FEMINISM AND DIFFERENCE: THE PERILS OF WRITING AS A WOMAN ON WOMEN IN ALGERIA

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At the heart of the feminist project, East and West, is a desire to dismantle the existing order of things and reconstruct it to fit one's own needs. This desire is best expressed in Omar Khayyam's cry:

"Ah love! Could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it to the heart's desire!"[1]

However, feminists, East and West, differ in the grasp they have on this "sorry scheme of things" and the tools they use to "shatter it to bits." They also differ as to whether the process of remolding things can take place at all. Indeed, Western academic feminists can rediscover their womanhood, attempt to redefine it, and produce their own knowledge of themselves hampered only by what many perceive as male domination.[2] Ultimately, Western feminists operate on their own social and intellectual ground and under the unstated assumption that their societies are perfectible. In this respect, feminist critical practice takes on an air of normalcy. It appears as part of a reasonable (even if difficult) project for greater gender equality.

By contrast, the Algerian and Middle Eastern feminist project unfolds within an external frame of reference and according to equally external standards. Under these circumstances the consciousness of one's womanhood coincides with the realization that it has already been appropriated in one form or another by outsiders, women as well as men, experts in things Middle Eastern. In this sense, the feminist project is warped and rarely brings with it the potential for personal liberation that it does in this country or in Europe. The

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forms of expression used by Algerian feminists are, in fact, caught between three overlapping discourses, namely, the male discourse on gender difference, social science discourse on the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East, and academic discourses (whether feminist or protofeminist) on women from these same societies.

This article initially grew out of a preliminary reflection on the nature and specificity of U.S. feminist theory and on the ongoing search for a feminist epistemology. My forays into the production of U.S. feminist knowledge, at a time when feminism appears to be undergoing a crisis, impressed upon me the fact that academic feminism has yet to break away from the philosophical and theoretical heritage it has so powerfully questioned.[3] Knowledge is produced not only within a socioeconomic and political framework but also within an intellectual tradition with stated and unstated assumptions. Although it questions traditional assumptions, academic feminism has often neglected to investigate its own premises. If it were to do so more often, it might become apparent that "traditional" social science categories have not yet been transformed but have been given a different sex instead.[4]

When I turned my attention away from the center of the debate over feminist theory and epistemology to its North African and Middle Eastern periphery, for example, I noticed three intriguing phenomena. First, the interest of U.S. feminists in women from these parts of the world has spurred a growing literature that is noteworthy for its relative lack of theoretical import. With a few exceptions, women who write about North African and Middle Eastern women do not identify themselves as feminist, yet their work finds its legitimacy in academic feminism's need for information about their subject matter.[5] Second, "Eastern" feminists writing for a Western audience about women in their home countries have done so with the generally unstated assumption that U.S. feminist knowledge can be expanded or accommodated but seldom questioned.[6] U.S. minority women, in contrast, have consistently challenged academic feminist projects in a variety of ways. In so doing they have pointed out problem areas that feminist knowledge must address and resolve before it can claim to be an alternative to "traditional" knowledge.[7] Third, although U.S. feminists (like their European counterparts) have sought to define and carve out a space in which to ground their criticism,

"Eastern" feminists have simply adjusted their inquiry to fill the blanks in the geographical distribution made available to them by U.S. feminist liberalism.[8] These observations on feminist knowledge, East and West, led me to search for the connecting links between Western feminist knowledge writ large and constituted knowledge, through the study of the concrete case of Algeria. What I discovered was a continuity between the traditional social science modes of apprehending North African and Middle Eastern societies rooted as they are in French colonial epistemology and academic women's treatment from these societies. One continuity, for example, is expressed in the predominance of a "religious paradigm" that gives religion a privileged explanatory power.[10] Most academic feminist practice takes place within this paradigm, thereby reproducing its presuppositions and reinforcing its dominant position. This process takes place even when feminists claim they are aware of the paradigm's flaws.[11]

I also discovered a temporal and conceptual continuity between female (often protofeminist) and feminist discourses.[12] What was written about Algerian women by women in the first part of this century is reproduced in one form or another in the writings of contemporary French women and U.S. feminists about the same subject matter. More importantly, the themes defined by the French colonial or neocolonial discourse as significant for understanding Algerian women are the ones found today in Eastern feminists' writings.[13]

In the pages that follow I will describe some of these continuities and will suggest some of the ways in which poststructuralism impacts upon them. I will also discuss the need for reevaluating the feminist project within a humanistic/ethical framework.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCE AND FEMINIST PARADIGMS

The study of Middle Eastern and North African societies has been plagued by a number of conceptual and methodological problems that prompted the British sociologist Bryan S. Turner to say that it "lags behind other area studies in both theoretical and substantive terms." Indeed, it is "underdeveloped."[14] Scholarship on North African and Middle Eastern societies typically focuses on Islam as a privileged subject of inquiry whether it is dealt with as a religion or as a culture. Underlying the study of these societies are a

number of problematical assumptions. First, Islam is seen as a self-contained and flawed belief system impervious to change. In sociology, this assumption finds its theoretical justification in the work of Max Weber.[15] Second, Islamic civilization is assumed to have been in decline and to continue to decline. The "decline thesis," best exemplified in the work of H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen,[16] prompted David Waines to say that "the birth of Islam is also the genesis of its decline."[17] Attempts made by indigenous people to change their institutions are more often than not explained in terms of a return to Islam. This is well illustrated by the work of Clifford Geertz on what he calls "scripturalism."[18] Last but not least, it is assumed that "Islam cannot produce adequate, scientific knowledge of itself, since the political conditions of Islamic societies preclude critical, autonomous scholarship. Islam requires Western science to produce valid knowledge of the culture and social organization of the Islamic world."[19]

Such science has managed to keep the study of North Africa and the Middle East in a sort of intellectual ghetto where theoretical and methodological developments that take place in the mainstream of social science are somehow deemed inapplicable. For instance, up until recently, one could not talk about social classes in the Middle East but only of social hierarchies, or mosaics of people. One cannot speak about revolution but only of upheavals and coups. One still cannot talk about self-knowledge but only of "local knowledge" or "the native's point of view."[20]

Even when efforts are made by well-intentioned scholars to accommodate theoretical/methodological developments from other fields, they end up reinforcing the old problematical assumptions. For example, the recent focus on "popular culture" feeds into the view of Islam as divided up into the orthodox and the mystical. Similarly, the introduction of the concept of class in the study of the Middle East and North Africa has sometimes resulted in making proletarian rebels out of theologians and/or members of religious sects.[21]

A bird's-eye view of the literature by women, whether they are feminists or only have interests in women's questions, indicates that by and large they reproduce the problematical assumptions that underlie the area study of the Middle East and North Africa.

Academic women's work on Middle Eastern and North African women is dominated by the religion/tradition paradigm and is

characterized by a variant of what the late C. Wright Mills called "abstracted empiricism."[22] That is, the problems selected for study are limited by the method chosen to study them. Once researchers have decided on a functionalist/culturalist method, for example, they are unable to address anything but religion and tradition. The overall result is a reductive, ahistorical conception of women. The emphasis on the religion/tradition paradigm, a combination of orientalist[23] and evolutionary assumptions, constrains its critics by compelling them either to ritually refer to its parameters or to submit to them. Tradition in this case is seen as exemplified by the veil, seclusion, clitoridectomy, and so on.

Historically, of course, the veil has held an obsessive interest for many a writer. In 1829, for example, Charles Forster wrote *Mohammetanism Unveiled,* and Frantz Fanon, the revolutionary, wrote in 1967 about Algerian women under the caption: "Algeria Unveiled."[24] Even angry responses to this abusive imagery could not escape its attraction as when a Moroccan feminist titled her book: *Beyond the Veil.*[25] The persistence of the veil as a symbol that essentially stands for women illustrates the difficulty researchers have in dealing with a reality with which they are unfamiliar. It also reveals an attitude of mistrust. A veil is a hiding device; it arouses suspicion. Besides, veiling is close to masquerading so that studying women from societies where veiling exists is a form of theater! Some native (for example, "Eastern") feminists have pushed the theatrical imagery to its extreme by making the veil an integral part of the woman's persona.[26]

The evolutionary bias that suffuses most thinking about women in the Middle East and North Africa is expressed in a definite prejudice against Islam as a religion. Although U.S. feminists have attempted to accommodate Christianity and feminism and Judaism and feminism, Islam is inevitably presented as antifeminist.[27] What is at work here is not merely a plausible rationalist bias against religion as an impediment to the progress and freedom of the mind but an acceptance of the idea that there is a hierarchy of religions, with some being more susceptible to change than others. Like tradition, religion must be abandoned if Middle Eastern women are to be like Western women. As the logic of the argument requires, there can be no change without reference to an external standard deemed to be perfect.

Although religion is seen in Western societies as one institution

among many, it is perceived as the bedrock of the societies in which Islam is practiced. A ritual is established whereby the writer appeals to religion as *the* cause of gender inequality just as it is made the source of underdevelopment in much of modernization theory. In an uncanny way, feminist discourse on women from the Middle East and North Africa mirrors that of theologians' own interpretation of women in Islam. Academic feminists have compounded this situation by adding their own problematical specifications. They reduce Islam to one or two *sura,* or injunctions, such as those related to gender hierarchy and the punishment meted out to adulterous women (which is also applied to men).[28]

The overall effect of this paradigm is to deprive women of self-presence, of being. Because women are subsumed under religion presented in fundamental terms, they are inevitably seen as evolving in nonhistorical time. They have virtually no history. Any analysis of change is therefore foreclosed. When feminists "do" history, they generally appear to engage in an antihistory, where progress is measured in terms of a countback to the time where it all began, and all began to come unraveled. This means the time of the Koran for the female writer, just as it is the time of the Koran and the Traditions for the male writer.[29] The tenacious focus on religion in the scholarship on women in the Middle East and North Africa makes it the functional equivalent of fire in mythology and early scientific thought. A similar obsession/fascination with the mysterious power of fire dominated the "primitive" *as well as* the "scientific" mind up until the end of the eighteenth century.[30]

The question to raise at this point is this: Why hasn't academic feminism exposed the weaknesses of the prevailing discourse on women in the Middle East and North Africa? There have been articles and prefaces to anthologies that have denounced what Elizabeth Fernea and B.Q. Bezirgan have aptly referred to as "astigmatic writing" about women in the Middle East and North Africa.[31] Some studies have also attempted to break away from – although they have not displaced – the prevailing paradigm. It is also worth remembering that competing paradigms are "incommensurable" in that the criteria for judging their relative merits are not determined by value-neutral rules but lie within the community of scholars whose "expertise" has *produced* North Africa and the Middle East

as a field of knowledge.[32] Still, no sustained effort has been made to challenge systematically the epistemological and theoretical presuppositions of much of the scholarship on women.[33]

Difference, in general, whether cultural, ethnic, or racial, has been a stumbling block for Western social science from its very inception. Nineteenth-century European ethnology and anthropology were established precisely to study different peoples and their institutions. However, regardless of the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological inadequacies and uncertainties in the works of many classical anthropologists and ethnologists, their interest in "difference" was a function of their desire to understand their own institutions better. This was the case with Emile Durkheim's work on religion, Marcel Mauss on exchange, and Bronislaw Malinowski on the Oedipus complex to cite only a few. Although I do not wish to absolve Western anthropology of its Europocentrism, it showed, at least in its inception, some awareness of a common denominator between people of different cultures, a *human* bond. The notion of "cultural universals" or that of the "human mind," however problematic, are expressions of such a common link between various peoples.

Contemporary academic feminism appears to have forgotten this part of its intellectual heritage. Of course, counterposing feminist scholarship to social science may appear senseless. Aren't female social scientists part of the same society and intellectual milieu as males? Indeed they are. But, academic feminists have generally denounced conventional social science for its biases regarding women both in its theory and its practice. Specifically, they have shown that it has reduced women to one dimension of their lives (such as reproduction and housework) and failed to conceptualize their status in society as historically evolving. Academic feminism, therefore, has brought a breath of fresh air into social science discourse on women and held out the promise of a more even-handed, less-biased practice. It is surprising, then, when one sees that women in Algeria (or in any other part of the Third World) are dealt with precisely in the ways with which academic feminists do not wish to be dealt.

Women in Algeria are subsumed under the less-than-neutral label of "Islamic women" or "Arab women" or "Middle Eastern women." Because language produces the reality it names, "Islamic women" must by necessity be made to conform to the configura-

tion of meanings associated with the concept of Islam. The label affirms what ought to be seen as problematical. Whether the "Islamic women" are truly devout or whether the societies in which they live are theocracies are questions that the label glosses over.

The one-sidedness of this discourse on difference becomes grotesque if we reverse the terms and suggest, for example, that women in contemporary Europe and North America should be studied as Christian women! Similarly, the label "Middle Eastern women," when counterposed with the label "European women," reveals its unwarranted generality. The Middle East is a geographical area covering no less than twenty countries (if it is confined to the "Arab" East) that display a few similarities and many differences. Feminists study women in Victorian England or under the French Revolution; few would dare subsume French or English women under the all-encompassing label of "European women" or Caucasian women, as substantive categories of thought. Yet, a book on Egyptian women was subtitled "Women in the Arab World."[34] Michel Foucault may have been right when he asserted that "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting."[35]

There is a great continuity in the U.S. feminist treatment of difference within gender whether the difference is within or outside of U.S. society. In each case an attribute, whether physical (race or color) or cultural (religion or ethnicity), is used in an ontological sense. There is, however, an added feature to feminist modes of representing women from the Middle East and North Africa, and these modes reflect the dynamics of global politics. The political attitudes of "center" states are mirrored in feminist attitudes toward women from "peripheral" states. Elly Bulkin rightly notes that "women's lives and women's oppression cannot be considered outside the bounds of regional conflicts." She points out that Arab women are represented as being so different that they are deemed unable to understand or develop any form of feminism. When Arab women speak for themselves they are accused of being "pawns of Arab men."[36] The implication is that an Arab woman cannot be a feminist (whatever the term means) prior to disassociating herself from Arab men and the culture that supports them! In the end, global politics joins hands with prejudice, thereby closing a Western gynocentric circle based on misapprehended difference.[37]

The political bias in these representations of difference is best illustrated by the search of many feminists for the sensational and the uncouth. This search for the disreputable, which reinforces the notion of difference as objectified otherness, is often carried out with the help of Middle Eastern and North African women themselves. Feminism has provided a forum for these women to express themselves and on occasion for them to vent their anger at their societies. The exercise of freedom of expression often has a dizzying effect and sometimes leads to personal confession in the guise of social criticism. Individual women from the Middle East and North Africa appear on the feminist stage as representatives of the millions of women in their own societies. To what extent they do violence to the women they claim authority to write and speak about is a question that is seldom raised.

In assessing the issue of writing about Third World women, Gayatri C. Spivak points out that First World women and Western-trained women are complicitous in contributing to the continued "degradation" of Third World women whose "micrology" they interpret without having access to it. Although well taken, this view obscures the fact that complicity is often a conscious act involving social class position, psychological identification, and material interests. Of course, to include all "Western-trained" women in the pural "we," which also encompasses "First World" women, is to simplify the reality of the feminist encounter between Western and non-Western women. Unfortunately, academic feminist practice, just like that of its intellectual predecessors, is not pure on either side of difference. I, for one, refuse to be identified, even metaphorically, with Senanayak, the Indian antihero character who lends his expert knowledge to crush the revolution exemplified by "Dopti," a female revolutionary.[38] Affirming the existence of complicity is not sufficient. Indeed, the very act of translating this particular Indian short story for a U.S. audience did not bridge the chasm of cultural difference. It fits in with what Gaston Bachelard called the "museum of horrors." It documents the villainous acts of Indian men and the victimization of Indian women. The association of the Western and non-Western female reader with the process of victimization is an imaginative way of reducing the differential divide, but it does not fill it. And therein lies the dilemma of Third World women writing about Third World women.

WOMEN IN ALGERIA

As I have suggested, Euro-American and/or academic feminist discourse on women in Algeria reproduces the major elements of the prevailing social science paradigm. In addition, it makes explicit the connection between feminist or protofeminist practice and traditional geopolitics, of which colonialism and the international division of intellectual labor are a significant part. There is also continuity between nineteenth- and twentieth-century feminist and protofeminists writing about Algerian women. By and large, nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature on women in Algeria betrays a great deal of ambivalence. Male authors searched for women wherever they could find them, and although they bemoaned what they perceived as seclusion, they also expressed contempt for the libertines they encountered and surprise (rather than approval) before the unveiled rural women. Women writing from a social scientific perspective expressed their ambivalence in a slightly different mode, ostensibly empathizing with Algerian women they perceived as inferior and displaying unabashed contempt for Algerian men.[39]

A model of the protofeminist discourse on Algerian women is provided by Hubertine Auclert's *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie,* published in 1900.

Auclert sees that colonialism victimized women but even though she is aware of the excesses of the colonial order, she still advocates the Frenchification of women. She suggests, moreover, that French women should become the tools of such an endeavor! "Upon entering tents and bolted doors, they [French women] would familiarize Muslim women with our lifestyles and ways of thinking"! Their task would no doubt be easy, because, according to Auclert, Algerian women were at heart the daughters of the free-thinking women of pre-Islamic Arabia. The eloquence they displayed in court, writes the author, was such that "you would think you heard, resuscitated, the beautiful speakers of pagan Arabia." In other words, Islam, the obstacle to being French, was but a veneer for women. Through women, moreover, one can undo Islam. Religion is identified with men so that a step toward the Frenchification of women is the construction of a pre-Islamic female essence. That same religion was responsible for what Auclert felt was Algerian women's inability to experience passionate love as French women were assumed to do. Algerian

women were also found to be lacking a certain sensitivity that the French displayed because the latter read novels and had a different religion! In the end, the Algerian woman was perceived as living in limbo. "The Arab woman neither is nor does she feel at home at her husband's."[40]

In 1929, another French woman, Mathea Gaudry, a lawyer turned anthropologist, accepted the fact that she could not change the Algerian women's religious beliefs but did not give up the overall colonial project of Frenchification. Working with women from the Aurès mountains, she stated that "her intelligence would make the Auressian woman worthy of some education; what I mean is that we could teach her French, how to sew and run a home." As for the Algerian men from the region, she wrote that "their mental faculties appear to be stunted in the prime of life." Besides, the men are "inveterate liars" and display a "congenital nonchalance."[41] She too pursued the nostalgic notion of Algerian women's pre-Islamic past, to wit: "By subjecting her [*the* woman from Ammour mountain] to the authority of a master whom she must fear, Islamic law profoundly separated her from those berber and pre-Islamic women: Sadouk, Raytah and others whose independence is legendary."[42] Indeed, this is more a matter of legend than reality. The author adds that the nomadic woman's "more or less confused understanding of this legendary past" accounts for her flirtatious games with men. Why can't a woman be free to flirt without a rationale being found for her behavior in mythical time?

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, various monographs on women appeared with the aim of "guiding" Algerian women toward the ideal of French womanhood and downgrading their religion and customs, even at a time (the 1950s) when women were displaying the kind of behavior French women should have commended. In this respect it is noteworthy that only one study was written by two French women of an Algerian female revolutionary who became a *cause célèbre* during the war (1954-62).[43]

Germaine Tillion's work (*The Republic of Cousins*), which appeared to break new ground in bringing Algerian women together with southern Mediterranean women in the same theoretical framework, was also unable in the end to transcend the stumbling block of Islam. Algerian women emerged from the book at the bottom of the hierarchy of sisterhood. After asserting that Islam had little to do directly with what she termed the "degradation of the

female condition," Tillion was unable to keep religion analytically separate from her comparative evaluation of Algerian and European women living in the northern rim of the Mediterranean. Tillion also managed to neglect the colonial factor in her analysis of the dynamics of religion, political economy, and the reproduction of gender relations.[44]

In a book that purports to have been written in a spirit of sisterhood, Françoise Corrèze stated that "the donkey and the mule tied to a ring undoubtedly suffer less from man's [authority] than the women cloistered in the shed we entered." That *she,* a stranger, was allowed to penetrate the "cloisters" is a fact that she did not bother to ponder. Having apparently approached her study of rural women with a preconceived interpretative framework, she found herself compelled to explain away facts that did not conform to her ideas. For example, she wondered why a mother-in-law she met did not exhibit the signs of the mythical "powerful mother-in-law" and concluded that "perhaps she was once [powerful]."[45]

The author's gaze at the Algerian female Other dwelled on women's postures, gestures, and clothes, and it studiously noted whether women's clothes were clean or dirty. In the process, the reader is not always told about the nature of the social changes that have affected the rural communities studied, although signs of such changes abound almost in spite of the author's will.

In 1980, Juliette Minces produced an essay on women in Algeria (in a book that, naturally, covers "the Arab World") in which she denied women any selfhood or ability to think. Women's participation in the war is presented as the result of men's will and manipulation. Her contempt for women is revealed in her remark that Algerian women chose Islam over colonialism. She, the scientist, tells women that "they have no consciousness of the double alienation they underwent"! Yet, she adds, "they had access to French society and were open to new ideas"![46] Echoing Minces, U.S. feminist Judith Stiehm has written that "the French held the Muslim culture in disdain because of its treatment of women." Using as her main source a State Department area handbook for Algeria, Stiehm revealed her ignorance of her subject matter by making factually incorrect statements. For example, she wrote that "as Muslim women move out of seclusion they tend to enter segregated schools, offices and/or factories."[47] As a matter of fact,

offices are not segregated and what single-sex schools remain were inherited from the French era. In addition, the state has been implementing a policy of coeducation.

In a book published in 1980 entitled *Femmes d'Islam, ou le Sexe Interdit* (Women of Islam or the forbidden sex), encompassing North Africa, Renée Pelletier and Autilio Gaudio engaged in another diatribe against Islam, blaming it for, among other things, the Algerian president's alleged unwillingness to "show his wife in public." In fact, the current president does appear with his wife in public, although he may not "show" her! The authors' analysis of the Koran is based on one *sura*, just as the rest of their essay is based on anecdotal information gleaned from one book written in the 1960s supplemented by images from a short film. What is most noteworthy about this book, however, are the leading questions used in a questionnaire meant to elicit responses about women in Morocco. For example:

> Question #10: "Have you felt sexual attraction for boys?"
> Question #13: "Have you already kissed a boy on the lips who is not your fiance or husband?"
> Question #2: "How did you perceive your mother's condition when you were a child?"
> Question #5: "When have you, for the first time, felt the weight of traditions and prohibitions?"

In conclusion, the authors assert that "this study could be applied to all three countries of the Maghreb."[48] On the other side of difference, they must be, they are, all alike.

Echoing Stiehm, another U.S. feminist political scientist, Kay Boals, has written that the nature of female/male relations in Algeria "elicited contempt and derision from the colonizer." Also of interest is the typology of forms of consciousness that Boals set up to explain the behavior of colonized people, blacks, women, and homosexuals. Such individuals exhibit a type of consciousness that falls in one of six categories, ranging from "traditional" to "traditionalist, reformist, assimilationist, revolutionary," and "transforming" (which an earlier draft of the article termed "modernizing"). The author asserted that Algerian males are definitely "traditionalist" but women are "transforming." Indeed, what women "aspire to corresponds more closely to patterns of male-female relations in European than in traditional Muslim culture." A problem arises, however, when one turns to the defini-

tions of these types of consciousness. The "traditionalist" is the man who "continues to reaffirm the criteria of judgement of his own traditional culture or religion but he is unable to do so with internal conviction. There is thus a strong internal incoherence between emotion and thinking, between what one would like to believe and what one 'knows in one's bones.'"[49]

No such conflict should exist among women whose consciousness is transforming. Yet "Algerian women are eager to change the traditional patterns but are somewhat inhibited in doing so by the internal psychic ambivalence created by the desire to affirm the Algerian heritage and culture." The "transforming consciousness" is defined as that which feels "genuinely free to forge new combinations of personality traits . . . without the need . . . to imitate the model of the European." If this is the case then one wonders why Algerian culture or heritage would be an obstacle to acquiring such a consciousness unless it is deemed inadequate and therefore something that ought to be rejected. Indeed, the author has defined "traditional consciousness" as that which is characterized by "a calm conviction of superiority over others and a sense of being at the center of the cosmos." The ideal human type of this consciousness is found in the person of Al Khidr Husayn, the first editor of the journal of Al Azhar University in Cairo. This creature, "although writing in the 1930's apparently remained essentially unaffected by the British occupation!"[50] In other words, the colonial/European factor defines a catch-22 situation. If you fall prey to it you are an "anomaly" in the sense that you wish for change deemed impossible to obtain; if you don't you are still anomalous because you are defined as "traditional." It is worth noting that the author does not provide any information about having interviewed or observed the females and males whose psyche she has furnished with ambivalence, contradictions, inhibitions, and anomaly.

The repetitive nature of the prevailing paradigm stifles the mind and dulls the senses. At the very least, it has no aesthetic value; it is like wearing the same clothes all the time. However, its ultimate effect is to preclude any understanding of Algerian women *in their lived reality*: as subjects in their own right. Instead, they are reified, made into mere bearers of unexplained categories. Algerian women have no existence outside these categories; they have no individuality. What is true of one is true of all; just as what is true

of Algerian women is also held to be true of all women deemed to be like them over the space generously defined as the "Muslim world" or the "Arab world." This "worlding" of the female world is another instance of the unquestioned practive of "abstracted empiricism."

How, then, can an Algerian woman write about women in Algeria when her space has already been defined, her history dissolved, her subjects objectified, her language chosen for her? How can she speak without saying the same things?[51] The Algerian case supports Foucault's contention about Western culture that "the most tenacious subjection of difference is undoubtedly that maintained by categories."[52] What is needed is a phenomenology of women's lived experience to explode the constraining power of categories. Such a phenomenology would not be a mere description of the subjective meaning of women's experience. Rather, it would be the search for the organizing principles of women's lived reality as it intersects with men's.[53] To study women from a phenomenological perspective is different from merely interviewing them to elicit from them information about their lives that *confirms our* conceptions of *them.*[54]

The fetishism of the concept, Islam, in particular, obscures the living reality of the women and men subsumed under it. North African and Middle Eastern societies are more complex and more diverse than is admitted, and cannot be understood in terms of monolithic, unitary concepts. Religion cannot be detached from the socioeconomic and political context within which it unfolds. And religion can not be seen as having an existence independent of human activity. As the product of human activity, it is subject to change, if not in content at least in function. To understand the role of religion in women's lives, we must identify the conditions under which it emerges as a significant factor, as well as those that limit its scope. In addition, we must address the ways in which religious symbols are manipulated by both women and men in everyday life as well as in institutional settings. Finally, we should refrain from thinking in terms of a "Middle East" and realize that what is useful to geopolitics is not necessarily so to sociology. Concrete women (like men) live in concrete societies and *not* in an ideologically uniform space. There are Turkish women and Egyptian women and Algerian women. Subsuming some under others results in obscuring, rather than improving, our understanding of gender relations.

CONCLUSION

This bird's-eye view of feminist discourse on women in Algeria points to the necessity of asking anew a question that might sound embarrassing: What is the nature of the feminist project? What is its relation to women in other places? Is there something at the heart of academic feminism that is inescapably Western gynocentric; that is, must it inevitably lead to the exercise of discursive power by some women over others?

To subscribe to the notion that the metaphysics of difference-as-misrepresentation is inescapable is self-defeating and betrays resistance to changing the intellectual status quo. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida upholds the view (shared by some Third World feminists) that ethnocentrism is necessarily irrevocable on the grounds that ethnology is a European science. He also adds that deconstruction is inscribed in the very language of European social science.[55] Read in an unorthodox fashion, this means that the metaphysics that sustains ethnocentrism also sustains deconstruction, a destructuring activity. In spite of its honest recognition of the ethnocentric core of social science, this view appears to legitimate its own existence. For if ethnocentrism reproduces itself in an endless cycle, the language of ethnocentrism may not be superseded; it can only be deconstructed. What applies to ethnocentrism also applies to the Western gynocentric conception of difference.

If academic feminism cannot be allowed to hide behind a deconstructionist approach to legitimate its misapprehension of difference within gender, it should not be allowed to seek refuge in the Foucauldian conception of power and language either. Foucault's conception of power as being decentered has legitimized the view, among some academic feminists according to which power over women-in-general is diffuse. In so doing, the actual instrumentality of power that some women (for example, academic women) exercise over other women (such as Third World women) is neglected. Similarly, subsuming all reality under discourse, as Foucault does, has resulted in a shift of focus from women's lived reality to endless discoursing about it. It is true that a feminist engaged in the act of representing women who belong to a different culture, ethnic group, race, or social class wields a form of power over them; a power of interpretation. However, this power is a peculiar one. It is borrowed from the society at large which is

male-centered. It is borrowed power that gives academic feminists engaged in interpreting difference status and credibility. But, when the power of men over women is reproduced in the power of women over women, feminism as an intellectual movement presents a caricature of the very institutions it was meant to question. The misrepresentation of "different" women is a form of self-misrepresentation. It bespeaks a repression of one's femaleness and glosses over the fact that the representer is also engendered and remains far from having achieved the freedom and capacity to define herself.

Just as some men's inability (or reluctance) to accept sexual difference as the expression of modes of being human has led them to formulate a sociobiological conception of women, Western gynocentrism has led to an essentialism of otherhood. Both phenomena are products of a larger differentialist trend that has affected Western Europe and North America since the end of World War Two. The collapse of the colonial empires, the rise of consumer societies, and the crises of the late capitalist states have formed the context within which assertions of "difference" have emerged. The celebration of difference between women and men, homosexuals and heterosexuals, the mad and the sane, has since become the unquestioned norm.

What is problematical in this conception of difference is that it affirms a new form of reductionism. The rejection of humanism and its universalistic character in discourse analysis and deconstruction deprives the proponents of difference of any basis for understanding the relationship between the varieties of modes of being different in the world. Difference becomes essentialized. It is not accidental that Foucault, for example, contributed little to our understanding of what it means to be mad, female or male. What he did was to explain the *category* of madness and of sexuality. The discourse and deconstruction approaches to difference obviate the crucial issue of *intersubjectivity*. Although Derrida warns against an ontological conception of difference, he is unable to avoid affirming difference as unmediated otherness. He locates difference in language, thus removing it from the realm of shared experiences that language may not necessarily capture.

The inability to address the intersubjective foundation of difference is clearly a significant problem in academic feminism. In the United States, this problem is not merely the result of some

feminists being influenced by Foucault or Derrida. It is also related to an intellectual tradition marked by pragmatism, a byproduct of positivism, that has characterized U.S. institutions of higher learning since the nineteenth century. In feminist scholarship, this has meant giving the female *experience* (read U.S. or "Western") a privileged ontological status.

To take intersubjectivity into consideration when studying Algerian women or other Third World women means seeing their lives as meaningful, coherent, and understandable instead of being infused "by us" with doom and sorrow. It means that their lives like "ours" are structured by economic, political, and cultural factors. It means that these women, like "us," are engaged in the process of adjusting, often shaping, at times resisting and even transforming their environment. It means they have their own individuality; they are "for themselves" instead of being "for us." An appropriation of their singular individuality to fit the generalizing categories of "our" analyses is an assault on their integrity and on their identity. Intersubjectivity alerts us to the common bond that ties women and men of different cultures together. It is a relative safeguard against the objectification of others, a reminder that the other is just as entitled as I am to her/his humanity expressed in her/his cultural mode.[56]

For the intersubjective component of experience to become evident in the study of difference within and between genders, a certain form of humanism must be reaffirmed. But the rejection of humanistic philosophy, which subsumed woman under man while making claims to universalism, has so far been replaced with the essentialism of difference.

It is often argued, of course, that humanism erases individuality, difference; that any return to a humanistic thought is self-defeating. Yet, it appears that the essentializing of difference between women has resulted in the erasure of "other" women. When these are locked into the categories of religion, race, or color, their own individuality as women has already been erased. For example, a "Muslim woman" is no longer a concrete individual. She is not Algerian, or Yemeni; she is an abstraction in the same way as a "woman of color" is. Their assumed uniqueness dissolves their concrete reality. They cannot by definition be compared with "First World" women. Indeed, what distinguishes them from the latter is also what is seen as accounting for their very essence.

Antihumanism has not provided any authority higher than itself that could monitor its excesses. Old-style humanism, in contrast, and despite its shortcomings, makes itself vulnerable to criticism by appealing to its unfulfilled promise of a more reasonable rationalism or a more egalitarian universalism. Indeed, the universalistic claim to a supracultural human entity embodied in reason provided colonized societies with the tool necessary to regain their freedom. Colonized women and men were willing to give up their lives in order to capture their share of humanity celebrated but denied by colonial powers. But what does antihumanism offer "different" peoples? On what grounds (moral or otherwise) can powerless people struggle against their relegation to the prison house of race, color, and nationality into which antihumanism locks them?

There is a sense in which the antihumanist celebration of unmediated "difference" may denote resistance to accepting difference as the other side of sameness. It is not accidental that the rise of antihumanism coincided with the collapse of the French colonial empire, more specifically the end of the Algerian war (and it was at this time that both Foucault and Derrida began publishing). Yet, antihumanism, as a philosophy, holds a great attraction for some feminists because of its nihilistic questioning of all (including moral/ethical) constraints on action or on thought. This is, of course, the very reason it is fraught with dangers as soon as discoursing about others' (not only men's but women's) subjectivity is at stake. To what extent can Western feminism dispense with an ethics of responsibility when writing about "different" women? Is the subject "women" free of all constraints only because women are the researchers? The point is neither to subsume other women under one's own experience nor to uphold a separate truth for them. Rather, it is to allow them to *be* while recognizing that what they are is just as meaningful, valid, and comprehensible as what "we" are. They are not the antithesis of "ourselves" that justifies "our" studying them in ways we do not study "ourselves."

Heidegger's letter on humanism offers an example of the kinds of questions that might be posed in order to reorient our thinking on humanism. We need to ask what is the "humanitas of homo humanus?" What is woman's/man's place in history? Is woman/man "a specter, a spectator or a creator?" What would a "humanism

in a new dimension" be like? A new humanism requires a more original reexperiencing of what it is to be human. This involves a process of "questioning, etymologizing, and historicizing." Although Heidegger's answers are ambiguous, they nevertheless point to the importance of history, language, and ethics in reexploring humanistic thought. When seen as a "process of coming to the word," humanism precludes the assumption of woman's/man's domination by the word, a tenet of the antihumanist discursive approach to history.[57]

Finally, being aware that woman/man plays a role in history that requires specification points to the ethical component of human activity and thought. Indeed, when feminists essentially deny other women the humanity they claim for themselves, they dispense with any ethical constraint. They engage in the act of splitting the social universe into "us" and "them," "subjects" and "objects." This propensity to apprehend social reality in terms of binary oppositions is a contradictory element in feminist thought. Feminists have criticized the social and natural sciences precisely because they use dichotomous categories that assign women one attribute or role, thereby simplifying the far more complex reality of women's lives.

The split vision of the world that relegates non-Western women to a residual category, where fancy more than fact rules, is a significant error in feminist scholarship as a whole. It can be corrected only if and when Western feminists are ready and willing to think differently about the variety of modes of being female, including their own. They must recognize that knowledge of North African/Third World women is not given all at once. It is, like knowledge of women in Western societies, a process of sifting the true from the false and making visible that which remains submerged. It is historical and has a rationality of its own which human reason *can* comprehend.

As it now stands, difference is seen as mere division. The danger of this undeveloped view lies in its verging on *indifference*.[58] In this sense, *anything* can be said about women from other cultures as long as it appears to document their differentness from "us." This bespeaks a lack of concern for the complexity of difference as well as a simplification of difference to mean "particularity," that is to say, unmediated singularity.[59] Because the North African and Middle Eastern cultures have long been stereotyped, because the

feminist movement ought to be a movement toward human liberation from epistemological domination, women from these cultures cannot satisfy themselves with a mere act of negation when they write about themselves. They must shoulder a double burden, namely, to work toward an epistemological break with the prevailing paradigm *and* to reevaluate the structure of gender relations in their own societies.

History has dealt these women a hard blow. It held them hostage to colonial or imperial ventures and delivered them to travelers, chroniclers, painters, and anthropologists of both sexes who mused about their lives. Now, they are in a position from which they could recapture the dispersed fragments of their selves and put them back together in combinations that the motley crowd of their observers may not suspect. The task is enormous but necessary. If feminism is seen as a critical intellectual movement, "Eastern" feminism should attempt to bring about that intellectual renaissance that men have so far failed to carry out.

This requires reflecting on the roles that female intellectuals should play in effectively promoting women's needs. It is crucial here to ponder the adequacy of the means for achieving these ends. To think of feminism in the singular is sociologically inappropriate. Similarly, French or U.S. styles of feminisms may not be functional in different socioeconomic and political contexts. What form should women's effort to reach gender equality take in the various societies of North Africa and the Middle East? Is feminism, as understood in Western societies, women's only avenue toward social change? Such questions may not be answered if Eastern feminists think of their audience as residing here instead of in their societies of origin.

There is a sense in which the issue for North African and Middle Eastern academic women is not the applicability of U.S. or French feminist theories. That is a luxury one cannot afford. The question is to define a critical writing space within which women who are not making their careers in Western universities, but who are the subjects of our writing, can identify. This requires resisting the temptation of seeing in U.S. or French women's present needs our ideals. It also calls for a comprehensive exploring and understanding of the body of knowledge produced by the indigenous peoples of these areas of the world. To selectively pinpoint instances of women's "victimization," as is often done, obscures the

complexity of gender processes and presents a truncated image of an intellectual heritage whose existence is barely suspected by all but a few experts. If this means to reinvent the wheel, so be it! The old wheel has not worked too well. Perhaps a new one might be an improvement on the old.

A failure to do so will inevitably result in storytelling. That can be a rewarding endeavor. Having told his wonderful story several times, Othello remarked that Desdemona "devoured up my discourse," and "my story being done she gave me for my pains a world of kisses." However, Othello was also devoured by his own discourse. In the end he bade Lodovico tell his story:

> "And say besides that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and turbaned Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the State,
> I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
> And smote him—thus" (He stabs himself) [60]

If discourse can be murderous, speech may never rise above mere talk. In the words of Dostoevsky, some people "may be able to live in dark cellars for forty years and never open their mouth[s], but the moment they get into the light of day and break out they talk and talk and talk". . . Isn't the whole point to have a *voice*?[61]

NOTES

1. Omar Khayyam, *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), quatrain 99.
2. The term "Western" here implies no particular ontology and is essentially inadequate. It is used in this text to refer to women who are identified as belonging to what is geographically and culturally presented as the "West" or the "First World." It is as inadequate as the term "Eastern," which I will also use.
3. See Marnia Lazreg, "The Epistemological Obstacle of Experience: A Critical Neo-Rationalist Approach" (Paper presented at the Pembroke Center Conference on Feminism, Theory, Politics, Brown University, 14-16 Mar. 1985).
4. This issue is best illustrated in the debate over what constitutes feminist science. See Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Myra Jehlen, "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism," *Signs* 6 (Summer 1981).
5. Significantly, the intense current interest in "Middle Eastern women" is occurring at a time when the "Middle East" has been neutralized as a self-sustaining political and economic force.
6. For an example of accommodation, see Mervat Hatem, "The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt," *Feminist Studies* 12 (Summer 1986): 251-74. The author displays no

awareness of the criticism leveled at the concept of "patriarchy," using Egypt to bear out the universalistic claims of U.S. feminist theory of patriarchy.

7. Examples of minority women's questioning of academic feminism include *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983); and Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984). See also Maria Lugones and Victoria Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You? Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism, and the Demand for the Woman's Voice," *Women's Studies International Forum* 6, no. 6 (1983): 573-89.

8. Up to now, attempts at defining a space from which to address the woman question have been reduced to accepting or rejecting Islam as a religion. Thus, "Eastern" feminist writing oscillates between adopting or rejecting Western feminist modes of analysis. For example, Aziza Al Hibri makes lists of the positive and distorted aspects of the Koran in "A Study of Islamic Herstory: Or How Did We Ever Get into This Mess?" in her edited *Women and Islam* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 207-20. Historians of religion Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith have made similar attempts in "Eve: Islamic Image of Woman," in *Women and Islam*, 135-44. Azar Tabari's and Nahid Yeganeh's exchange on whether (Shi'a) Islam can accommodate gender equality must be understood within the context of contemporary Iran where Shi'ism is in power. They, too, yield to the prevailing paradigm pitting modernity against tradition in *In the Shadow of Islam: The Women's Movement in Iran* (London: Zed Press, 1982), esp. pt. 1, 1-75.

9. The connection between the colonial discourse and contemporary women's and/or feminist discourses on Third World women is explored in some detail by Chandra Talpade Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Boundary 2* 12 (Spring/Fall 1984): 333-58; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 154-84. For an exploration of the relationship between French and American orientalisms see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), esp. chap. 3, pt. 3.

10. By "paradigm," I mean the "rules, empirical and theoretical laws, experimental techniques, methodological directives, and even metaphysical principles that are involved in any particular scientific achievement." See Gary Gutting, ed., *Paradigms and Revolutions: Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), esp. introduction, 1-21. The rise and fall of paradigms in science is classically discussed in Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Cf. Michel Foucault's use of "discourse." See Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2d. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), esp. 197-204.

11. Algeria may be seen as an "ideal type" in which colonial domination, social science, and interest in women display their intimate connections. Disclaiming traditional/Europocentric conceptions of Islam has become part of a ritual among feminist writers who nonetheless use the very language denounced. See, for example, Fatima Mernissi's introduction to the first edition of *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1975); and Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Fall 1982): 521-34.

12. Making a distinction as to who is and is not a feminist – among Western women writing about Algerian or "Middle Eastern" women – has become nearly futile. U.S. academic feminism's market for "Middle Eastern women" is such that even writers who do not profess to feminism feel free to borrow its language: "private sphere," "sexual segregation," and "women's subordination," for example. Here, "protofeminist" refers to women writers who, within the Algerian context, at the turn of the century undertook the study of women with the purpose of making social policy recommendations. Huber-

tine Auclert, for example, was active in petitioning colonial authorities to outlaw polygamy. She was also aware of the less-than-equal status of French women who lacked the right to vote. See Hubertine Auclert, *Les Femmes arabes en Algérie* (Paris: Société d'Editions Literaires, 1900).

13. Although U.S. women writing about Eastern women have no direct colonial involvement, their discourse still reflects the direct domination in *all* spheres of socio-economic and intellectual life of subjugated peoples. Popular culture in the United States upholds a view of "Islamic" societies that bears strong resemblances to French colonial and postcolonial female writers' perspectives. Were it not for the entrenched prejudices against "Islam," certain critiques would not have been necessary. See Elizabeth Fernea and B.Q. Bezirgan, eds., *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), esp. the introduction, xvii-xxxvi; Cynthia Nelson, "Public and Private Politics: Women in the Middle Eastern World," *American Ethnologist* 1 (August 1974): 551-63. See also Susan Dorsky's *Women of 'Amran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986), esp. the conclusion, for recent disclaimers of "Islamic" female victimization.

14. Bryan S. Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), 1.

15. See Max Weber's study of Islam in *Economy and Society*, esp. vol. 3; and Bryan S. Turner's critique of it in *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: Routlege & Kegan Paul, 1974).

16. For a critique of H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen's *Islamic Society and the West*, see Roger Owen, "The Middle East in the Eighteenth Century: An "Islamic Society" in Decline?" *Review of Middle East Studies* 1 (1975): 101-12.

17. David Waines, quoted in Turner, *Weber and Islam*, 6.

18. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), esp. 56-89.

19. Turner, *Weber and Islam*, 6-7.

20. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), chap. 8.

21. Jacques Berque wants "to give a privileged place, at least temporarily, to the marginal, the local, the peripheral" in Maghrebin history in order to discover, among other things, the "faults of the established order." See his *Ulemas, fondateurs, insurgés du Maghreb* (Paris: Sindbad, 1982), 16.

22. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), chap. 2.

23. Juliette Minces, *La Femme dans le monde arabe* (Woman in the Arab world) (Paris: Editions Mazarines, 1980). The recent English translation of the title was The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society (London: Zed Press, 1980). This was apparently done in an effort to keep the orientalist conception of women alive. "Orientalism" refers to the view according to which the "Orient" is antithetical to and radically different from the "West." Thus, Minces is able to use the totalizing as well as reductive category of "obedience" to capture the essence of difference so conceived.

24. Cited in Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 268; and see Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 34-67.

25. See Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil.*

26. See Leila Ahmed, "Islamic Women in Middle Eastern History" (Paper presented at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College, 12 Nov. 1985).

27. Feminist theology also suffers from a religious bias. Rosemary R. Reuther is eager to preserve the "Judeo-Christian affirmation that the divine is one," leaving out Islam's emphasis on the unity of the divine. See her *Sexism and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).

28. See Eliz Sanasarian's *The Women's Rights Movement in Iran: Mutiny, Appeasement, and Repression* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 12, which studies feminism as a social movement. Even radicals who avoid religion still view women as hopeless victims of a reified culture where heterosexual love seems impossible. See Hatem, 258-62. Turkish feminists are proud of the state which secularized their society, but they are often unable to see the complex interaction between religion and state which might play a role in structuring gender relations. For example, see Deniz Kandiyoti, "Sex-Roles and Social Change: A Comparative Appraisal of Turkey's Women," *Signs* 3 (Autumn 1977): 57-73; and Binnaz (Sayari) Toprak, "Religion and Turkish Women," in *Women in Turkish Society*, ed. Nermin Abadan-Unat (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1981), 281-93.
29. See Margaret Smith, *Rabi'a Al Adawiya and Her Fellow Saints in Islam* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1974). Smith's work on the Sufi mystic has been faithfully followed by Ahmed, who argues that Sufism provided women with a form of liberation from the constraints of what Smith perceived as "orthodox" Islam (see Ahmed's "Islamic Women in Middle Eastern History"). But Sufism finds its roots and justification in the Koran and cannot easily be placed in opposition to "Islam."
30. Gaston Bachelard, *La Psychanalyse du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).
31. See Fernea and Bezirgan, xvii-xxxvi.
32. There are works that consciously attempt to deviate from the prevailing paradigm as, for example, those cited in note 13. Among the most noteworthy are Andrea Rugh's *Family in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984); and Judith Tucker's *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). However, they have not constructed a competing paradigm.
33. Methodological/theoretical issues are discussed in some detail in Rosemary Sayigh, "Roles and Functions of Arab Women: A Reappraisal," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3 (Autumn 1981): 258-74; Judith Tucker, "Problems in the Historiography of Women in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (1983): 324-36; and Nikki Keddie, "Problems in the Study of Middle Eastern Women," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1979): 225-40. Sayigh is the only author to have linked the practice of orientalism to the biases inherent in the study of "Arab women." The typical focus on religion in much of orientalist scholarship does not mean writers assert that ideas are the motor of Middle Eastern history. Rather, the argument is that *religious beliefs* keep women, men, and their institutions in the Middle East and in North Africa from evolving toward the Western type of secularization and "modernization."
34. See Nawal Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980).
35. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* ed. D.B. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 154.
36. Elly Bulkin, "Semite vs. Semite/Feminist vs. Feminist," in *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Seminism and Racism,* ed. Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith (Brooklyn: Long Haul Press, 1984), 167, 168.
37. I am using the term "gynocentric," as suggested by Elizabeth Weed, associate director of the Pembroke Center, Brown University, to refer to the situation whereby some women as a group exercise discursive power over other women whom they exclude from their frame of reference.
38. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "'Darupadi' by Mahasveta Devi," in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 261-82, esp. translator's foreword. Senanyak's expertise is presumably similar to that of academic feminists' scholarship on Third World women: it can equally harm.
39. This article is not concerned with works of fiction on women in Algeria.
40. Hubertine Auclert, 26, 84, 91, 128. Even though Auclert was anticlerical, she shared with her contemporaries the view that Islam was inferior to Christianity.

41. Mathea Gaudry, *La Femme chaouia de l'Aurès* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929), 287, 69, 84-85.
42. Mathea Gaudry, *La Société féminine du Djebel Amour et au Ksel* (Alger: Societé Algérienne D'Impressions Diverses, 1961), 426.
43. See Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi, *Djamila Boupacha* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).
44. Germaine Tillion, *Le Harem et les cousins* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), esp. 199-212. The book was translated as *The Republic of Cousins* (London: Al Saqui Books, 1983). Despite her mythic use of neolithic exigencies, Tillion was able to place Islam on a par with Christianity: "In Islam just as in Christianity, the Mediterranean woman was constantly deprived of her rights, here in spite of the French Revolution; there in spite of the Koran" (p. 175).
45. Françoise Corrèze, *Les Femmes des Mechtas* (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1976), 41, 42, 115.
46. Juliette Minces, 111-36, esp. 117, 118.
47. Judith Stiehm, "Algerian Women: Honor, Shame, and Islamic Socialism," in *Women in the World: A Comparative Study*, ed. Lynne B. Iglitzin and Ruth Ross (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio Books, 1976), 232, 240.
48. Autilio Gaudio and Renée Pelletier, *Femmes d'Islam ou le sexe interdit* (Paris: Denoël, 1980), 104, 105, 153.
49. Kay Boals, "The Politics of Cultural Liberation: Male-Female Relations in Algeria," in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. Berenice A. Carroll (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 203, 205.
50. Ibid., 196, 205, 201, 195.
51. Algerian academic feminist thought is an expression of the complex interaction between its colonial background, socialist ideals, and the continued French domination of Algerian universities. Examples of the range of their writings are Feriel Lalami Fates, "A corps perdu. . .ou des activités corporelles à caractère ludique des femmes travailleuses [Région d'Alger]," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 32 (June 1986): 91-99; Naziha Hamouda, "Les Femmes rurales et la production poétique," *Peuples Méditerranéens* 6, nos. 22-23 (1983): 267-79; and Fatiha Hakiki, "Le Travail féminin, emploi salarié et le travail domestique," *Actes des Journées d'Etudes et de Reflexion sur les Femmes Algéréennes, 3-6 mai 1980, Cahiers du C.D.S.H.* no. 3 (1980): 35-107. See also Fatiha Hakiki and Claude Talahite, "Human Sciences Research on Women in Algeria," in *Social Science Research and Women in the Arab World* (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), 82-93.
52. Foucault, 186.
53. Fatima Mernissi's *Le Maroc raconté par ses femmes* (Rabat: Société Marocaine des Editeurs Réunis, 1984) purports to give a voice to illiterate women in Morocco. Yet the text reveals a narcissistic attempt to speak for other women while rising above them. Nayra Atiya's *Khul Khaal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982) constitutes another instance of "giving" a voice to illiterate or poor women. Both Mernissi and Atiyah raise highly problematic questions concerning representation of poor and illiterate women for both national and international audiences.
54. I am working on a methodology rooted in Husserlian phenomenology.
55. Jacques Derrida, *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), 414.
56. This does not mean a return to a narrow-minded cultural functionalism. For example, to argue that the "veil" gives women a sense of selfhood is just as unacceptable as Patricia Jeffery's describing a veiled woman as "anonymous, a non-person, unapproachable, just a silent being skulking along, looking neither left nor right." See her *Frog in a Well* (London: Zed Press, 1979), 4. Veiling is a historical phenomenon that can be understood and explained. But, the meaning of the veil varies from individual to individual.

57. Robert Cousineau, *Heidegger, Humanism, and Ethics* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 9. This book reproduces substantial sections of Heidegger's letter. See also pp. 7, 9, 47.
58. See Henri Lefebvre, *Le Manifeste différentialiste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), esp. 93-145.
59. Cousineau, 48.
60. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello* (New York: Signet, 1963), 56, 163.
61. Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground," in *Great Short Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 293-94.