

War in white sheets: The public invasion of the private female space in women's literature

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ABSTRACT

The dichotomy between the "angel in the house" and the "devil in the flesh" used to symbolize the restrictions facing women in 19th century literature. With the advance of the different stages of feminism, this began to slowly dissipate as more female heroines began to be depicted as a major part of both the private and public spheres. However, does a more prolific female presence eliminate this opposition? This research paper will focus on whether such a distinction continues to preside over the works of female novelists, and the works under study are Hanan Al-Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra* and *Women of Sand and Myrrh* in addition to Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*.

While feminism in the West moved to more radical forms of expression, female voices calling for emancipation in the Middle East tend to be less extreme. Is this a sign of weakness in the Arab world? Or can it, on the contrary, be seen as a means of strength where feminism paradoxically goes hand in hand with some "patriarchal" values in society? Some would consider that feminism necessarily involves subversion of the status quo; that for women to be truly free there should be an elimination of all patriarchal norms. Yet in the Middle East some feminists arguably position themselves right in the middle, between the extremes. This involves maintaining some of the value systems set by patriarchy while bending them a little in order to make a niche within which female members of the society can flourish. Inherent within this project is the idea that these female members remain within the society, within the structure that is fundamentally patriarchal. In the Middle East, thus, it may be a battle to obtain liberty and equality with men instead of against them. In the search for equilibrium, both men and women are invited to participate and reliance on men is perceived as both inevitable and acceptable in a society where this is the norm.

This process, though, can be very slow. After all feminism in the West also started with less radical voices, during the first stage of feminism which began in the 19th century and continued into the early 20th century. Perhaps there will come a time where there will be a need for more radical Middle Eastern female voices. However, as the proverb says: "constant dripping will eventually wear out a rock". The question remains though, and this is of utmost importance, as to how to define the rock feminists wish to destroy. Is it men in general? Is it the values of society as a whole? Or simply those that are biased and patriarchal in nature?

This introduction aims to highlight the vast continuum of feminism found not only in the Middle East but also in the Western world. The term "feminism" does not necessarily denote one strict form of female struggle. On the contrary, feminism can encompass diverse women who come from different cultural backgrounds and strive for diverse goals. Hence, it is important to treat every form of feminism as simply one example of this wide spectrum. Since novels tend to shed light on the societies they originate from, this work will analyse novels written by Doris Lessing and Hanan Al-Shaykh that come from Britain and Lebanon respectively in order to evaluate where their brand of feminism might be situated along the continuum. The specific focus lies in the degree to which their heroines remain an integral part of their public spheres and their communities.

Woman and the Public Sphere²

The initial starting point for much of the feminist analysis of women's oppression in the early seventies was the significance of the separation in language and reality between the supposedly "private"

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² The public sphere in this analysis refers to activities, which pertain to so called public life which range from participation in political parties to partaking in war.

world and the “public” world [...] and yet, individually, we are not, either as women or as men, fixed and frozen within these “private” and “public” institutions³.

In a similar way, Hanan Al-Shaykh and Doris Lessing both attempt a deconstruction of these separate private and public spheres. *The Golden Notebook*, *The Story of Zahra*, and *Women of Sand and Myrrh* deal with the polarities of the private as opposed to the public sphere. The novels debate whether these two spheres are actually divided and exist independently since there are various examples of their merger where the “personal becomes political”⁴ or the public moves into the woman’s personal space. This can be seen, for example, in *The Story of Zahra* where war becomes an integral part of Zahra’s daily life and even moves into her bedroom when her brother hides his “loot” in their parent’s house. Deconstructing these spheres allows for men and women to coexist in a world where “private” and “public” intertwine. The novels therefore portray that it is possible to see “beyond the polarization of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ and beyond the separation of the private from the public, to a world of sexual equality”⁵. As a result, the choices that women may take in their personal lives are affected through their contact with the public sphere and hence contact with both other men and other women.

The Personal becoming Public

The self I am – the identity I have – is affected by the politics of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, and world justice [...] feminist theory and feminist politics have been responsible for my coming to understand that my individuality is shaped by political forces and that what I feel is deeply personal is affected by public systems of control.⁶

It is this interdependent relationship that can be seen in Lessing’s novel where her characters generally consider the Communist Party as an extension of their own personal lives. It is also important to note the connotations behind choosing the Communist Party as the political background to *The Golden Notebook*. For Lessing, the novel has to be set “among Socialists and Marxists, because it has been inside the various chapters of Socialism that the great debates of our time have gone on, the movements, the wars, the revolutions, have been seen by their participants as movements of various kinds of Socialism, or Marxism, in advance, containment or retreat”⁷. Yet Lessing does not represent the Utopian Communism that was being advanced by feminist intellectuals like Heymann⁸ who considers that,

True Communism is a community of mutual aid in which each gives their best, where the belief in the good is kept alive [...] Violence and Communism stand in total contradiction, the latter encompasses the principle of mutual aid, construction, while the former destroys and brutalises.⁹

Heymann explicitly describes the idyllic relationship between Communism and pacifism. She also considers that Communism embodies the “female principle, of mutual aid, charity, and equality”¹⁰. This is in direct contrast to what capitalism signifies – which, according to Heymann, is a combination of the male principle that glorifies competition and exploitation. These two polarized opposites therefore provide a clear choice that the public sphere offers; either the male or the female principle. Yet does everything fall so easily into place? Does making such broad generalizations serve the feminist purpose of seeking equality? After all one of the objectives of the second wave of feminism has been to deconstruct the differences between male and female – by suggesting that gender is, in fact, socially constructed. However, Heymann seems to argue otherwise by separating the public sphere into these corresponding opposites where the female is pacifist and charitable while the male competitive and exploitive.

⁴ See Segal, Lynne, *Is the Future Female? Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*, London: Virago, 1987, p. xii.

⁵ See Segal, *Is the Future Female?* p. xiii.

⁶ See Griffiths, Morwenna, *Feminisms and the Self: The Web of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 1.

⁷ See Lessing, D. (1972). *The golden notebook* (2nd ed). London: Flamingo, p. 11.

⁸ Augsburg and Heymann, called themselves socialists from 1918, From Gelblum, Amira, “Ideological Crossroads: Feminism, Pacifism, and Socialism”, *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870 – 1930*, Ed. Billie Melman, New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 307 – 327.

⁹ Original Quote by Heymann in her work “Kommunismus”, as cited in “Ideological Crossroads”, p. 318.

¹⁰ As cited in Gelblum, “Ideological Crossroads”, p.318.

Doris Lessing in *The Golden Notebook* provides her characters ample space to be involved in the public domain. Her protagonist, Anna, is an active member of the Communist Party. Lessing, though, describes the realities of Communist life as opposed to Heymann's Utopian notion of "True Communism". Malcolm Bradbury reviewing *The Golden Notebook* considers that it "captured the heavy mix of the time when not just novels but political certainties were dissolving".¹¹ Anna juxtaposes the concepts of capitalism and Socialism in a manner similar to Heymann when she answers Molly, "Bound. Free. Good. Bad. Yes. No. Capitalism. Socialism. Sex. Love."¹² Yet despite this outwardly simple classification, Anna throughout the novels portrays the complexity of these terms where freedom, love, and Communism are all questioned at different intervals.

Lessing not only explains her motives as an author for choosing the Communist Party over any other but also continues to discuss the personal and the political spheres and how they seem to merge; she even suggests in the preface that "nothing is personal". Lessing believes that every feeling or idea voiced by one person is shared by others and cannot be uniquely one's own. This leads her to bypass the predicament of indulging in writing about personal issues since a personal story evolves into a story shared by many others, and therefore, becomes public. Lessing views the person as a "microcosm and in this way [breaks] through the personal, the subjective, making the personal general, as indeed life always does, transforming a private experience into [...] something much larger".¹³

The importance of the characters' personal attitudes to their public lives is evident through their accounts of the condition of the Communist Party where most members find themselves battling with the choice of leaving this dying political Party. Anna describes socialism as "in the doldrums in this country"¹⁴. However, despite her dissatisfaction with the Party, she cannot completely withdraw from it since it is part of her personal identity. The party and its politics are given prominence in her life and two notebooks are dedicated to this subject. The red notebook discusses her membership in the British Communist Party after the Second World War and after she becomes an important writer who has published a very bestselling novel *Frontiers of War*. The black notebook examines young Anna and her Communist group while they are trying to help in South Africa during the Second World War. Yet even here Anna's tone is ironic,

the war was presented to us as a crusade against the evil doctrines of Hitler [...] yet the whole of that enormous landmass [...] was conducted on precisely Hitler's assumption – that some human beings are better than others because of their race.¹⁵

Anna ponders her motives for remaining a member and considers it mainly due to her own "private myth"; she is waiting for a body of people to take over in the Soviet Union and change everything back to the "real Socialism"¹⁶. She has joined the public sphere due to her own personal quest for morality and egalitarian values and it is her subjective take on party politics that allows her to remain optimistic. This further proves that the Communist Party does not represent the distant public sphere but rather becomes an integral component of her own personal identity. Even other women that work within the Party are on a personal quest. One of the female comrades describes how "this country's full of women going mad all by themselves". She believes she would have been one of them if she were not a member of the Party; it is the Party that has given her a purpose in life.¹⁷ Anna therefore concludes that "the Communist Party is largely composed of people who aren't really political at all, but who have a powerful sense of service. And then there are those who are lonely, and the Party is their family."¹⁸ This is why Anna's history of Communism in her notebooks does not cover its ideology or political standpoints; it is actually rather a tale of people's personal lives where she focuses on individuals, depicting their hopes and dreams. This is ironic precisely because Communism is based on the ideological privileging of the collective over the individual and subjective.

¹¹ See Bradbury, Malcolm, *Mail on Sunday*, Review Cover Flamingo Modern Classics Ed. of *The Golden Notebook*.

¹² See Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 59.

¹³ See Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 156.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 161.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 162.

War Invading the Female Space

As in *The Golden Notebook*, the private and public spheres in *The Story of Zahra* are also intertwined, though the public sphere is more powerful since it invades the characters' personal lives. This invasion is rendered in visual terms in the cover illustration on the Anchor Books edition of *The Story of Zahra* which shows an unmade bed with white sheets in a dark bedroom, yet there is a rifle in the corner next to the slightly open door; it is this door with the gun right next to it that carry danger. The personal space of the bedroom is no longer a safe haven since it has been invaded by the gun and by other perils that lie beyond the door. Yet despite this contrast between personal and public, the bedroom and the outside, peace and war, things are not as simple as they appear to be in the first instance. One might be tempted to classify Zahra as the embodiment of the pacifist woman who seeks to abolish war and maintain her personal space. Yet Zahra towards the end seeks war by seeking the sniper, and in the final sections of the narrative, the polarization of public and personal becomes blurred. The distortion of the public and personal spheres does not happen immediately but rather passes through stages that culminate in the affair with the sniper and the creation of a temporary bedroom on the same rooftop from which the sniper hunts his victims with his rifle. Both *The Golden Notebook* and *The Story of Zahra* juxtapose the public and personal spheres only on the surface while portraying how they are more deeply intertwined. However one major difference lies in the valorisation of the personal in *The Golden Notebook*, where public choices become a reaction to their owner's personal identity, while *The Story of Zahra* appears to show the opposite of this process, where the public sphere associated with the war overpowers the personal sphere and causes every space to be invaded, to the point where all the characters' lives are dominated by the raging war.

The experiences of the war begin in the second part of the novel, "The Torrents of War". The characters' lives are dependent on external means of salvation - the television, radio, and announcements of a ceasefire. Zahra finds herself coping with confinement inside the house where she escapes from life and does not have to cope with its tough questions concerning her marriage and her future; her personal life is placed on hold owing to the war. Al - Shaykh portrays the profound intrusion of war onto her characters' personal lives where,

The thunder of artillery reverberated off the walls, the shriek of rockets pierced our ears and reached every core, and our peaceful refuge came to be filled with phantoms of fear and the sounds of bullets.¹⁹

This invasion of the war begins physically, through the actual sounds of the bullets but then takes on a more sinister form that brings it closer to the souls of the residents, where their fear is represented as ghosts in front of their eyes. It is after the war invades every corner of her life that Zahra becomes fully aware of it and develops into one of its victims, relying on the radio and reading between newspaper lines for her existence. Yet Zahra wants everything to be destroyed, even their own personal lives, since she cannot understand how people can forget the dead and injured when there is a ceasefire. She wishes more destruction on her own house so that it can be seen, in no uncertain terms, "how war pervades the whole of Lebanon"²⁰.

However, the most dangerous aspect of the war is that it erases the feeling of personal suffering, where Zahra begins to feel guilty that she had felt misery before the war, as if she has no right to personal pain while there is a much bigger wound that cannot be healed enveloping her whole country. In this way, the war not only invades her personal space, but threatens to obliterate her identity by erasing her own personal past and suffering. The madness that consumes her when the war keeps getting closer brings her to the edge of self-destruction where she cannot even bear to hide within the walls of the basement to take refuge from the shelling. This conflict within Zahra does not allow her to completely break free by living in the peaceful village; consequently her feeling of guilt causes her to go back into a war that has almost suffocated her. Despite her new found desire to become a part of the war, Zahra is still not ready to fully embrace it and criticizes her brother for learning to cope as if the war has become a part of life's daily routine. Even when war knocks on her own doorstep yet again and she is faced with the women and children refugees, she still cannot take any form of action.

¹⁹ See Al-Shaykh, *Al-Shaykh, H. (1995). The story of Zahra: A novel. (P. Ford, Trans.). New York: Anchor Books. (Original work published 1986)*

p. 128.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 130.

It never occurred to me to offer my services, no matter how limited they might have been [...] why had I stood like a tourist, watching what went on before my eyes as if it was all happening to remote strangers?²¹

It may be her fear of disconnection from the war that actually causes her to seek out the sniper. Zahra needs to give the war more control over her life; she needs to feel the war around her and within her so that she does not fall into the trap of treating it with detachment. Her means of granting the war complete command over her personal life is to give her body to its overlord – to the sniper. It is precisely when Zahra fully abandons herself to war and its lord that she begins to have “feelings of security, of comfort, even of relaxation”²². This might be because her life is not under her control anymore; she has given it up to the war and its sniper who treats her according to his whims and desires. The complexity, though, is that the moment Zahra relinquishes all self-control, she gets closer to her real emotions than at any time in the past. She is able to finally remember her childhood traumas with her mother and put them away in the distant past in which they belong. Her self- abandon causes her to get in touch with a part of her she never knew she possessed, a part that has its own demands, needs and desires. Zahra is able to accomplish, through the intrusion of the war, what she would not have gone through if she had led a “normal” life - she “discovers the possibilities of her vibrant body. But this freedom is not a lasting one because its roots go deep into violence, war, death, and destruction”²³. Zahra and the sniper create a bed on the rooftops among the dust on the stairs where the sniper brings white sheets in order to improve their afternoon sleeping arrangements. However, while Zahra is making her private home on the public rooftop, her real home is being invaded by another sign of the war - her brother’s spoils of war that are hidden under her couch and mother’s bed.

As Zahra finally lies on her bed, weak, pregnant, and thinking of committing suicide, she gets closer to her real pains that at any point in her life and yet she dares to expect future happiness. Zahra’s brief period of exhilaration and hope is cut short by the bullet that hits her, a bullet fired by her own sniper.

He kills me. He kills me with the same bullets that lay at his elbow as he made love to me.
He kills me, and the white sheets which covered me a little while ago are still crumpled from my presence.²⁴

The imagery of war, bullets, and death is entangled with visions of lovemaking and white sheets. Zahra dies and closes her eyes; war has finally caught up with her and killed her, it has even taken away any chances for the future since the “white clouds” she sees are also menacing. Zahra’s wish to obliterate herself in order to feel her country’s pain causes her to lose her own personal self. She exemplifies a woman’s need to identify with one’s nation to the point of self-sacrifice.

In conclusion, both novels offer a merging of the “private” and “public” spheres. The novels though differ in highlighting which sphere overpowers the other where the “personal becomes public” in *The Golden Notebook* while the more conservative novel by Al-Shaykh affords more power to the “public” sphere which infiltrates the “personal”. Yet despite their differences, the novels attempt a deconstruction of the polarization that had previously governed these spheres. It is by merging them, and thereby merging the connotations of “feminine” and masculine” previously associated with “personal” and “public” respectively that all three novels provide a world where men and women coexist.

Nationalism, Feminism, and the Sisterhood

One means of analysing women’s choices in the novels is through focusing on their relations to other women and their implementation of the notion of sisterhood – having a community of women that offers its constituents solidarity, freedom and permanence. It is this state of sisterhood that affects both the public and private choices that these characters make in the novels. This notion of a shared sisterhood draws on a recurrent facet of feminist debate over the years. The debate ranges from the radical feminists like Valerie Solanas who would rather opt for an exclusively female community into which no male is allowed while

²¹ Ibid, p. 146.

²² Quotation from *The Story of Zahra*, p. 150.

²³ See Accad, *Sexuality and War*, p.60.

²⁴ See Al-Shaykh, *The Story of Zahra*, p. 214.

others like Evelyn Accad consider true solidarity to be "Femihumanism". This term coined by Accad describes her solution for the Lebanese society where both men and women work together in order to bring about "a pluralistic society built on recognition of the other's differences, be they religious, sexual, or ethnic"²⁵. Yet, in principle, this term does not necessarily pertain to the Lebanese society exclusively and could accommodate other cultures. Nevertheless, for Accad, Femihumanism incorporates the two concepts of Nationalism and Feminism where nationalism "is meant to transcend the patriarchal dichotomies of private/public, inside/outside, and yes, sexual/political".²⁶

The choice of nationalism, which necessitates love of one's own country and consequently solidarity with one's own compatriots – male and female - is therefore juxtaposed to internationalism and harmony among women regardless of their nationalities. History has shown how women have dealt with this question over the years; Amira Gelblum in an article discusses the way women reacted to the Second World War where "most feminists chose nationalism over internationalism [...] only a minority, alongside the socialist feminists remained faithful to their pacifist ideas".²⁷ Similarly, in the Middle East, "there were not really any feminist struggles separate from the political struggle. In Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, girls thought that politics was the way to free themselves and win dignity".²⁸ Therefore women joined in nationalist struggles in order to defend their countries alongside their male compatriots. Despite their struggles and their nationalism though, these women found themselves returning after the war to their oppressed state in the same Patriarchal system they had defended.²⁹ Even though nationalism and feminism have not mixed well, Accad argues that it is possible for women to incorporate their demands at the beginning of national struggles in which nationalism could become "revolutionary"³⁰.

Taking these diverse positions into account, one could therefore analyse the female characters in the novels in an attempt to clarify their personal and public choices. In *The Golden Notebook*, Anna is a member of the Communist Party and the novel not only sheds light on Anna's feminism but her nationalism as well. Anna seems resentful of the need to defend the USSR simply because they are a part of the Communist Left. After Stalin's death, she leaves the Party officially yet continues going to the meetings,

We met as socialists, with full trust. The discussions have slowly developed and there is now a sort of vague plan – to remove the "dead bureaucracy" at the centre of the Party, so that the CP should be completely changed, a genuinely British Party, without the deadly loyalty to Moscow and the obligation to tell lies, etc., a genuinely democratic Party.³¹

Anna, therefore, seeks to have a British Party which involves breaking ties with other Communist Parties around the world; only by choosing allegiance to their own country and removing the chains binding them to other Communist countries can they be truly democratic. Anna and Molly in *The Golden Notebook* maintain a very strong female bond; they have been together for a long time and been a part of each other's lives to the point that they have become interchangeable to people surrounding them. On the other hand, Anna is aware that her allegiance will always be given to the men in her lives. This is evident when she refuses an afternoon of idle talk with Molly,

If I join in now, in a what's-wrong-with-men session then I won't go home, I'll stay for lunch and all afternoon, and Molly and I will feel warm and friendly, all barriers gone. And when we part, there'll be a sudden resentment, a rancour – because after all, our real loyalties are always to men and not to women.³²

Anna, in her matter of fact tone, has set the pace for the rest of the novel, where women find it difficult to actually bond³³. Nonetheless this kind of camaraderie present between Molly and Anna is not replicated in any female friendship in both *Women of Sand and Myrrh* and *The Story of Zahra*.

²⁵ See Accad, E. (1990). *Sexuality and war: Literary masks of the Middle East*. New York: New York UP, p. 38.

²⁶ Ibid, foreword, p. x.

²⁷ See Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 308.

²⁸ See Mokhtar, Khaoula, "Becoming Liberated in Beirut", *Women of the Mediterranean*, ed. Monique Gadant, trans. A. M. Berret, New Jersey: Zed Books, 1986, p. 7.

²⁹ See Mokhtar, "Becoming Liberated", pp. 7 - 8.

³⁰ See Accad, *Sexuality and War*, p. 18.

³¹ See Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 394

³² *The Golden Notebook*, p. 62.

³³ Relationship between Maryrose and Anna is another example of women feeling guilty for having a bond uniting them.

Women of Sand and Myrrh presents an array of female characters linked by the common destiny of living in Saudi Arabia. These women come from different backgrounds and have different needs, desires and demands despite sharing the common fate of being in a very patriarchal society that represses their freedom³⁴. There is a brief moment where Suha feels close to her pupil Tamr and they go to the marketplace together. Yet when Suha is attacked for not wearing a veil, she feels completely alone,

I felt besieged from every direction, as men and boys pushed forward from all over the market and stood in a circle around me and Tamr [...] Although I could hear Tamr's voice raised in protest I felt completely isolated and she seemed just like all the other black-shrouded women.³⁵

It is apparent that Suha and Tamr have different requirements from life. Though they are both victims of the same strict rules, Tamr would have been happy living Suha's life and considers her free because she has her own driver, can go to the swimming pool, and work at the institute. Suha, on the contrary, feels her life there is stifling since she is used to having so much more freedom back in Lebanon.

As in *The Story of Zahra*, the Arab female characters in *Women of Sand and Myrrh* do not have a good relationship with their mothers who are the agents of patriarchal law³⁶. It is Tamr's mother that marries her off when she is only 12 years old. Likewise, while Tamr is terrified in the closed room with her "husband" she can hear the women's voices outside "trilling" and singing. Tamr later recounts the story of the girl tied to the tree and thereby gives another example of women's cruelty to other women. This girl is being punished for getting pregnant and is subsequently tied to the tree with her mother striking her; other women are around her hitting and tearing at her dress "like hungry locusts"³⁷. The novel therefore suggests that women do not feel a strong bond of solidarity for each other. On the contrary Suha cannot abandon her own personal sorrows, "I was turned in on myself to such an extent that I couldn't establish a real friendship with any woman here"³⁸. Women, therefore, remain isolated from each other within their own generation, because of their diverse backgrounds, and from the generation of their mothers. There are instances within the narrative where men and women are in "harmony" even though this is short lived: Nur's husband encouraging her to read, Tamr's brother being coerced by his wife into giving Tamr more freedom, or Suha's husband accepting her choices. In light of the above, the female characters might have more in common with other men in their lives though they appear to be more influenced, both negatively and positively, by other women within their communities.

Conclusion

The correlation of the private and public spheres creates a world within which men and woman should interact with each other. It is a world where the concept of a shared sisterhood may not be sufficient to grant women of a specific community all the rights they desire. Accad's concept of Femihumanism therefore becomes more attractive since it affords both men and women the ability to form a shared "humanhood"³⁹ instead of merely a sisterhood. However despite brief flashes of a shared humanity, the novels themselves do not provide a complete union between men and women that could promote Femihumanism.

The varying approaches employed by both writers illustrate diverse elements in feminism and female writing that pertain to varying societies. Examining these experiences can lead to a deeper awareness of the forms of feminism these societies tend to adopt. Feminism becomes descriptive instead of prescriptive where each community may structure its own form of female struggle. Even though the texts chosen in this

³⁴ Suha is a Lebanese that has led a more liberal life in which she has been financially independent; Tamr is a Saudi Arabian woman who was married at the age of 12 and lives under her brother's mercy; Tamr's mother Taj el Arous is originally Turkish and was married off to a sultan who only slept with her for a few nights; Nur, though from a richer Saudi Arabian family, is married to a man who is always away, yet she is under his mercy since she cannot travel without him signing her passport. Suzanne is an American living in Saudi Arabia who seems happy despite its set rules since she feels different and exotic.

³⁵ See Al-Shaykh, H. (1993a) *Women of sand and myrrh*. (C. Cobham, Trans.). London: Quartet Books. (Original work published 1989), p. 29.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 118.

³⁷ See Al-Shaykh, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, p. 121.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 41.

³⁹ See Accad, *Sexuality and War*, p. 38.

work are only a small sample of the diversity of female experience across different cultures, they shed light on the need to endorse this multiplicity and embrace it under the term "feminisms".

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