

# Arab Women, Media, and Sexuality

## Conference Programme

**8:45 – 9:15**                    **Registration, coffee, and tea**  
**9:15– 9:20**                    **Welcome and announcements**

**9:25 – 10:40**                **Taster plenary**  
(Bowland Auditorium)  
Chair: Dr. Ann Kaloski-Naylor

- 1- Stefanie Van de Peer: Tunisian Women before and after the Jasmine Revolution: a cross-media exploration of representation
- 2- Steven C. Koehn: The Arab Feminism of YouTube: A Joint Media and Narrative Analysis
- 3- Salam Al-Mahadin: The Hijab: New Musings on an Old Debate (long-distance presentation)

**10:40 – 10:55**                **Coffee and tea**

**11:00 – 12:30**                **Concurrent panels (1 and 2)**

**Panel 1: Cultural Products: TV and Talk Shows**  
(BS/008)  
Chair: Sarah Harper

- 1- Nay El Rahi : Sexuality on Lebanese television: Case of Severe Schizophrenia
- 2- Ehab Galal: Women on Islamic satellite TV: room for sexuality?
- 3- Reem Abd Ulhamid: Muslim discourse on women's sexuality: the case of Iqraa TV (2009) (long-distance presentation)

**Panel 2: Cultural Products: Advertisements and Drama**  
(Bowland Auditorium)  
Chair: Abigail Tazzyman

- 1- Çiçek Coşkun: Modernization And Women In Tunisian Films
- 2- Souad Belhorma: Beauty Sells best: The Representation of Women in Commercial Advertisements (long-distance presentation)

**12:30 – 1:15**                **Lunch in the Treehouse**

**1:15 – 2:30                      Concurrent panels (3 and 4)**

**Panel 3: On Veiling and Unveiling**

(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Rifat Mahbub

- 1- Rehnuma Sazzad: ‘The New Veiling’: Arab Women’s Challenges to the Media
- 2- Ruxandra Todosi: Challenging (In)Discretion: How Can a Symbol of Sobriety Become an Erotic Motif?
- 3- Sehrish Malik: Muslim Women Veiled/Unveiled: From Orientalist Representation of the Nineteenth Century to Post September 11 Discourse

**Panel 4: East – West**

(BS/008)

Chair: Amy Pressland

- 1- Hiam S. Elgousi: Arab / Muslim women representation in the western media: whose reality counts?
- 2- Anna Turnaturi: The absence of sexuality of Arab women in the representation of Western media
- 3- Hayatte Lakra: 9/11 to 2011 : Arab Women from victim to revolutionary

**2:30 – 2:45                      Coffee and tea**

**2:45 – 4:00                      Panel 5: Cultural Products: Music, Novels, and Poetry**

(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Iris Pai

- 1- Hamad Alhazza: The Contribution of Saudi Journalist Women to Novel Writing
- 2- Kenza Oumlil: Unsettling Embodied Domination: The Writings of Suheir Hammad
- 3- Yasmine Gad: Dangerous Temptations: Womanhood or Lolitas?

**4:00 – 4:10                      Comfort break**

**4:15 – 5:10                      Panel 6: Resistance and Empowerment**

(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Sydney Calkin

- 1- J. Anniina Mattsson: The Importance of Being Seen: Female Emirati self-portraits in Flickr
- 2- Aura Lounasmaa: Sexuality in Moroccan women’s rights advocacy

**5:15 – 5:25                      End remarks and thanks**

**5:30 – 6:30                      Wine/juice reception in the Treehouse**

9:25 – 10:40

Taster plenary

(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Dr. Ann Kaloski-Naylor

Stefanie Van de Peer

Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, UK

S.E.Van-De-Peer@soton.ac.uk

### **Tunisian Women before and after the Jasmine Revolution: a cross-media exploration of representation**

Férid Boughedir famously claimed that Tunisian cinema is a feminine cinema. His films testify to this assertion: *Halfaouine* (1990) is a sensual discovery of the female body through the eyes of a teenage boy, and *A Summer at La Goulette* (1996) is equally an exploration of developing sensuality in three young women's adolescent summer adventures. But what does feminine cinema mean? Does it refer only to the sensibilities of a successful male cineaste with a privileged point of view, or could it incorporate women representing their own sensualities? Boughedir is after all only one of the many popular Tunisian filmmakers of the Golden age of Tunisian cinema.

Neija Ben Mabrouk has attempted to correct the male vision of the woman as either saintly or a deviant figure. In the film *Caméra Arabe*, Mabrouk states that men's viewpoints on women needed to be readdressed at the high point of New Arab Cinema. According to Mabrouk it is not enough for women to get a central role in the films – women also need to be able to narrate their own stories and include a more balanced view of themselves through self-reflexive and psychologically challenging films. In this paper, I will explore Tunisian women's films such as Selma Baccar's *Dance of Fire* (1994) and *Khockkhach* (2009) and Moufida Tlatli's *Silences of the Palace* (1994) and *The Season of Men* (2000), to illustrate a female aesthetic of women's sexuality that is more complex and challenging than Boughedir's films could be.

While these cinematic explorations are all from about ten to twenty years ago, I would argue that it is the sensibility of the Tunisian censor that can now begin to be challenged – we need to question whether the Jasmine Revolution carries the promise of change. While it is too early to make assertions, we can look into the media's portrayal of Tunisian women through the ages and project hopes and speculations onto the near future.

Steven C. Koehn

Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait

Koehn.S@gust.edu.kw

### **The Arab Feminism of YouTube: A Joint Media and Narrative Analysis**

This study utilizes a population of 40 young female Arab students at a Middle East university who self-selected YouTube videos (both Arabic and English videos) that they felt depicted both positive and negative attributions of their view of the new Arab woman. This group of

videos underwent content analysis as used in media research. Next, the women were asked to give their own narratives on what they perceive is the new Arab woman and YouTube's impact on the formation of such a domain. These narratives are being analyzed for qualitative data and themes, with both forms of analysis being cross-referenced for a more complete assessment of the persona of the new Arab woman and YouTube's impact on young Arab females. This research was sparked by a course discovery that young Arab University females were utilizing YouTube videos for make-up and dress trends more so than their prior use of Arab magazines.

Salam Al-Mahadin (long-distance)  
American University of Madaba, Jordan  
sumi70jo@yahoo.co.uk

### **The Hijab: New Musings on an Old Debate**

Touted as the symbol of Islam par excellence, Hijab is not short of proponents and critics. But in hunting the spectre of Hijab, several questions have remained unanswered or simply unproblematised. Initially conceived as a social commentary on Hijab, this paper followed an unpredictable trajectory where notions of Arab/Muslim women's sexuality became caught up in Western notions of "jouissance" as dictated by the social imperative to enjoy enforced by global capitalism. This social imperative contradicts with the earlier stages of capitalism where society was prohibition-driven. The paper argues that Hijab detracts from that jouissance/pleasure and constitutes a threat to modern Western subjects by denying them access to the powerful image of a woman's body. Drawing upon a wide range of examples from Western and Arab media, the paper examines some of the very complex webs of meaning and signification that Hijab has acquired over the past few decades in both local and Western contexts.

**Please join us for a break in the Treehouse at the close of this session. The break ends at 10:55.**

11:00 – 12:30

Panel 1: Cultural Products: TV and Talk Shows  
(BS/008)

Chair: Sarah Harper

This panel runs in parallel with panel 2

Nay El Rahi

School Of Oriental and African Studies – SOAS, University of London, Assafir  
(Lebanese newspaper), Nasawiya (Beirut-based feminist collective)

### **Sexuality on Lebanese television: Case of Severe Schizophrenia**

Coming of age in a society that thrives on contradicting ideologies and values, I developed what I now can identify as an identity crisis. In Lebanon, the media has historically been the primary dispersant of social values. Much of my adolescent daze can be blamed on the intricate set of messages that our ‘liberal media’ spread, or as in many cases, chose to withhold. While our ‘progressive’ media flaunted ‘Lebanese feminine beauty’ on air 24/7 in buoyant celebration of Lebanese women as symbols of the emancipated Arab woman, it shied away from the beaten wife next door with Lebanon still lacking basic laws that protect women from domestic violence. As our ‘plural’ media toggled back and forth between images of the ‘traditional conservative chaste Arab woman’ and the ‘Westernized sexually liberated’ one, it remained flagrantly nonchalant to the regressive patriarchal legal and societal framework within which real women in the country live, often almost complicit with it.

Dima Dabbous-Sensenig (2002) diagnosed this as the ‘schizophrenic situation of Lebanon’, as televisions run images of ‘liberated women, sexually or otherwise’, representing Western cultures and lifestyle, while strongly clashing with the patriarchal reality of the Lebanese society viewing them and the national legal system designed to cement gender inequality and oppression.

The scarce literature in Arab scholarship on Lebanese television and its representations of women’s issues and sexuality barely scratches the reality of the broadcast industry. Intricately tucked away under a thick dusty coat concealing its complexity, the subject of this research is under triple marginalization: In the Arab context, Lebanon doesn’t quite figure as it’s not representative of the region in terms of demographic, political or social make-up; on the national level, women are institutionally subordinate to men within a legal patriarchal framework, so issues related to them are naturally sidelined; on the academic level, talk shows, a solid pillar of contemporary popular culture don’t have much chance in featuring in academic scholarship.

My research endeavors to examine the ways in which this schizophrenia is manifested in contemporary Lebanese talk shows, particularly ‘Sireh Wenfatahet’ (Open Discussion) and ‘Ahmar Bel Khatt El Arid’ (Wide Red Line). This paper will look at how these shows construct and address ongoing campaigns demanding basic women’s rights in Lebanon, namely the right to full nationality and the right to protection from domestic violence. In juxtaposition to the shows’ construction of these demands, this paper will posit the shows’ both loose and tension-laden use and construction of the term “sexuality”, particularly female sexuality.

Ehab Galal

Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies. University of Copenhagen,  
Denmark

ehab@hum.ku.dk

### **Women on Islamic satellite TV: room for sexuality?**

Since the rapidly increase of Arab satellite-television-channels, around 50 Arab so-called Islamic satellite channels have been introduced as well. They transmit a variety of programmes from talk shows, to fatwa-, children- and lifestyle programmes. Among them are a considerable number of programmes directed particularly towards women, and among the rest, the gender issue is also a popular issue. While religion, and particularly Islam, often has been seen as the conservative protector of women's chastity, the different kind of programmes offer a room for discussing sexuality within the Islamic framework. The huge attention given the women is motivated by the value of the woman in bringing up the next generation. However, the question is where that leaves the Muslim woman and her sexuality? Is the Muslim woman's sexuality only a tool for reproduction, or does the Islamic programming offer a space, where women (and men) can discuss sexuality without cultural or religious shame in public, since the Islamic framework functions as legitimizing the discourse? In order to answer this question, I will present how women sexuality it exposed, examined and discussed in different Islamic programmes. The chosen channels for analysis are: Iqraa, al-Resaleh, al-Rahma, and al-Naas, representing both moderate (wasatiya) and a salafi approaches to Islam. Of specific analytical interest is, first, how sexuality is framed discursively: e.g. within a religious, scientific or socio-cultural discourse. Second, who is discussing sexuality: e.g. men or women; scholars, experts or audiences. Third, how does the programme genre frame the discussion: e.g. how does fatwa programmes compared to life style programmes tackle the issue.

Reem Abd Ulhamid (long-distance)

Media department, Birzeit University, Occupied Palestine

reemhamid83@gmail.com

### **Muslim discourse on women's sexuality: the case of Iqraa TV**

In Islam, the text of the Quran is believed to be the actual words of God and must always be referred to, due to its definite everlasting applicability. However, interpretations of the Quran have been debated, especially with respect to women's roles. The proliferation of Arab satellite television dominant by the Saudi interpretation of Islam can be seen as drawing out other interpretations and claims to guide Muslims to the only correct version of Islamic practice "the right path".

The present dissertation examines a particular discourse on family life, and principally on intimate relations in the married couple as diffused in the Arabic Language Muslim talk show (fiqeh el nissa) *Islamic Jurisprudence for Women*, broadcast on the *Iqraa* channel in the mid 2000's. I approach this discourse through a content analysis of *Islamic Jurisprudence for Women* program and through a discussion in a focus group of four, educated Palestinian women. In which I focus on how an Islamic talk show on

*Iqraa* TV namely develops a specific concept of obedience in general and sexual obedience for women in particular. The study explores different Muslim interpretations for sexual obedience as well as the religious hegemony *Iqraa* channel presents via this program.

In the Muslim discourse, women's sexuality emerges as symbols of Muslim identity to define the honor of the Muslim family from a Salafi perspective. *Iqraa* however, on the basis of the present case study, carries a more permissive discourse towards women's sexuality.

*Iqraa* television is the first thematic Islamic television to promote Islamic values for Muslim women. Hence the proliferation of the Arab channels in the 1990's through Saudi investments programming on Arab satellite TV increased in early 2000's. Those religious channels present women's sexuality as one of the most important elements to reform the civic society into a Muslim one.

**Please join us for lunch in the Treehouse at the close of this session.**

11:00 – 12:30

Panel 2: Cultural Products: Advertisements and Drama  
(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Abigail Tazzyman

This panel runs in parallel with panel 1

Çiçek Coşkun

Cankaya University, Ankara, Turkey

cicekc@gmail.com

### **Modernization And Women In Tunisian Films**

This paper analyzes the representation of women and modernization in Tunisian society by looking at Tunisian films produced in Tunisia in 1980-2000. Selected films are *The Silences of the Palace* (1994), *Halfaouine: The Boy of the Terraces* (1990), *Aziza* (1980), *Clay Dolls* (2002) and *Be My Friend* (2000). *Story of the “The Silences of the Palace”* passes in 1956, in the year that Tunisia took its independence. *Story of “Halfaouine: The Boy of the Terraces”* passes in 1960s, in almost a decade after the independence of Tunisia. *Story of “Aziza”* passes in the period it was produced. *Stories of “Clay Dolls”* and *“Be My Friend”* pass at the end of 1990s or beginning of 2000s. Thus, these five films make possible a survey of women’s modernization in Tunisia beginning from 1956 on the one hand; and to examine changes in the discourse towards women issue after 1980s on the other. It is possible to say that study aims to develop a new concept to understand modernization process of women in a non-western, Muslim, and North African society through representations in films.

To make the study possible, after making a general view of policies in Tunisian women’s modernization since 1956, those five films will be analyzed in terms of Tunisian women representations by referring to modernization process. Thus, it would be possible to see representations of women in Tunisian films before the Arab Spring.

Souad Belhorma (long-distance)

Centre for studies and research on women, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah

University, Morocco

belhormasouad23@gmail.com

### **Beauty Sells best: The Representation of Women in Commercial Advertisements**

In this paper we propose a semiotic framework for understanding the way advertisers carefully use women’s body to construct a very attractive product. It analyses the role commercial advertising plays in the representation of women, body and sexuality. Our analysis is based on a selection of beauty products ads in two shopping magazines (*Avon* and *Christian Lay*). As consumers, people are exposed to many stereotypical images of women’s body. The purpose of advertisers in producing stereotypes is to secure an immediacy of understanding of what a product is trying to say because it is an effective way to attract the attention and to persuade the target group to buy the product, the service or even the idea, therefore to have a

high rate of selling. However, it is not only used to persuade people to buy a certain product, but also to sell the product by selling various and desirable visions of the individual. Our question is that adverts in these two shopping magazines, for some products, seem to be normal in appearance on the surface, but in reality have stereotypical and abusive construction, a depiction guided by convention, culture and ideology, because adverts present a particular version of reality which tailored to fit the presumed needs and to persuade the targeted population. By analyzing content and form of adverts for women in commercial advertisements, it is obvious that there is the use of the woman's body as a tool to persuade the respective reader.

**Please join us for lunch in the Treehouse at the close of this session.**

1:15 – 2:30

Panel 3: On Veiling and Unveiling  
(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Rifat Mahbub

This panel runs in parallel with panel 4

Rehnuma Sazzad

Media and Cultural Studies, Nottingham Trent University, UK

N0232745@ntu.ac.uk

### **‘The New Veiling’: Arab Women’s Challenges to the Media**

The veil in the Western media represents Arab women’s bodily existence and the patriarchal command over it. However, the contemporary Arab women are turning the symbol of their oppression on its head. The well-educated new generation women challenge their media-assigned ‘victim’ status by using their headscarf as a statement of their personal style, choice and self-discipline. This makes the conventional media a victimizer itself. Nevertheless, Leila Ahmed’s *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil’s Resurgence from the Middle East to America* supports the Arab women’s overturning of convention by showing that the symbol of their passivity is being transformed to that of their independence. Following Ahmed, I project that rather than viewing the veil as a patriarchal imposition, the contemporary Arab women do it to claim their control over their own bodies. Thus, the veil becomes a socioreligious tool that they utilize to put forward their agency and historical consciousness in gaining autonomy. I also refer to Katherine Bullock’s *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes* to point out that in our supposed post-modern world, the veil announces the Arab women’s liberation from the beauty industry. Thus, I certainly agree with Ahmed and Bullock’s ‘Islamic feminism’, now a well-established term that was considered an oxymoron just a few years back. However, I have no unreserved satisfaction about the ‘quiet revolution’. It appears rather too eloquent to me. If the veil is a symbol of the Arab women’s self-protection, it also highlights the inevitable ground of their need for that. This signals that we are still far from a society where the ‘relation between the sexes [is] predicated on the benevolent and passionate wonder at the otherness of the other.’ Despite its guaranteeing of freedom, therefore, the veil represents a cultural barrier the sexes are yet to cross humanistically.

Ruxandra Todosi

Nottingham Trent University, UK

ruxandra.eliza@gmail.com

### **Challenging (In)Discretion: How Can a Symbol of Sobriety Become an Erotic Motif?**

When it comes to Islamic (including, but not restricted to Arab) women and their veiling, the prevalent message conveyed by covering is clear: seclusion; privacy; and, as some authors cogently point out, *resistance* (El Guindi, 1999; Bowen, 2007; Ghosh, 2008). Notwithstanding the anti-exposure, anti-flamboyance, anti-salacity dimension inherent to Islamic dress in

keeping one's personal charm and identity private, there is another, flipside story to be told of veiling garments — one that the Western media are ever prompt to capitalize on.

In the past we've had what are now referred to as *Orientalist* accounts, starting with early eighteenth-century travel literature depicting an illusive, erotically exotic East flord with vividly contrived 'treasures & pleasures' — most of which were later proven either inexistent or systematically misrepresented.

In fact, both as an abstract principle and as material cover, veiling (*hijab*) expressly stands for self-restraint, intimacy and discretion. But in today's world, where high street windows cry out 'kiss me, baby' and billboards throw red lips, handcuffs and multi-purpose lingerie at every passer-by, the choice to look away is less the choice it ever was before.

Fashionwise, in Arab countries too, the 'classic' dark and plain *abayas* begin to tighten, shrink or feature eye-catching adornments. Concurrently, a growing flux of fashion/lifestyle magazines prescribe amended (read: scater) outfits and more 'assertive' feminine behaviours, in tandem with the latest (read: Western) trends in dress, conduct and attitude.

This paper will explore a sample of such fashion voices and readjusted styles. Referring to various media formats and using a comparative cultural/geographical dialectic, I will address the sartorial framing of Arab women's (veiled) sexuality, while highlighting the intersections, clashes and cross-'contaminations' charted between Western and Arab fashionscapes.

Sehrish Malik

Graduate Program at York University, Toronto, Canada

sehrish@yorku.ca

### **Muslim Women Veiled/Unveiled: From Orientalist Representation of the Nineteenth Century to Post September 11 Discourse**

For the Western gaze, Muslim veil/unveil tends to be about subordination and oppression of women. Through my analysis of the paintings and the magazine images, I hope to complicate the relationship of gendered Muslim veiled/unveiled bodies and their representations. My central research question is whether the representations of Muslim women in Orientalist paintings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century are similar or different to the images in popular culture post September 11. I argue that the images of Muslim women as the victim and Muslim men as the perpetrator of violence need to be seen in the context of the history of colonization in the Middle East and post September 11 because these images tell us more about the ways in which the (neo) colonial powers represent the 'Orient' to fulfill their imperial goals than they do about actual Islamic practices and culture. The racialized, gendered and sexualized depiction of Muslim women and the continuity of desire to unveil the veiled bodies in the Orientalist painting and post September 11 magazine images have served to justify colonial and imperial rule.

In the first part, I analyze the following Orientalist paintings of the harem: Jean-Leon Gérôme's *Terrace of the Seraglio* (1886), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' *The Turkish Bath* (1862), and *Women of Algiers* (1834) by Eugene Delacroix. I examine the representation of gender, race, class and sexuality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings of the harem, bath and the seraglio. I show that hegemonic Western representations objectify the women they depict, turning them into 'Oriental', universal, generic 'Arab women'. My analysis of the images through these frameworks will contest power structures, and racist and privileged Eurocentric depiction of rescue narratives of Arab and Muslim women in paintings

In the second part, I draw on some of the discursive tropes and motifs used in these paintings that are reproduced in new ways in *Time* magazine. What is interesting about the post 9/11

images is that women's bodies are de-sexualized yet still victimized, veiled, and oppressed. I will use the following images from the *Time Magazine*: "Life in Hell: A Baghdad Diary" (August 14, 2006), "Lifting the Veil" (December 3, 2001) and "What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan" (August 9, 2010). I show that the tropes and motifs as having historical currency in which the oppressed Muslim women in need of rescue are similarly reproduced and evoked in the 'new imperialism'. Within these images, Muslim women are re-presented as powerless, victims of their culture, are silenced and voiceless like the unveiled bodies in the Orientalist paintings.

**Please join us for a break in the Treehouse at the close of this session. The break ends at 2:45.**

1:15 – 2:30

Panel 4: East – West

(BS/008)

Chair: Amy Pressland

This panel runs in parallel with panel 3

Hiam S. Elgousi

University of Leeds

H.S.El-Gousi@leeds.ac.uk

### **Arab / Muslim women representation in the western media: whose reality counts?**

One of the main characters of Muslim women representation in the western media capture mainly the images of the veil and the Harem as depicted in the early periods of orientalism. Such stereo- typing images have evolved around numerous depictions that go beyond the veil, towards issues of gender based inequity, subjugation, and lack of intellectuality etc. The images produced in the Western media is not without political ends or justifications, however, generalization does not help portraying a genuine image about Muslim women or any woman in the globe. After September 11, 2001 and the involvement of USA coalition in Afghanistan, more images of Muslim women were produced to justify the invasion and to produce an image of Taliban regime against the one produced or intended by the coalition.

The construction of the veil itself as a Muslim attire has broadly been brought by the Media, and by depicting specific societal and cultural traditions dominant in some societies. While the (burqa) has become a popular icon which represents Muslim women on different media segments including the World-Wide Web, no portrayal was shown of Afghani women who do not wear the burqa. The main ethics of Western liberalism was manipulated by the ban in France for the Muslim students from wearing the scarf in schools. “Under the ban that took effect on 11 April 2011, no woman, French or foreign, will be able to leave their home with their face hidden behind a veil without running the risk of a fine and instruction in citizenship” (BBC 2011). Such rule left behind the efforts to expose a Western system that is governed with high levels of racism and exclusion against the other as the one appears in France. Nevertheless, the slight change in the discourse around Muslim women representation in the media should also be highlighted.

The aim of this paper is to exam Muslim women’s perspectives regarding the portrayed images by the western media and highlighting both positive and negative impacts of such portrayals. The paper will draw recommendations for improvement.

Anna Turnaturi

Nottingham Trent University, UK

N0243761@ntu.ac.uk

### **The absence of sexuality of Arab women in the representation of Western media**

This paper deals with the representation of the sexuality of Arab women through an analysis of the contrast between the reading of the eroticized image of Arab women in postcolonial thinking and the starkly sexless portrayal of Arab women in the Western media today. Indeed, a strong vein of sexuality is evident in the description of Arab women as interpreted by postcolonial theorists such as Said and Fanon, and even in the fantastic dreams of the vibrantly imaginative tales of the Arabian Nights. Drawing on Fanon, in postcolonial literature, the veil of the Arab woman is seen as a representation of the sensual: the veil conceals yet at the same time does not conceal, since the sexuality of the Arab woman is based on what is hidden and therefore cannot be seen, allowing the onlooker to become lost in fantasies of the unattainable. Yet whilst these are the representations of Arab women that characterise postcolonial literature, namely, images imbued with great sensuality, in contrast we are now witnessing a lack of sexuality in the figures of Arab women as they have been appearing in the Western media over the course of recent years.

The tendency of photos in Western newspapers is predominantly to show women cloaked in black from head to toe, leaving no room for any suggestion of sensuality or sexuality. Based on these preliminary observations, this article seeks to examine in depth the reasons behind the recurring stereotypes of Arabic women that prevail in the Western media today.

Hayatte Lakra  
Sorbonne Paris Cité, France  
hayatte@live.fr

### **9/11 to 2011 : Arab Women from victim to revolutionary**

Since 9/11 a great deal of attention has been paid to the Muslim women showed as oppressed. This image in the post 9/11 media has reinforced the Orientalist cliché. Women, veiled, and even unveiled are no longer thought of as individuals: collectively they have become the 'Muslimwoman', neologism created by Miriam Cooke in 2007. Religion and gender are intertwined. The Muslimwoman in the post 9/11 era is once again caught between the image of oppression in Neo-Orientalist discourse and the need by Islamists to control her appearance and behaviour. Nevertheless, many Muslimwoman claim the veil as a marker of freedom and talk about their body freely. They centre on the politics of the body and primarily sexuality, the effects of these struggles on their bodies, and the question of struggle over their sexuality and gender, linking it to politics, war and spirituality.

Muslim women are today more visible. Media have permitted Muslim women to discuss about their status and to protest against those who want to remain her silent. This visible presence has been seen during the Arab Spring, women were at the forefront of demonstration. They have used media to assert their existence and to defend their rights. Eman Al-Obeidy, Libyan woman who accused Gaddafi's militia of raping her in a country where sexuality is usually part of the private sphere or Alia Almahdy, young Egyptian girl, posted a nude photograph on her blog to defend her freedom of expression against Islamists. Muslim women, through media, are creating links permitting them to share communalities and be able to talk about their sexuality.

**Please join us for a break in the Treehouse at the close of this session. The break ends at 2:45.**

2:45 – 4:00

Panel 5: Cultural Products: Music, Novels, and Poetry  
(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Iris Pai

Hamad Alhazza

School of Modern Languages and Cultures in Leeds University, UK  
ml09h2ma@leeds.ac.uk

### **The Contribution of Saudi Journalist Women to Novel Writing**

This paper will discuss the contributions of Saudi women journalists Novel Writing. Female journalists have written many recent novels, but they could not do so through public mediums like, magazines and television. This paper will include statistics about the number of female journalists who have become novelists. The period of time will be specific and relate to community changes. Some female novelists began to work in the media after they became known through their novels. They have found it easy to enter the media field and disseminate their ideas to many people.

Also in this paper, I will try to answer the following question: Why write a novel? In other words, why choose one genre of literature over another such as poetry or a play? There is no doubt that there is a difference between novels and other genres in terms of giving one a chance to express ideas and explain needs and journalist women have realized this difference and exploited it well for their ideas.

Because we live in a very special society, very sensitive and religious, all new ideas will be unacceptable and uncommon. For example one cannot describe sexuality for any reason except for treatment or to clarify a religious rule. As a consequence, women journalists use the novel as a way to speak out against social taboos without liability. In addition, certain segments of society have begun a trend of reading novels. Thus, publishers are keen on distributing a large number of new novels at the Riyadh International Book Fair annually where they find a good environment to sale their books.

Kenza Oumlil

Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

koumlil@gmail.com

### **Unsettling Embodied Domination: The Writings of Suheir Hammad**

This paper examines a particular embodiment and claim to one's gendered, racialized, and sexualized body. It takes interest in the writings of the Palestinian poet Suheir Hammad, who grew up in Brooklyn, New York. Hammad now performs her poetry around the world and is the recipient of several awards. Her writings pose a challenge to preferred gendered readings because of their disturbances to commonsensical notions of Palestinian and Arab womanhood and because they are grounded as a feminist intervention. As demonstrated in the literature, the central tropes of the dominant discourse have revolved around the figure of the helpless and veiled victim in-need-of saving by the benevolent West. In this paper, I conduct a textual analysis to examine Hammad's written responses which contain references to the workings of patriarchy. Her poetry reveals how women's bodies are rendered invisible, while it

acknowledges the institutional barriers to racial and gender equality. It also denounces the responsibility of marginalized communities in sustaining regimes of oppression such as patriarchy and brings to light numerous forms of inflicting violence on female bodies, as in the case of honour killings, sexual assault, or Muslim women's repressed sexuality. Hence, whereas every woman's body has been "broken into," her work, which is dedicated to women, also celebrates sisterhood. Finally, it represents a feminist effort to archive missing stories, thereby pointing to stronger possibilities for Arab womanhood.

Yasmine Gad  
University of Kent, UK  
Gad.Y@gust.edu.kw

### **Dangerous Temptations: Womanhood or Lolitas?**

With the growing interest on the cultural interchange rather than exchange of ideologies which continue to govern and regulate female bodies, identities, and perceptions, my paper aims to investigate the various representations of femininity through current Arabic music videos and images. Female sexuality amongst Arab women has been long-been an object of scrutiny and debate. In the Middle-East and large parts of North Africa women's sexuality has been defined in accordance to patriarchal assumptions of womanhood. Recently, the media has reinforced the image of the Lolita. Not only must the Arab female subject be provocative, but she must also be innocent. The complicated fusion of the two states is paradoxical in that what appeals to the sexual appetite of a male and female audience nowadays is a multiplicity of selves or performance within the feminine framework.

This paper will examine a number of Arab female musical icons of seductiveness, femininity, and the 'ideal woman', and analyze the dilemmas they cause to women behind the screen. Suddenly, the male gaze that demands this dual performance on-screen also expects it of the everyday woman. However, there is a grave difference, as that woman can be his wife, sister, or mother. Reconciling the states of provocativeness and virginity, innocence and experience, activity and passivity, maturity and infancy poses as a problem that is yet to be addressed. Due to the great demand of such videos, male dominance asserts itself, its expectations, and its definitions in shaping the perception of women with each other and amongst themselves. It is no surprise that patriarchy is a universal condition; however, within Arabic Islamic cultures and societies, a specific type of female conquest occurs. Imposing the paradoxical expectations on the Arab woman happens through the male gaze which is also inherently borrowed by other women. In effect, women are left competing with each other and mostly with their own reflected image. Lacking the voice and ability to define their own images leads to an erosion and fracturing of the female self. The ongoing battle between self and other is propagated by these female performers in the media who in their active seductive roles lead to a mass passivity amongst other women. The ordinary woman is trapped. She sees female bodies on display in a patriarchal secluded form, so how is she to see her own? Although she may be aware of the forces at play, they are not only difficult to resist, but impossible to avoid. The question is why? How? And what are the solutions?

**A short comfort break is scheduled after this session. The break ends at 4:10.**

4:15 – 5:10

## Panel 6: Resistance and Empowerment

(Bowland Auditorium)

Chair: Sydney Calkin

J. Anniina Mattsson

Department of Media, Aalto University, Finland

anniina.mattsson@gmail.com

### **The Importance of Being Seen: Female Emirati self- portraits in Flickr**

In the paper, I examine self- portraits of young women from the United Arab Emirates in the online photo- sharing website Flickr. The primary focus of the paper is to study how young Emirati women represent themselves and construct their identities in new media through visual self- representations.

The study concentrates on the images of members of Flickr group BanaaT UAE, out of which 170 members' images are selected and subjected to a historical and cultural comparison and contemplation. In the analysis, the photographs are analysed against a backdrop of the history of the UAE, women's social standing, local and colonialist visual traditions as well as new information and communication technologies (ICTs). The hypothesis is to find to hints on traditions of Islamic art, colonialist type depictions of Muslim women as well as nationalism. Instead the research reveals that the contemporary photography culture, for example, have less to do with the photographs studied than the equipment and software used to create them. Indeed, the research findings indicated that the young Emirati women do not publish classic self- portraits (defined in traditional terms as identifiable medium close- up self- portraits) as out of the 8,248 images studied in all, just seven included recognisable facial features, six of them children's and only one young woman's. Despite this, the study concludes that for these young women, Flickr is both a site of display as well as audiencing with its own socialising practices. It appears as though the norm for these young women is to construct their self- portraits in ways that obscure their identities intentionally, adhering to somewhat stricter- than- average social customs expected of them outside the virtual world regarding modesty as well as normative and conservative Islamic "gazing rules". Yet as the non- identifiable self- portraits were put on public display, they appear to have gotten their meaning from being seen.

Aura Lounasmaa

National University of Ireland, Galway

a.lounasmaa1@nuigalway.ie

### **Sexuality in Moroccan women's rights advocacy**

This paper explores the ways in which Moroccan women's NGOs are including and excluding discussion on sexuality in their women's rights advocacy public awareness campaigns.

Women's NGOs in Morocco situate themselves ideologically on a spectrum from secular to religious. Many NGOs mix both human rights and religious references in their work while having a referential set in one or the other. Many of the NGOs are currently campaigning for

changes in Morocco's penal code to change articles relating to medically assisted abortion and sexual relations between consenting adults, two issues where women's sexuality is at the centre. How does this mix of references and ideologies allow discussing women's sexuality? Some of the NGOs have added sexuality on their agendas as a rights issue; others are discussing it in the context of health. What is the relationship between the NGOs ideology and its approach to sexuality? The paper is based on on-going doctoral research which studies the advocacy campaigns of Moroccan women's NGOs and the languages that are used in them. The provisional title of the thesis is: "Women as agents and symbols of modernisation: women's rights advocacy in Morocco". The paper brings together the theme of sexuality as it appears in the content and discourse analysis of 25 research interviews conducted with women's NGOs in Morocco in January 2011 and September-December 2011, and advocacy and training materials produced by these NGOs to support their work as well as media appearances by NGO leaders in relation their advocacy campaigns.

**Please join us for wine and juice reception in the Treehouse at the close of this session.**