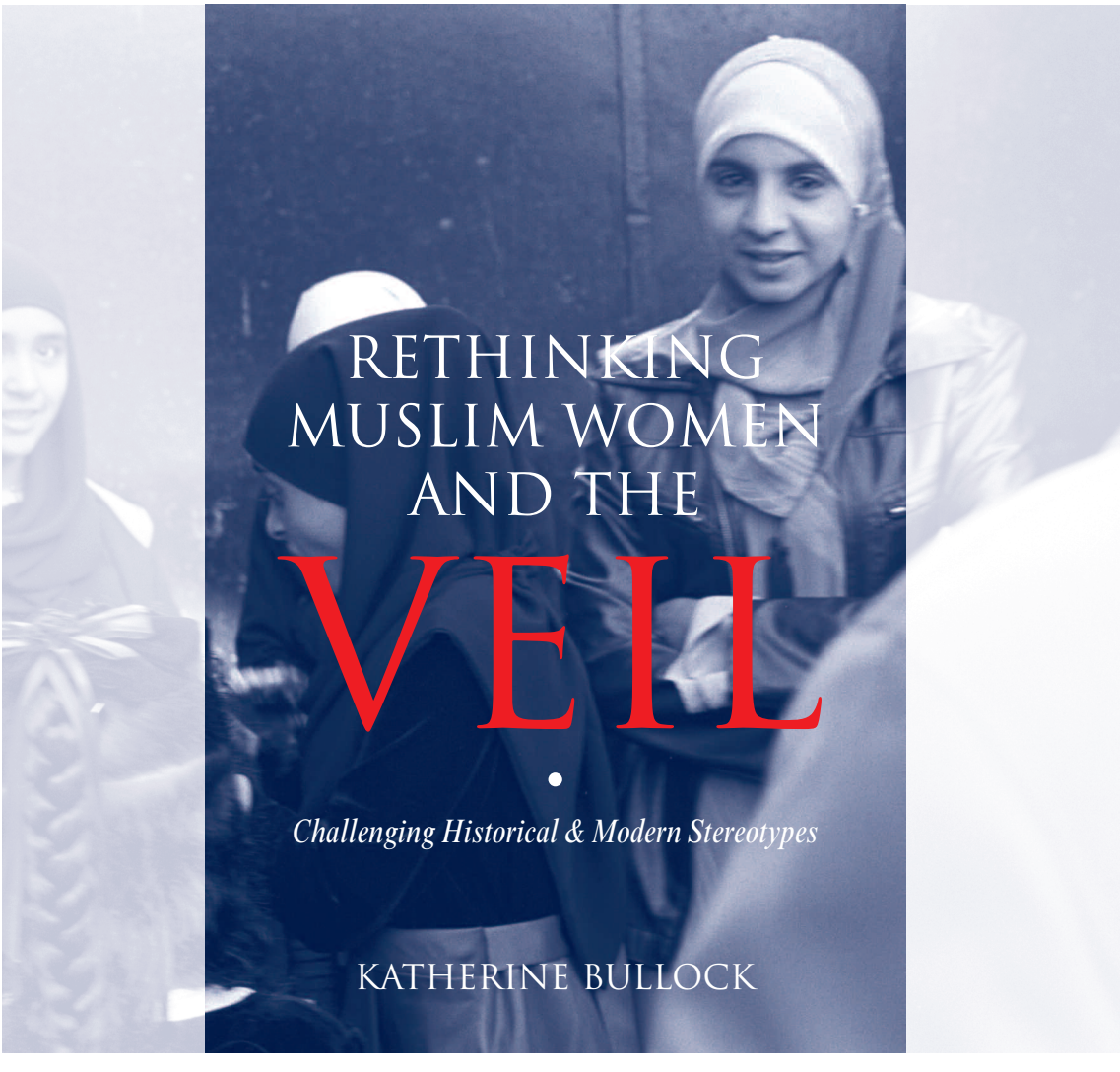
Rethinking MUSLIM WOMEN & THE VEIL

Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes



IIIT Books-In-Brief Series

Rethinking MUSLIM WOMEN and THE VEIL

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Modern Stereotypes

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978–1–56564–358–1

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IIIT Books-In-Brief Series

The IIIT Books-In-Brief Series is a valuable collection of the Institute's key publications written in condensed form designed to give readers a core understanding of the main contents of the original. Produced in a short, easy to read, time-saving format, these companion synopses offer a close, carefully written overview of the larger publication and it is hoped stimulate readers into further exploration of the original.

Dr. Katherine Bullock's treatise on *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil* was first published by the IIIT in 2002 with a second printing in 2007. It is a forceful and intelligent critique of the popular western notion of the veil as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression. Addressing many of the key socio-political concerns which this global issue has raised, the author examines the West's historical fixation with the veil (including aspects of colonialism and fetishism with the harem), appraises feminist discourse, and offers an alternative theory of the veil. An important feature of the work is the voice the author has given to the views, opinions, experiences, and perspectives of a sample of Muslim women interviewed in Canada on the subject of the hijab.

The author embraced Islam during her Ph.D. candidacy and, interestingly, it was the experience of people's reaction to her conversion that led her to change the original topic of her doctoral thesis and choose instead the study of the veil as the subject of her Ph.D. Through careful and meticulous study into an area fraught with historical and cultural misconceptions, the author has sought to challenge some of the subjective and negative

fundamentals which have come to dominate much of the discourse into this important issue today.

Dr. Bullock's work forms an important background to any study or debate of the huge and growing political issue that the veil has become in the West.

Abridged Edition by Katherine Bullock of her Original
RETHINKING MUSLIM WOMEN AND THE VEIL:
Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes
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ISBN hbk: 978-1-56564-433-5
ISBN pbk: 978-1-56564-432-8
2007

INTRODUCTION

In 1991 I saw a news report on the television that showed Turkish women who were returning to the veil. I felt shocked and saddened for them. Poor things, I thought, they are being brainwashed by their culture. Like many Westerners, I believed that Islam oppressed women and that the veil was a symbol of their oppression. Imagine my surprise then, four years later, at seeing my own reflection in a store window, dressed exactly like those oppressed women. I had embarked on a spiritual journey during my Master's degree that culminated four years later in my conversion to Islam. The journey included moving from hatred of Islam, to respect, to interest, to acceptance. Naturally, being a woman, the issue of the veil was central.

Despite my attraction to the theological foundations of Islam, I was deeply troubled by what I believed to be practices oppressive to women. I felt that the veil was a cultural tradition that Muslim women could surely work to eliminate. I was shown the verses in the Qur'an that many Muslims believe enjoin covering on men and women, and it seemed quite clear to me then that, indeed, the verses did impose covering. I wandered home, feeling quite depressed and sorry for Muslim women. If the verses were clear, they had no recourse: covering would be required for a believing Muslim woman.

I had to put these issues aside in order to decide whether or not to accept Islam. What counted, in the final analysis, was the fundamental theological message of the religion – that

there is a single God, and that Muhammad (ṢAAS)* was His Last Servant and Messenger. After several years of study I had no doubt about that ... if only it were not for the issue of women and Islam.

When I finally made my decision to convert, now one and a half years into my doctorate (July 1994), I decided that whether I liked it or not, I should cover. It was a commandment, and I would obey. I warned some people in my department that I had become a Muslim, and that the next time they saw me I would be covered. Needless to say, people were quite shocked, and as word spread (and as people saw me in my new dress), I found myself subject to some hostile treatment. How could I have embraced an oppressive practice, especially when I was known as a strong and committed feminist? How could I embrace Islam? Had I not heard what Hamas had just done? Had I not heard what some Muslim man had just done to a woman? I was not quite prepared for this hostility, nor was I prepared for the different way I was being treated by secretaries, bureaucrats, medical personnel, or general strangers on the subway. I felt the same, but I was often being treated with contempt. I was not treated as I had been as a white, middle-class woman. It was my first personal experience of discrimination and racism, and made me see my previous privileged position in a way that I had never before properly understood.

My new Muslim women friends (including many converts) comforted me as I negotiated my way through my new religion and the reactions that I was experiencing from the broader community. How did my friends manage this situation, I wondered? Did they experience wearing hijab (headscarf) in Toronto the same way I did, or was I just being overly sensitive? Did people really stare on the subway, or were they looking at something else? Why was I being treated with pity and/or contempt? During this difficult time I was searching for a topic for my Ph.D. dissertation, and although I tried to avoid it for a while, it became obvious that the reaction to the headscarf was a topic worthy of exploration.

*(ṢAAS) – *Ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*. 'May the peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.

Why was the 'veil' seen as a symbol of oppression in the West? Why did the West seem to malign Islam? How could I and my friends feel committed to something that we felt was liberating, and yet be in so much conflict with the non-Muslim society around us? Why did people not know our version of Islam and the scarf?

This book is a result of the journey to answer these questions. The foremost aim of *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil* is to challenge the popular Western stereotype that the veil is oppressive. My main argument is that the popular Western notion that the veil is a symbol of Muslim women's oppression is a constructed image that does not represent the experience of all those who wear it. That construction has always served Western political ends, and it continues to do so even in the late twentieth century. In addition, I argue that the judgment that the veil is oppressive is based on liberal understandings of 'equality' and 'liberty' that preclude other ways of thinking about 'equality' and 'liberty' that offer a more positive approach for contemplating the wearing of the veil.

Chapter One
Hijab in the Colonial Era

When did the veil become a symbol of oppression in the West? Although I have not been able to pinpoint the origins of the idea, it is evident that by the eighteenth century, the veil was already taken by Europeans to be an oppressive custom amongst Muslims. The British Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who traveled to Turkey with her diplomatic husband, the Honourable Edward Wortley Montagu in 1717–18, disputed the idea that the veil was oppressive. Having tried out the veil while in Turkey, she argued it gave women freedom, for it allowed them to go out unrecognized.[1] However, the notion of the veil as oppressive assumed a new and important focus in the nineteenth century because that was the era of European colonization of the Middle East. As Ahmed demonstrates in her book, colonialists utilized that new focus on the status of

women in part to justify invasion and colonization of the Middle East.

During the colonial era, Europeans, men and women, be they colonialists, travelers, artists, missionaries, scholars, politicians or feminists, were of one mind that Muslim women were oppressed by their culture. The veil was included as part of a fairly standard list of oppressions facing Muslim women: polygyny, seclusion, easy male divorce. In fact, the veil became shorthand for the entire degraded status of women, and a metaphor (or sign) of the degeneracy of the entire Middle East (Orient) that fed off European cultures' Orientalist view of the Middle East.[2]

It was not just the West that was convinced of the veil's oppressive nature. Native elites internalized the Orientalist view of themselves. They also became convinced that they were backward, their women degraded, and that they ought to follow Western prescriptions for improvement. Unveiling became a central urgency for elites attempting to 'catch up' with the West. Thus the 'veil' became a potent symbol of the progress or regress of a nation.[3] And since it was the upper classes leading 'modernization,' the anti-veil discourse was also an attack on those classes that remained attached to the veil and its older symbolic meanings (a symbol of piety/wealth/status).[4] The anti-veil discourse opened a gulf between the people of a nation: the Western-focused elites and others who were adopting the culture of the colonizer as well as benefiting economically and socially from colonialism, versus the rest, lower classes, traditional Muslim teachers, and others who, as well as suffering from colonialism, were not assimilating to Western ways.[5]

Thus, the notion that the veil is oppressive is an idea born out of domination, or, at least, the will to dominate. Any argument that advances the notion that the veil is a symbol of Muslim women's oppression draws, wittingly or unwittingly, from Orientalist and colonial discourse about the veil. That is perhaps why debates over the veil can assume such furious proportions. The veil, as Ahmed remarks, has ever since the colonial period "carried" the Orientalist "cargo" of

meanings.[6] Struggles today in the Muslim world over hijab reflect these kinds of class/culture divisions.

Metaphysics of Modernity

If the veil had been seen in the West as oppressive since at least the 1700s, what was it about the nineteenth-century colonial era that brought new attention to the veil? In this chapter, I argue that it is the nature of the veil as a gaze inhibitor that most contributes to it coming under attack. Though the dynamics at play started during modern colonialism, they continue to the present day, and explain contemporary attacks on the veil. My analysis extends Timothy Mitchell's argument in *Colonising Egypt* about the encounter between the European "metaphysics of modernity," in which the individual comes to experience themselves as outside the world and grasping the material world as if it were a picture (the world-as-exhibition), with a non-European metaphysics, which was not set up to allow the material world to be represented as a picture.[7]

The Gaze and the Veil

What I need to highlight about the modern experience of the world-as-exhibition is the priority given to looking: "Just now we are an objective people," *The Times* wrote in the summer of 1851, on the occasion of the Great Exhibition. "We want to place everything we can lay our hands on under glass cases, and to stare our fill."[8]

Mitchell notes that this is the modern experience of 'objectivity': the feeling that one is able to look down on and observe the world from a neutral place. What happens, then, when one encounters a world set up to deny the gaze? The gaze requires a 'point of view,' to see but not be seen, and also that the natives present themselves as a spectacle. It is not hard to see immediately how frustrated a European visitor would be in the colonial era upon arrival to the Middle East, where the women covered their faces with veils. The women do not present themselves as an exhibit. Neither do the houses in which they lived (lattices were over windows that looked onto the streets), nor did male/female segregation allow for it. The veiled women violated all the requirements of the world-as-

exhibition: they could not be seen; they could not be seen, but were seeing; and they were not a picture that could be read. They were mysterious beings who refused to offer themselves up to the visitor. For me, this is a key aspect of the European campaign against the veil. Europeans arrived in the Middle East with the confident knowledge of being at the apex of civilization, but this conviction was destabilized upon arrival in the Middle East. How could one be superior, or establish authority over creatures who could not be known (because they could not be seen, grasped as a picture)? What could not be seen, grasped as a spectacle, could not be controlled. Moreover, Europeans felt uneasy about the veiled women: the Europeans knew they were being watched by women who were themselves unseen. That gave the women some power over the Europeans. That was a reversal of the expected relationship between superior and inferior – to see without being seen. And so – and here is the crux of my argument – the Europeans retaliated. They attacked the veil, they tried to rip it off; they tried everything they could to see the women. They exposed women in paintings, photographs, etc., by portraying them naked, or otherwise undressed. And thus began the campaign to unveil Muslim women.

Conclusion

The "metaphysics of modernity," where meaning is grasped as a distinction between a material thing and the non-material structure that it represents, with its emphasis on the gaze, led European visitors to the Middle East to attack the veil. The veil was a barrier to the European carrying through to completion the project promoted by the Orientalist vision of the Orient: namely the inherent inferiority of the Orient and the need for the West to civilize it. Colonial discourse also introduced ideas about Oriental inferiority and the focus on women's status as the benchmark for progress into the colonized's discourse. Native elites seized upon the European understanding of certain practices, such as the veil and the harem, in their efforts to "modernize." To the older pre-modern meanings of the veil, as a symbol of piety, wealth or status were added the meanings that the veil symbolized oppression and backwardness. The new meanings did not displace the older meanings, just created a new layer that was

attached to one's class position. Thus grew the divide between the Westernized elite minority and the non-Westernized non-elite majority. As Ahmed argues, the discourse over hijab is "tainted" with the "history of colonial domination and resistance and class struggle around that."[9] These dynamics are animating the struggles in the Muslim world today.

Chapter Two
Perceptions and Experiences of Wearing Hijab in Toronto

Soon after I started wearing hijab, two school girls in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, were sent home from school for refusing to remove their headscarves in class.[10] The incidents sparked a debate across Canada about the meaning of hijab and its place in Canadian society. The controversy in Canada about the meaning of the headscarf was based on its being an 'alien' practice that Canadians had to decide whether or not they would accept as 'authentic.' A Canadian Broadcasting Commission (CBC) investigative report asked the question: "Can the hijab pass the litmus test of being Canadian?"[11] That the girls who were expelled were Canadian (born and bred) seemed irrelevant. Jeffery Simpson's opinion piece in *The Globe and Mail*, which argued that Muslim women should have the right to wear hijab if they so desired,[12] sparked an angry response from two women citing that hijab was "clearly" a sign of Muslim women's oppression.[13]

What were obscured in these popular debates were the voices of covered Muslim women themselves. This chapter attempts to fill that gap by presenting the voices of some Muslim Canadian women who cover. I do not generalize from their views to 'all Muslims.' My aim was simply to gain a thorough understanding of what a few Muslim women thought about hijab. I interviewed fifteen Sunni women and one Ismaili between May and July 1996, who lived in the greater Toronto area, Ontario, Canada. Of the sixteen, six were converts to Islam. Ten wore hijab all the time (of which five were converts), and five wore hijab sometimes. Only two of these

women did not aspire to wearing hijab full-time at some point in the future. Of the fifteen Sunni Muslims, only one did not perform the five daily prayers, so the rest (including Noha, the Ismaili, who was active in her religious community) were what other people considered 'religious.'[14] This made them part of a tiny minority amongst Muslims in North America who are active mosque participants (about 1–5 percent), according to scholars of Islam in North America.[15] In order to preserve the anonymity of my interviewees, I have given them pseudonyms.

PERCEPTIONS OF HIJAB

1. Why Hijab?

Muslim women in hijab are sometimes told by Canadians "This is Canada. You're free here. You don't have to wear that thing on your head." Being the target of such comments can be amusing or upsetting, depending upon the style in which this information is delivered.

Nur, an undergraduate from South Asia, had a traumatic encounter in the library cafeteria one day, when she was approached by an older woman who demanded in a hostile manner why Nur was "bringing the backwardness to Canada." The woman emphasized that they had "worked really hard in Canada for women's rights," and wearing the hijab would "destroy all that." Once Nur pointed out that she was not making a statement to attract attention or make herself "one of the easy targets for hate," it was "more a religious thing," the woman "seemed...to calm down," though "she was still not convinced," presumably thinking that Nur should not wear hijab, whatever the reason.

Nur gave religious reasons when trying to explain to the non-Muslim Canadian woman why she wore hijab in Canada. All of my interviewees, even Fatima, who rarely covered and, unlike the other women who were not covering full-time, did not aspire to do so one day, thought that wearing hijab was part of the religion. When I asked them what made them think it was part of the religion, they all replied along the lines of "it's in the Qur'an," "God commands it in the Qur'an," and

so on. Bassima, an English convert to Islam, also referred to the "hadiths that say when a woman reaches puberty you should see nothing but the face and hands."

2. Traditional (i.e. Male-Biased) Interpretation?

Women scholars who do not themselves cover have authored most of the studies on the re-veiling movement. Many of them cast aspersions on their interviewees' assertions that the Qur'an mandates covering. From these scholars' point of view, the Qur'an simply requires modest dress, not the kind of covering that the Islamists describe. Framing their studies in this way is a disservice to the women whom they have interviewed for their scholarly articles, for it implies that they are more able to interpret the Qur'an than their interviewees. A better way to approach the differences in interpretation is modeled by Karam's study of Egyptian feminism. While she disagrees with the Islamist women's interpretation that covering is mandated in the Qur'an, she feels a profound respect for their methodology: "It was a classic catch-22 situation: I was unable, as a Muslim woman who grew up with Islamic convictions, to deny the legitimacy of their Islamic basis (that is, the Qur'an), whilst I could not accept the interpretations they used with their consequent social implications."[16] Karam points out that both those who cover and those who do not are convinced that the Other is deluded by false consciousness.[17]

The notion that women who choose to cover are suffering from false consciousness is very strong in the West. When I started to wear hijab to university, one of my classmates told my friend, "Doesn't she know she is oppressed?" However, no woman can choose to cover these days, especially having grown up in the West, without being aware of all the debates both inside and outside the Muslim community surrounding the practice. Covering has a long tradition in the Muslim world. The current debates over it are relatively new, having been sparked by the colonial encounter with the West. Living in Canada, it is not an easy matter to decide to wear hijab, given the negative assessment of it by the broader community and the experiences of harassment and discrimination that generally come with it. The women whom I interviewed had

not made the decision to cover – and to keep wearing it day after day – without some real thought about why they would wear it. Scholars of the re-veiling movement found that there were many different motivations for women to put on the hijab, from political protest, to economic reasons, to piety (see Chapter Three). My interviewees had considered various interpretations of the Qur'an, and chosen that which made most sense to them. They all believed that the Qur'anic verse asking women to cover their hair was straightforward.

The public perception of Islam is that it is a bad religion, promoting violence and oppression of women. For the women in my study, however, hijab symbolized, neither oppression nor terrorism, but "purity," "modesty," a "woman's Islamic identity," and "obedience, or submission to God and a testament that you're Muslim." They felt peaceful in their hijab, and enjoyed wearing it. They firmly believed hijab to be a benefit for society, because hijab "cleaned up" male-female interaction; that they felt treated as persons, not "sex objects"; and that negative feelings of envy and jealousy would be lessened in a society in which the women covered. If feminist methodologies and epistemologies of experience as a foundation for knowledge are to mean anything, these meanings of hijab should be taken seriously, and the women not derided for holding 'false' beliefs.

Chapter Three

Multiple Meanings of Hijab

The sociological complexity of covering is not captured by the conventional wisdom in the West that holds that "the" veil (as if there was just one type) is a symbol of women's oppression in Islam. My concern in this book is to challenge the common Western presumption that every woman wearing a scarf is doing so out of force or coercion, and that the scarf represents her oppression in Islam. This chapter focuses on the multiple meanings hijab holds, in order to demonstrate that an observer should not read a single meaning into it and to highlight the injustice done to women in the West who

suffer from the imposition of the "the veil is oppressive" meaning (for example, girls who are expelled from school in France and Quebec, and Muslim women who suffer from job discrimination or harassment because they cover). Practices of Muslim women in other countries are analyzed here in order to demonstrate the multiple meanings of hijab that shift according to context and individual differences. I have synthesized seven core themes from academic studies of covering to capture women's differing motivations for covering: Revolutionary Protest, Political Protest, Religious, Continued Access to the Public Sphere, Expression of Personal Identity, Custom and State Law. Naturally there is some intersection among the themes that I have identified and more than one may apply to the same woman. In the section to follow I present the themes of covering taken from these studies. I then look at the meanings that the contemporary Western media commonly ascribe to hijab. This allows for telling demonstrations that the image of hijab in the West that is generated by the media is overwhelmingly negative, with little relevance to women's perspectives.

Reasons for Covering

(1) *Revolutionary Protest*: During the Algerian fight for independence in the 1950s, and in Iran in the 1970s, women who had previously not covered donned the veil/*chador* to help overthrow oppressive governments.[18] The headscarf demonstrated that one was against colonialism or against the Western sympathetic elite regime and all that it stood for.

(2) *Political Protest*: Women put on hijab as a political protest against elite Westernization programmes and Western neo-imperialism to signal that they are not happy with the current political situation, either with policies pursued by the state and/or with the "commercial, technological, political, and social" invasion of their countries by the West.[19]

(3) *Religious*: Part and parcel of the political protest against Westernization and secularization is a conviction about Islam as a viable and positive alternative political, social and economic system. Many women have decided to cover based

on this international movement's calls for men and women to observe the 'Islamic dress code.'[20]

(3.1) *Make Society Better*: Along with the themes of rejecting Westernization and secularization, and adopting Islam as an alternative, is the pervasive one that women who don hijab feel that they are being proactive about improving society. In this view, hijab ideally represents a leveling of the social classes.[21] Williams found that women in Egypt felt that they were wearing hijab as a way to remedy society, to stop it from falling apart, to stop *inḥilāl* (dissoluteness, disintegration).[22]

(4) *Continued Access to the Public Sphere*: Not all of the women who have started to cover in recent years have done so out of religious conviction. These women, some of whom never pray, have found that hijab facilitates access and movement in the public sphere: seeking employment; gaining respect; and combating male harassment.[23]

(5) *Expression of Personal Identity*: Another reason for wearing hijab especially for Muslim women in the West, is to make a statement of personal identity, similar to Nadia, a second-generation British Asian woman who started covering when she was sixteen: "...wearing the veil makes me feel special, it's a kind of badge of identity and a sign that my religion is important to me."[24]

(6) *Custom*: Many Muslim women wear hijab as a way of honouring their family or society's customs and culture. A 35-year-old teacher from Saudi Arabia, with a BA in education from the United States, said: "'Yes, I wear the veil out of conviction.' 'On what do you base your conviction?' [AlMunajjed] asked. 'I am attached to my traditions. Wearing a veil is part of one's identity of being a Saudi woman. It is a definite proof of one's identification with the norms and values of the Saudi culture...and I will teach my daughter also to wear it.'"[25]

(7) *State Law Requirement*: Covering is required by state law, such as in Iran after the 1979 Revolution and Afghanistan after the 1998 accession to power by the Taliban.

The Meaning of Hijab: Western Media Viewpoint

It is fairly easy to demonstrate the differences between the sociological complexity of the motivations for and meanings of covering and the standard Western media image of the motivations for and meanings of covering. For the Western media, hijab by and large, stands for oppression and as shorthand for all the horrors of Islam (now called Islamic fundamentalism): terrorism, violence, barbarity, and backwardness. This is a predetermined mold into which the empirical details are made to fit.

Just as in colonial times, when the veil was the metaphor of the entire Orient, in the 1990s the word "veil" is shorthand for all these horrors of Islamic fundamentalism. Headlines proclaim: "The Veiled Threat of Islam";[26] "Women of the Veil: Islamic Militants pushing women back to an age of official servitude";[27] "Foulard. Le Complot: Comment les Islamistes Nous Infiltrent [The Veil. The Plot: How the Islamists are Infiltrating Us]";[28] "Islam's Veiled Threat";[29] "An act of faith or a veiled threat to society?"[30] "Muslim Veil Threat to Harmony in French Schools, Minister says";[31] "The New Law: Wear the Veil and Stay Alive";[32] "Women Trapped Behind Veils."[33]

Thus hijab is linked to assertions about women's inferiority within Islam. The "veil" is assumed to be a "blatant badge of female oppression,"[34] forced on unwilling women by various methods – bribery,[35] or threats of and actual violence.[36] However, as we saw above, many women in Muslim countries wear hijab willingly and with conviction. In Scroggins, Goodwin's, and Brooks hands, these women come across at best as silly, duped, or bizarre, and at worst, as Islamist ideologues equally responsible and culpable as men for supporting an anti-woman ideology.[37] The youth who featured prominently in the academic studies of covering discussed above, are presented in Goodwin's study as easily attracted to "extremism" owing to their age and their socioeconomic conditions. Her "vast majority" obviously escaped being interviewed by those scholars cited above.[38] In Brooks' hands they are presented as the herald of a bleak future leading their country backward in time. None of the

caveats/nuances of the scholarly studies exist, such as Macleod's observation that the new veiling in lower-class Cairo is not directly linked to the Islamic movement in Egypt, or Zuhur's and Rugh's emphasis on piety,[39] not socio-economic conditions, or Brenner's perception of Javanese women as forward-looking, rational and modern women seeking to re-discipline themselves and improve their society.[40]

Chapter Four

Mernissi and the Discourse on the Veil

Moroccan feminist, Fatima Mernissi's two books, *Beyond the Veil* and *The Veil and the Male Elite* are widely consulted in the West about the 'meaning' of the veil.[41] In both books, Mernissi argues that the veil is a symbol of unjust male authority over women. Since my book is aimed at undermining the stereotype of the veil as oppressive, a critical refutation of Mernissi's main arguments found in these two books is essential.

Mernissi and Methodology

The personal trauma that Fatima Mernissi seems to have experienced growing up in Morocco is never far from the surface of most of her writings. An anecdote from Mernissi's autobiography illuminates her relationship to covering very well. During World War II, when she was not yet nine, she and her cousins concluded that they needed to change their hair color or cover it to protect themselves from Hi-Hitler who "hated dark hair and dark eyes and was throwing bombs from planes wherever a dark-haired population was spotted."[42] Mernissi started wearing one of her mother's scarves, only to have it ripped off her head by an angry mother: "Don't you ever cover your head!" Mother shouted. "Do you understand me? Never! I am fighting against the veil, and you are putting one on?! What is this nonsense?...Even if Hi-Hitler, the Almighty King of the Allemane, is after you," she said, "you ought to face him with your hair uncovered. Covering your head and hiding will not help. Hiding does not solve a woman's problems. It just identifies

her as an easy victim. Your Grandmother and I have suffered enough of this head-covering business. We know it does not work. I want my daughters to stand up with their heads erect, and walk on Allah's planet with their eyes on the stars."[43]

In the face of this, could a young child develop anything other than an ambivalent (or negative) attitude to covering? Could a young woman decide that she wanted to cover without being seen as backward or anti-nationalist? Mernissi is obviously still traumatized by these memories, and her whole corpus is evidently a search for the cause of her pain, as a way to change and remedy it. Who would not condemn such a system? That women of her class, who were kept illiterate had to veil their faces (*niqāb*) when they were allowed outside makes her equation of veiling with women's oppression seemingly self-evident. The problem is that Mernissi equates her experience of veiling in the Moroccan system as 'the' experience of veiling, 'the' inherent or true meaning of veiling. As I explain in more detail later, Mernissi fails to recognize both the multiplicity of Islamic practices around veiling (and hence their meanings as described in Chapter Three), and the multiplicity of Islamic discourses around veiling. She pursues an ahistorical approach that equates the twentieth-century Moroccan social/political/economic system with the seventh-century Arabian system with the idea that what resulted in Morocco by the twentieth century is what Prophet Muhammad envisioned as a positive ideal of Islam. She also equates what resulted in Morocco with what resulted in the entire Muslim world, to the extent that she discusses the meaning of veiling in 'the' Muslim social order, as if Indonesia, Bangladesh, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and so on, are systems identical to that of the first Muslim community in seventh-century Arabia.[44]

So, my principal disagreements with Mernissi are two: (1) an ahistorical approach to the meanings of religious symbols that fails to contextualize how people enact Islam differently in different times and places; and (2) a reductive approach that does not acknowledge the multiplicity of discourses around veiling. To counteract the negative stereotype that hijab is a symbol of Islam's oppression of women, it is pertinent to ask

if 'Islam' requires the kind of society Mernissi condemns as hostile to women, or if there are alternative visions that are more favorable to women. In this chapter I shall argue that Mernissi's arguments about Islam's view of women are contradicted by the very sources of Islam, the Qur'an and hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad). My debate with Mernissi is not to deny that Muslim societies embody repressive practices or discourses on women. My dispute with her is about normative Islam (is the Qur'anic vision anti-woman or not?). An interpretation of a Qur'anic vision that is favorable to women counteracts both Mernissi's point of view, and any other Qur'anic interpretation that is suppressive of women.

Women and Sexuality in the Qur'an and Sunnah

Mernissi's case against the veil is based on her conclusion that Islam views women's sexuality as dangerous, therefore needing to be controlled. She further argues that Islam views 'femaleness' as anti-divine, or sullying, and that Islam is against heterosexual love between husband and wife. Women threaten men's relationship to God, so must be covered, secluded and excluded from the Muslim community.[45]

None of these arguments can be sustained by a close reading of the Qur'an and Sunnah. As Winter notes, Islam has a "sex-positive attitude," exemplified by Imam Nawawi's statement: "All appetites harden the heart, with the exception of sexual desire, which softens it."[46] There is nothing in the Qur'an about women as dangerous sexual beings. Rather, there is the notion that men and women are fundamentally alike, being created of a single soul, and being *both* recipients of the divine breath. (So how can Islam view femaleness as anti-divine?) The Qur'an is replete with verses stressing mutual marital love and harmony; it is a wonder that she has overlooked them (e.g. Qur'an 30:21). The Qur'anic picture of mutual love, consideration, compassion, and harmony between husband and wife is a far cry from Mernissi's view: "the Muslim order condemns as a deadly enemy of civilization: love between men and women in general, and between husband and wife in particular."[47]

To emphasize, in Islam there is nothing evil or undesirable about the body and its desires. Woman, although partaking in the Fall, is not held responsible for the expulsion from Paradise (Adam is). There is no original sin (God forgave them straightaway), and no impurity attached to her because of this act, as in other religious traditions. Desire *per se* is neither of the devil nor in tension to virtue. It is the context that determines virtue. That is, fulfilling sexual desire in marriage is encouraged and rewarded; fulfilling sexual desire outside marriage is discouraged and punished. Every act in a believer's life can be an act of worship, if it is done with the right intention. So, sexual intercourse, rather than expressing antagonism between Allah and women, is an act that brings both men and women rewards from God, when it is a lawful act. Thus, the hijab is not a symbol of a faith that is (normatively) anti-female, wishes to erase femininity, or exclude women from the community of believers.

Conclusion

Mernissi's argument that the veil excludes women from the faith, from public space, and so on, is refuted by the opinions and actions of women examined in Chapter Three and by my interviewees in Chapter Two. In ignoring covered women's voices and in reducing them to passive victims, Mernissi is only reinscribing the colonial and Orientalist view of the 'veiled woman.' Her vision is reductive, ignoring the sociological complexity of covering.

If her assumption, 'that in Islam there is a contradiction between femaleness and the divine' requiring women to be smothered and excluded (hence degraded) in hijab is faulty, as I argue it is, then the hijab can carry a different meaning.

Chapter Five

An Alternative Theory of the Veil

One of the points of this book is to show that social context influences meanings ascribed to hijab. In this chapter, I aim to develop a positive theory of the meaning of hijab for the consumer capitalist culture of the twenty-first century. I argue

that because of capitalism's emphasis on the body and on materiality, wearing hijab can be an empowering and liberating experience for women. I analyze feminist arguments about the male gaze and capitalism's commodification of the female body to argue that hijab is a powerful way to resist the detrimental aspects of both. In Sections C, D, and E, I refute some common critiques of hijab as a dress that smothers femininity, renders women sex objects, and denies them choice. The chapter closes with Section F that presents hijab as a gateway into a faith tradition that assists its adherents to withstand the corrosive effects of modern materialism.

A. Hijab *and Liberation* and B. Hijab *and the Male Gaze*

Writing for the mainstream press, Naheed Mustapha and Sultana Yusufali present hijab as liberation from oppressive aspects of Western popular consumer culture. In so doing, they make use of two kinds of feminist analysis.[48] First, the objectification and commodification of women's bodies in capitalist culture, and second, the theory of harm done to women by the promotion of a beauty ideal.

Orbach, Bordo, Wolf, Ussher, MacKinnon, Dworkin, and many other feminists have analyzed in detail Western cultures' images of women.[49] They examine the problem of the objectification of the female body and its use in advertising, pornography, art, film, and so on. The main argument is that women's bodies are presented in such a way as to satisfy a (heterosexual) male gaze and a (heterosexual) male desire: the woman is beautiful and her body sexually arousing. In art (especially the genre of the female nude) and pornography, the woman is frequently passive, often reclining, offered as a possession for the man to take her.[50] In the case of a picture/film the 'taking' is visual, although some feminists argue that this visual objectification has effects in the real world, that it "constructs women as things for [male] sexual use."[51] Moreover, this positioning of the female body is not confined to art, it is ubiquitous in imagery everywhere there are pictures, most especially in advertising: a woman's body in a bikini stroking a car exhaust system; a woman's legs sticking out of a cereal box ("Get more kicks out of Kix").[52] The relationship between the product being sold and the

woman's sexualized body is nil; the body is there to attract attention. It also excites the heterosexual man, and reinforces the lesson that women's bodies are objects. This kind of objectification, it is argued, dehumanizes women, turns them into objects and denies their personhood.

It is an important part of the feminist project to change and ameliorate this.

Mustapha and Yusufali view hijab as a way out of the commodification/objectification trap, as something that gives women back their personhood. In addition to believing that hijab removes the deleterious effects of the male gaze by de-objectifying women, Mustapha and Yusufali argue that hijab is liberating because it saves women from the ravages of the beauty game. The beauty game is women's attempts to make themselves into the images of beautiful women that they see all around them. In putting on long, loose clothing, and covering their hair with a scarf, they feel liberated from the "bondage of the swinging pendulum of the fashion industry and other institutions that exploit females" (Yusufali). In opting out of the beauty game, they are embracing as liberating a symbol from their own Islamic heritage that others in other contexts may have found oppressive. So in choosing hijab they are constructing a Muslim identity, a minority identity, in the face of the dominant (Western) culture's messages about women – about the need to dress fashionably, and be slim and beautiful. They use their Islamic heritage as a way to resist, rebel against and counteract these powerful images of ideal beauty. For these and other like-minded Muslim women, hijab is a countermeasure in the West. They even have their own version of false consciousness: "Women are not going to achieve equality with the right to bare their breasts in public, as some people would like to have you believe," (Mustapha) thus turning the tables on those feminists who would view the young women's support for hijab as false consciousness.

C. Hijab *and Femininity*

From the perspective of those used to displaying the female body as right and appropriate ("If you've got it, flaunt it" is

a common message for women in Western culture), "covering it" seems to suppress femininity and beauty. The often drab-looking garments of covered Muslim women give the appearance that their femininity and sexuality are being denied. In this section, I advance four points in order to rebuff the assumption that hijab smothers a woman's femininity and sexuality. In the first place, women do not wear hijab all the time. Although it is often portrayed this way, hijab is not a public/private dress: it is related to the presence or absence of unrelated or related men. So, when a woman is with all women or men from her family, she does not cover. Similarly, outside, if she is free of the gaze of unrelated men, she need not cover. Second, women are encouraged to dress up and beautify themselves, to exult in their bodies, with and for their husbands. Third, because most socializing is done in a segregated fashion, women frequently congregate with no men present. For these occasions many women love to put on makeup, and wear fancy and fine clothes. One of the most spectacular events is a bridal shower for the bride, with women wearing their most beautiful outfits. At some of these events women spend time decorating each other's hands with henna patterns. Singing and dancing are common. I have seen elderly women dancing, clapping, and shaking their hips, urging on a shy, restrained bride to shake her hips and body with more vigour. And fourth, to highlight similarities between hijab and other women's strategies for coping with the male gaze in public space, such as shaving off all their hair as is common amongst some feminists.

D. Hijab, Sexuality, and Essentialism

Liberal and poststructuralist feminists both assume that human behavior and desire are socially constructed. Any strategy, like hijab, that appears to cement traditional male-female differences is suspect.

The Qur'an itself does not offer detailed explanations for its commandments to cover, nor about differences in male/female dress. However, it does offer two brief explanations that might be enough. When we examine verses such as surahs 24: 31, in which women are asked to "draw their *khumurihinna* [usually trans. as veils] over their bosoms" and 33: 59 to "cast

their outer garments over their persons [when abroad]: that is most convenient, that they should be known [as such] and not molested)," I believe the Qur'an is arguing that in the public arena there is something about male-female relations that can be harmful to women, and that wearing an outer garment might alleviate. The Qur'an leaves unanswered exactly how or what the garment might help, but when read with a verse in Surah 24 which commands men and women both to "lower their gaze and guard their modesty" (24: 30–31), I assume that the Qur'an is pointing to the phenomenon of the male gaze already analyzed above and positing the primacy of sight for male sexuality.

Essentialism is dangerous when it enshrines 'male/female superior/inferior', and can be used, as it has been, over the centuries to deny women fundamental rights to life, education, the vote and so on. However, the Qur'an does not posit these kinds of male-female differences. Indeed, I suggest that it declares an essential sameness between male/female, as in verse 4:1: "O humankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate..." What the Qur'an is offering us is a description of the durable dangers to be found for women in the public arena. Covering for women is argued for more as a strategy than as a statement of essentialized female/male identity. After all, older women are allowed to uncover (24:60). In contrast to the liberal/postmodern position which hopes that socialization will eventually eliminate male harassment of women, the Qur'an is suggesting that this is an enduring feature of human existence. This need not imply biological determinism, XY chromosomes means harasser of woman: most men treat women well. It is rather that socialization makes this kind of male behavior constantly replicated and replicable.

So, my argument is that hijab does not deny a woman's sexuality. Only that society is better served by keeping male and female sexuality in check, inside and outside the home, and especially in the public sphere.

E. Hijab and Choice

Scholars of the re-covering movement, as well as Westerners in general, are suspicious of women's 'choice' to cover. There remains a deep-seated conviction that women are coerced or subtly brainwashed into 'choosing' to cover. The idea is something like: 'If you have chosen to cover, well, you have been socialized to believe covering is a good thing. However, if you really knew your interest as a woman, you would know that it is not good to cover, so your decision to cover is a sad indication of your being brainwashed.' Certainly this is how I thought before I became Muslim.

The relationship between an individual's culture and his or her ability to choose is complex, for choice is always circumscribed by the range between what a culture considers acceptable and unacceptable. Even in the West, as I argued in Chapter Three, where a great deal of freedom exists, there are parameters to people's choices. Most Western societies still expect women to cover their breasts in public (except in space-specific places like a nudist beach/camp). No one would really argue that women are being forced by their culture to cover their breasts just because of this sanction against toplessness. Most women accept the restriction and feel they are 'choosing' to cover their breasts when they dress themselves. It is the same with hijab: it is a culturally approved dress in many Muslim societies that Muslim women can choose to adopt (though there are other societies that do not condone hijab Turkey being a notorious contemporary example.) Of course, what I am arguing applies only to societies that allow women true choice, not places like Iran or the Taliban's Afghanistan, where women are prevented by law from uncovering, or during periods of social unrest in the Muslim world, where hijab is seen as a marker of allegiance and violence is perpetrated against women to force them to cover. This kind of violence against women is unacceptable. I mean to speak here only of the relationship of hijab to choice in societies where there is the genuine freedom to adopt or not adopt hijab.

F. Hijab and Religiosity

Because of its religious sanction, and when worn consciously

by a Muslim woman for reasons of piety like many of my interviewees in Chapter Two, hijab acts as a portal into the Islamic faith. Like other major world religions, Islam's teachings emphasize the afterlife, and caution believers not to be seduced by the allure of this-wordly goods. The Qur'an directs people's minds to the Day of Reckoning, where each soul will have its good and bad deeds weighed on a scale. Piety, we are reminded constantly, is more important than this-wordly objects, and dress is included in this. So, even though wearing hijab as a pious act can be empowering, it is really only a preliminary level. A hadith in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* says: "Allah does not look at your appearance or your wealth but at your hearts and deeds" (no.2564).

Another way hijab, when adopted as a statement of religiosity, can counter capitalism's materialist culture is the Qur'an's message about the perfection of the human body. Eating disorders and body dissatisfaction are reaching epidemic proportions in the West, yet this is possible only in a culture that no longer believes that God causes all things, including one's body shape. It may well be that the body is a site of cultural practice and formation, such that there is no such thing as a 'biological body'.[53] It is also true, however, that one cannot change one's body structure too much without recourse to surgery. Although one can diet and exercise, if one is staying within healthy limits (that is, not anorectic/bulimic), there is only just so much tinkering to be done. The Qur'an's message is to be happy and content with one's body because God created our shapes: "He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases" (3:6); and He created us "in the best of moulds" (95:4). The Prophet used to advise people to be healthy, and consume and exercise in moderation.

Thus Islam acts as a counter to the materialism of capitalism. In adopting hijab, Muslim women tap into a deep faith tradition that provides positive physic resources to counter materialism's corrosive effects.

G. Conclusion

The argument advanced in this chapter is that hijab acts as an empowering tool of resistance to the consumer capitalist

culture's beauty game of the twenty-first century that has had such a detrimental impact on women's self-esteem and physical health. Hijab is also a religiously endorsed dress, and its link to religion gives its wearers a gateway into a faith tradition that elevates self-esteem by reminding people that their worth is not based on appearances, but on their pious deeds. From this perspective, hijab is a symbol of a religion that treats women as persons, rather than as sex objects. This is the exact opposite conclusion to a common feminist conception that hijab is a symbol that Islam views women as a sex object, that she must be covered up because she is thought of reductively as 'female' whose only important attribute is her sexuality that threatens the social order.

CONCLUSION

My book began with my attempt to understand why a secular liberal society that is supposed to be neutral about how individuals pursue the good, reacted badly to my becoming Muslim and adopting hijab. My quest has taken me on a journey back to colonial times when Europeans first encountered hijab, to contemporary times, where after abandoning hijab, some Muslim women are wearing it again. I have presented the voices of some Muslim women living in Toronto who cover, and analyzed the emphatic voice of a woman opposed to hijab. Finally, I have tried to articulate a positive theory of hijab for the capitalist cultures of the twenty-first century.

Hijab is a philosophy about male and female dress, and an etiquette for male/female relations. However, it is the piece of cloth that covers a woman's body to varying degrees, also known as hijab, that is the focus of hostility in the West, as well as a site of a bitter struggle in the Muslim world. In Turkey and Tunisia, laws banning hijab are enacted in the name of "modernity," a modernity, based on Orientalism that sees Islam as backward, anti-civilization, barbaric, and oppressive to women. At this point, the common Western view of the veil as oppressive and the Muslim world's attempts to banish hijab converge.

To date feminist paradigms have not captured covered women's positive experience with hijab, nor have they captured the diversity with respect to covering that prevails in the entire world. It is the regnant Orientalist/feminist discourse that effaces Muslim women, turning covered women into silent dummies, unable to speak for themselves, rather than their hijab. Western feminists, forgetting about the oppressions women face in their own culture, treat Muslim women as the only remaining group in the world to suffer oppression. Thus, the role of power politics in the continuation of the hijab-is-oppressive stereotype cannot be overlooked. In many ways the anti-hijab discourse is linked to the project of Western hegemony, even if that hegemony is seen as natural and not the result of this or that specific foreign policy.

Some will rightly protest. In many Muslim societies, women have been and are secluded; they have been and are forced to cover. Hijab has been part of a package limiting women's potential, denying them education, employment outside the home, and the vote. It is no wonder that, like Mernissi, many Muslim women campaign against hijab and celebrate its disappearance. The new covering movement is a radical challenge to both the Western stereotype of oppression and some traditional Muslim cultural practices. The return to the Qur'an and Sunnah movements (of which there are several versions) contain within them many forces. There are those, including myself, who see the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the Prophet, and the first community as embodying equality and justice for women and men, but a way of life distorted by cultural accretions over the last 1,400 years. These Muslims, men and women, are asserting that hijab (ought to) be divorced from oppressive traditions of the past, such as seclusion, and that those oppressions wrongly kept women from their rightful participation in the affairs of the community. They are demanding education, work, political input, and the hijab.

These differences of opinion over hijab should not be allowed to overcome the Muslim community today. Difference of opinion was a marked feature of the early days of Islam. The hijab is often obsessed over as if it's the thing that makes a

woman a Muslim or not. What is forgotten is that it is the *shahādah* (the declaration and belief that none is worthy of worship except God and that Muhammad is His Messenger) that makes one a Muslim, and after that the most important deed is to pray on time. Prophetic tradition reminds us that otherwise observant Muslim women can be penalised in the next life if they were gossips in this life. The scale of a person's deeds is not ours to worry over. What should concern us more than how another woman is dressed is our own behavior and deeds. So, the "conservative" side of the spectrum needs to be careful of arrogance and denouncing those who do not wish to wear hijab; as does the "progressive" side in its denunciations of those who do wish to wear hijab or *niqāb*. Above all, freedom of conscience, by both sides, should be upheld.

Since I first conduced my research, there has risen from amongst Muslims an argument that hijab is not a religiously sanctioned dress, but a cultural one. I investigated this as I was making my decision to convert, and concluded that the argument was based upon weak evidence and inconsistent logic. I worry that the rise of this "hijab is not a religious requirement" trend, since it is so much more happily supported by most in the West, only serves to marginalize more than ever, Muslim women who *do* want to wear head-covers or face veils. Their voices are now pushed to the margins by mainstream western cultural discourse and progressive Muslim discourse. Not all of the women interviewed for *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil* wore or wanted to wear head-covers, but many did, and the overall framework of the book is supportive of the perspective that hijab is a religiously sanctioned dress that is not oppressive and is part of a religion that gives Muslim women dignity and respect.

Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil thus will hopefully serve as an alternative perspective on these debates. My book has been an attempt to present another story of the veil: the story of those, like myself, who find peace and joy in Islam, and who do not believe that Islam suppresses women, or that hijab oppresses them. My book is an attempt to open the lines

of communication with those who are willing to listen. It is a request that Muslim women who enjoy wearing hijab be treated with respect, be listened to gracefully, and disputed with in the spirit of goodwill. We may agree to disagree over certain issues, although at the very least, we should be able to disagree and still remain partners in the global village.

The Author

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She is a community activist and lectures frequently, both to Muslim and non-Muslim groups. Originally from Australia, she lives in Canada with her husband and children. She embraced Islam in 1994.

Notes

[1] *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, quoted in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p.150.
[2] Orientalism became a field of knowledge, or paradigm, for understanding the Middle East and Islam that pretended to objectivity (impartiality), but that was actually based on the guiding assumption of inherent Oriental inferiority. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1979, 2nd Ed., New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p.209.
[3] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p.128.
[4] Ibid., pp.129–30.
[5] Ibid., p.145.
[6] Ibid., p.129.
[7] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: Uni. of California Press,1988), pp.12–13, *passim*.
[8] Ibid.,
pp.19–20.
[9] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p.104.
[10] The Quebec issue followed on from French expulsions of girls in hijab in 1989. Naturally there are connections between French and Quebec culture.
[11] Canadian Broadcasting Commission, Prime Time News, July, 1995.
[12] Jeffery Simpson, "The Current Objections to Muslim Clothing are Simply Wrongheaded," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada), December 28, 1994, p.A16.
[13] Mona LeBlanc, Letters to the Editor, *Globe and Mail*, Wednesday, January 4, 1995.
[14] I say "other people" because most of the interviewees, even though they observed the five pillars of Islam, did not consider themselves "religious." They felt they would have to do more prayers, or read more Qur'an, to be truly religious.
[15] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Arab Muslims and Islamic Institutions in America: Adaptation and Reform," in *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities*, eds. Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham (Detroit: Wayne State University Centre for Urban Studies, 1983), p.75.
[16] Azza M. Karam, *Women, Islamisms and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p.133.
[17] Ibid., p.139.
[18] For Algeria, see Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. Trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967). French edition, 1959, pp.61–62, *passim*. For Iran, see Azar Tabari, "Islam and the Struggle for Emancipation of Iranian Women," in *In the Shadow of Islam: The Women's Movement in Iran*, eds. Azar Tabari and Nahid Yeganeh (London: Zed Press, 1982), p.13.
[19] Sherifa Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling: Islamist Gender Ideology in Contemporary Egypt* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.108.

[20] John Williams, "A Return to the Veil in Egypt," *Middle East Review*, 11, 3, (1979), p.50.
[21] Zuhur, *Revealing Reveiling*, p.2. Zuhur found this ideal contradicted by the Yves St. Laurent line of headscarves available for purchase. See also Leila Hessini, "Wearing the *Hijab* in Contemporary Morocco: Choice and Identity," in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, and Power*, eds. Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.50.
[22] Williams, "A Return to the Veil," p.54.
[23] Homa Hoodfar, "Return to the Veil: Personal Strategy and Public Participation in Egypt," in *Working Women: International Perspectives on Labour and Gender Relations*, eds. Nanneke Redclift and M. Thea Sinclair (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.110–111; Arlene Elowe Macleod, *Accommodating Protest: Working Women and the New Veiling in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp.114, 121.
[24] Helen Watson, "Women and the Veil: Personal Responses to Global Process," in *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*, eds. Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (London: Routledge, 1994), p.148. Nadia is the first woman in the family to have a post-secondary education. She is now studying medicine at University.
[25] M. AlMunajjed, *Women in Saudi Arabia Today* (New York: St. Martin's Press,1997), p.47.
[26] *New Statesman*, 27 March 1992, cover page.
[27] *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, June 28, 1992, Section P.
[28] *L'Express*, (Quebec), November 17, 1994, cover page.
[29] *Le Nouvel Observateur*, September 28, 1994.
[30] *Toronto Star*, May 14, 1996, F5.
[31] *Vancouver Sun*, September 15, 1994, A18.
[32] *Montreal Gazette*, April 11, 1994, B3.
[33] *Toronto Star*, December 15, 1996, F4.
[34] Deborah Scroggins, "Women of the Veil: Islamic Militants Pushing Women Back to an Age of Official Servitude," *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, Sunday, June 28, 1992, p.P3.
[35] Jan Goodwin, *Price of Honor: Muslim Women Lift the Veil of Silence on the Islamic World*, (New York: Plume, 1994), p.262.
[36] Ibid., pp.55, 78–9, 81, 98, 101, 107–9, 293, 300; Scroggins, "Women of the Veil," p.P3
[37] Goodwin, *Price of Honor*, pp.112, 161, 186–7, 217, 247, 342. Goodwin presents some women who cover as not fundamentalists and fearing fundamentalism, p.85; Scroggins, "Women of the Veil," p.P2. Geraldine Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women*, (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), p.8.
[38] Goodwin, *Price of Honor*, pp.137, 175.
[39] Andrea B. Rugh, *Reveal and Conceal: Dress in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986).
[40] S. Brenner, "Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and the Veil," *American Ethnologist*, 23, 4, (1996).
[41] Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Revised ed, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), and *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, Trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1991).

[42] Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994), p.100.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil,* p.82.
[45] Ibid.
[46] T.J. Winter, "Desire and Decency in the Islamic Tradition," *Islamica* (United Kingdom), 1, 4, (January 1994), pp.11–12.
[47] Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*, p.107.
[48] Naheed Mustapha, "My Body is my Own Business," *Globe and Mail,* Facts and Arguments, Tuesday, June 29, 1993; Yusufali: "My Body is My Own Business," *The Toronto Star*, Tuesday, February 17,1998, C:1.
[49] Susie Orbach, *Fat is a Feminist Issue: A Self-Help Guide for Compulsive Eaters* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1979); Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993); Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (1991, 2nd Ed, New York: Anchor, 1992); Jane Ussher, *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex* (London: Penguin, 1997); Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: Pleasure Under Patriarchy," in *Feminism and Philosophy: Essential Readings in Theory, Reinterpretation, and Application*, eds. Nancy Tuana and Rosemarie Tong (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); A. Dworkin, "Pornography is a Civil Rights Issue," in *Debating Sexual Correctness: Pornography, Sexual Harassment, Date Rape, and the Politics of Sexual Equality*, ed. Adele M. Stan (New York: Delta, 1995).
[50] John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb and Richard Hollis, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972).
[51] MacKinnon, "Sexuality, Pornography, and Method," p.142.
[52] Michael F. Jacobson and Laurie Ann Mazur, *Marketing Madness: A Survival Guide for a Consumer Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp.84–5.
[53] Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, p.290. Also pp.246–7, 275.

IIIT Books-In-Brief Series is a valuable collection of the Institute's key publications written in condensed form to give readers a core understanding of the main contents of the original.

The need to challenge the negative stereotype of the veil as oppressive is urgent. It is on many people's minds and the debate on whether to wear or not to wear is becoming ever more heated as mainstream media equate it with Muslim backwardness and barbarity. This work focuses on the popular Western cultural view that the veil is oppressive for Muslim women and highlights the underlying patterns of power behind this constructed image of the veil. It examines the colonial roots of this negative stereotype and successfully challenges the arguments of liberal feminists such as Mernissi to assert that in a culture of consumerism, the veil can be experienced as a liberation from the tyranny of the beauty myth and the thin 'ideal' of woman.

Shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Zaytuna Institute

The Veil is a flashpoint in the current Islamic discourse. Many interesting pieces have been written, but few from insiders with feminist credentials. This book is must reading for those engaged in the current Muslim scene, East or West. Dr. Bullock's book deserves serious attention as it challenges the most deeply rooted assumptions we in the West have about the veil and its meaning.

Julian Bond, Director, Christian Muslim Forum

This is a timely book, more so than when originally published. The author's perspective is of a 'Western' woman who had misgivings about 'the veil', who then began wearing the hijab when she became a Muslim. It is a refreshing read, well-written, honest and genuinely interesting. Unlike much attention usually given to this issue the author has actually listened to Muslim women's experience of wearing hijab and lets them speak in their own words. I hope that this book will inform new readers so that they can reflect for themselves on this issue.

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