

Women in the Arab Feminist Discourse: Between the Transnational Feminist Theory and the Islamic Feminist Theory

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Abstract

More interest has been given to women's status in the Arab Muslim world due to the stereotypical representation that the western literary as well as academic scholarship provided about them. In fact, elite Arab Muslim women have quested for liberation through the creation of several feminist approaches for instance, the transnational feminist theory and the Islamic feminist theory that have reconstructed the image of Arab Muslim women in literature, provided a non-stereotypical representation about them as well as demonstrated their resistance to the multidimensional oppression they have confronted. The aim of the present study is to explore the distinct theories that have been adopted to advocate the Arab Muslim woman's question in order to dislodge the Western stereotypes, to demonstrate women's struggle against the systems of domination in the Arab Muslim world and to empower the Arab Muslim female reader through the celebration of women's power within the Arab culture.

Keywords: *Arab Muslim Women, representation, the transnational feminist theory, the Islamic feminist theory and liberation.*

Introduction

In literature as well as in scholarship, there have been many assumptions that considered the woman question a universal issue. In fact, these assumptions led Western feminism to hegemonize the feminist discourse as well as to ignore women's cultural differences. Specifically, an Arab Muslim female reader cannot identify herself with the Western feminist discourse. Furthermore, an Arab Muslim female work representing women cannot be read through the lens of the Western



feminist theory. This is the reason why Arab Muslim intellectuals have sought to create their own feminist discourses through several feminist theories that consider their distinct resistance to the multidimensional oppression they confront including the transnational feminist theory and the Islamic feminist theory.

Indeed, considerable researches have been devoted to the representation of women in literature, but less attention has been paid to Third World women including Arab Muslim women's representation, their distinct resistance to multidimensional oppression as well as their quest for liberation.

The aim of the current study is to demonstrate that women in the Arab Muslim world have resisted patriarchal, colonial as well as religious oppression in different ways. Furthermore, they have created several approaches including, the transnational feminist theory and the Islamic feminist theory to advocate the Arab Muslim woman's question.

This study is entitled *Women in the Arab Feminist Discourse: Between the Transnational Feminist Theory and the Islamic Feminist Theory*. It aims at providing historical as well as theoretical backgrounds. It is composed of three sections, women in the Western feminist discourse, women in the Arab feminist discourse, Arab women writers and the transnational feminist theory and Arab women writers and the Islamic feminist theory.

Feminism in the Arab world is a broad topic of research. This study is limited to the two approaches that have been selected to demonstrate women's struggle for Arab Muslim women's liberation (the transnational feminist theory and the Islamic feminist theory).

The present chapter will explore the historical as well as theoretical backgrounds of Arab Muslim women's quest for justice, equality, liberation and self-representation. The first section will explore women's quest for liberation in the Western feminist discourse. The second section will be devoted to take a look at the status of women in the Arab Muslim world and the rise of the Arab feminist discourse in activism as well as in scholarship from Qasim Amin's advocacy of women's rights to the contemporary Arab feminists. The last two sections of the chapter will discuss the two approaches: the transnational feminist theory and the Islamic feminist theory.

1. Women in the Western Feminist Discourse

Across the globe, women have been oppressed, stereotyped, objectified, deprived of their rights and misrepresented. This is why the feminist movement, theory and epistemology has sought to secure the social, cultural as well as political rights for women. It is defined by the German scholar Chris Weedon as a movement as well as theory that has the intention of changing the existing power structured relationships between women and men (Weedon. qtd in Mahmood 2008). In addition, it aims to understand the social structures' perpetuation of gender inequalities. It arose during the Age of the Enlightenment.

1.1. The Early Feminist Discourse

The advocacy of women's rights for achieving justice and equality with men arose from the Enlightenment liberalism between the second half of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, because of two substantial reasons. First, the Enlightenment intellectual and philosophical movement was criticized for being a white-male-bourgeois oriented movement. In addition, it has been contended that it sought to maintain power while disguising in the discourse of universal liberation. Furthermore, female intellectuals and philosophers questioned the Enlightenment's masculine biased thoughts as well as intellectual institutions and they defended women's right to education and equality with men (Taylor, 264-265). For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft who has been considered as the first liberal feminist who sought equal rights and opportunities for women (Muhamad Shukri, 3) has claimed in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that women are naturally rational. However, inadequate education made them more emotional. Therefore, she has proposed that women should receive the same treatment as men in education, work and politics. Second, they were influenced by the liberal ideas of the English philosopher John Locke who insisted on concepts of equality, justice and individual autonomy (Taylor, 265).

Moreover, the Enlightenment sciences including medicine and biology challenged the traditional ideas that claimed the naturalness of gender roles (Taylor, 267). Indeed, the Enlightenment led to the advocacy of women's rights in Europe. As some female and male scholars claimed that gender roles are not natural facts. But rather socially and culturally constructed stereotypes.

1.2. The Western Feminist Discourse in the Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century, Europe besides the United States witnessed women's active advocacy for equal rights and opportunities. Since 1900 women became more influential as intellectuals, philosophers, writers and artists. Many of them including Simone De Beauvoir, Monique Witting, Judith Butler, Kate Millet and Hélène Cixous admitted the enlightenment thinkers' rejection of the naturalness of gender roles.

1.2.1. Simone De Beauvoir

The French existentialist feminist and philosopher Simone De Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) has investigated and later on rejected the biological, psychological and economic interpretations of inequality between the sexes. She has argued that the role played by women in the society is a historical situation rather than a natural fact. Moreover, women are socially and culturally programmed to believe that it is a natural fact. Therefore, she has emphasized the distinction between sex as a biological truth and gender as a cultural interpretation of this truth (Ibid, 522).

1.2.2. Monique Witting

The French author and feminist theorist Monique Witting has agreed with Simone De Beauvoir in claiming that women are socially, culturally, politically and ideologically compelled to believe that they are naturally born weak, submissive and dependent in her essay "One Is Not Born a Woman" (1981). She has argued that the norms imposed by the oppressor including the myth of woman and its effects on women's consciousness lead to and justify women's oppression. According to Witting as well as De Beauvoir, woman is only a myth, it is an imaginary social, cultural, political and ideological formation. Moreover, women as a class as stated by Witting is a product of a relation of exploitation. Consequently, she has offered a solution for women's oppression which is to destroy the notion of woman as well as the social system of heterosexuality. She has claimed that lesbianism is the only concept that rejects the social, economic, political and ideological subordination of women and seeks a sexless society.

1.2.3. Judith Butler

In the United States, the philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler has examined gender construction through specific acts in her essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1988). She has claimed that gender is performative. Besides, gender identity is an illusion and it does not relate to the human’s internal reality. since it is formed through the conformism to certain acts. Moreover, she has argued that the repetition of certain bodily gestures, movements and behaviors create gender identity. Butler has supported her arguments with the French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s idea represented in his book *Phenomenology of Perception* on the body in its Sexual Being that the social and cultural existence of the body is not fated by its interior essence but rather by cultural norms. She has contended that the female body as well as consciousness are pressured by social, cultural and historical conventions. To conclude with, Judith Butler has contributed to the feminist theory with the perception of gender is a performance and the various acts of gender maintain its survival. In addition, the claim that the society forces the human beings to make their bodies obey certain norms.

1.2.4. Kate Millett

In 1970, the feminist theory entered into literary criticism with the publication of Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (Mahmood, 2008). In her book, she has analyzed the patriarchal shape of behaviors and unexamined relations of dominance and subordination between women and men in literature.

1.2.5. Hélène Cixous

Another French feminist theorist called Hélène Cixous has discussed women’s writing issue and its necessity for women’s liberation in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1976). She has claimed that women have been prevented from writing, because it has been linked to men only. In addition, they were compelled to feel ashamed about their bodies. Therefore, Cixous has obliged women to write about women in order to create a language that liberates them from the previous codes, regulations, norms and stereotypes of subjugation. Hélène Cixous has declared that time has come for the liberation of the New Woman from the Old Woman who was led by men to execute women’s desires. Furthermore, she has guaranteed that women’s writing will ensure their return to their bodies that were considered as a source of guilt and shame.

Moreover, it will break up the silence and maintain women's relationship to their sexuality (their pleasures and native strength). To conclude with, for Hélène Cixous, *Ecriture Féminine* or women's writing explores women's needs, desires and life experiences.

Indeed, the Western feminist discourse sought to secure women's rights, opportunities as well as to liberate them from the bounds of patriarchy in activism, scholarship as well as in literature. However, they focused on Western women's oppression in relation to issues of sexuality and patriarchy only and did not link between the woman's question and politics, economics, culture as well as religion. In fact, the Western feminist discourse ignored women's cultural diversities and their distinct forms of resistance to the multidimensional oppression they confront. This is why Arab Muslim women have had problems in identifying themselves with the Western feminist discourse and have sought to create their own feminist discourses.

2. Women in the Arab Feminist Discourse

The Arab Muslim female role has been created and approved by historical, religious as well as cultural norms. However, it has been challenged either by Arab feminists or by the modern society. Particularly, some scholars have rejected the conservative application of pre-Islamic as well as medieval principles in the twenty first century. Moreover, they have claimed that the rules that originate from the Islamic hermeneutics need an urgent reform in order to shift Arab Muslim women to the global acceptance as well as to allow them to participate in the modern society (Okon, 21).

2.1. The Status of Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Some scholars including Leila Ahmed have claimed that women in the Jahiliyyah occupied positions of participants in central affairs for instance, leaders, warfare participants, authors, nurses on battlefields and keepers of the keys of Mecca. Moreover, they incorporated with men in their society (Ahmed, 62). In contrast, the Nigerian scholar Etim Okon and other scholars have contended that several pre-Islamic Arabian practices including female infanticide as well the objectification of women led to women's oppression, discrimination and marginalization. Furthermore, they created male-oriented societies. First, during the era that preceded Islam, Arab tribes considered giving birth to a female child a source of shame and agitation, because the Arabian Peninsula witnessed many tribal wars before Islam and women who belonged to the

defeated tribes became enslaved socially as well as sexually (Aquil, 23). Therefore, parents killed their female children due to their fear of the invaders' captivity. Together, this evidence suggests that infanticide symbolized females' flaw as well as their ability to be sacrificed during the era that preceded Islam. Second, women in the pre-Islamic era were treated as objects. For instance, upon a man's death, they were inherited by male relatives (Ibid). In addition, it has been claimed by the professor Rajaa Aquil in her article "Change and Muslim Women" that there were no marriage laws to organize families, because women were sold and traded for other women. Furthermore, adultery was permitted as men had several mistresses as well as temporary sexual relationships (the marriage of pleasure).

2.1.1. The Discourse of the Veil

The Egyptian jurist and Islamic modernist Qasim Amin in his book *The Liberation of Women* (1899) as well as the American Egyptian scholar Leila Ahmed in her book *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992) have argued that the veil was developed from the ancient cultures and religions that preceded Islam including the Greek, Roman, Assyrian, Jewish as well as Christian. Moreover, women worn the veil in the pre-Islamic era due to cultural and social circumstances for instance, the veil symbolized women as private properties. Therefore, it protected them from the strangers' captivity. In addition, it was used to differentiate between women from different classes as women of the lower class worn the veil. In fact, they have argued that the veil in Arab Muslim societies will change through time due to the social, political, economic and technological changes that influence the Arab Muslim culture.

2.2. The Status of Women in Islam

Islam improved the status of women. It ensured women's right of life. Particularly, some Qur'anic verses were revealed to denounce the practice of female infanticide. For instance, "and when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed" (Qur'an, 81:8-9). In this verse, Islam prohibits killing female children as well as the feeling of shame and agitation that the pre-Islamic Arabs related to females. Moreover, the following verse from the Qur'an indicates that Islam insisted on women's and men's equal humanity with the same responsibilities and duties (Abu Sarhan, 46): "O mankind, fear your lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women" (Qur'an, 4:1). Furthermore, prophet Muhammad defends women's right to seek knowledge and education in the following

Hadith: “seeking knowledge is compulsory for each and every Muslim” (Al Tirmidhi). Finally, marriage in Islam became the foundation of the human society that organizes families as well as a legal contract for life that intends to achieve mutual love, respect and loyalty.

Indeed, Islam is a religion based on the concept of justice and the purpose of the Islamic law is to avoid harm as well as to serve the public interest or *maslaha* of its believers including women. And since the public interest changes through time, the Islamic law should be open to change in order to preserve the Muslims’ interests, because Arab Muslim women’s status as well as rights have been decimated by many patriarchal interpretations in addition, they have been confined due to political and cultural reasons. Moreover, the conservative continuation of some practices and principles in the modern age has been regarded by certain scholars as obstacles to women’s advancement in the Arab Muslim world. Therefore, they argue that it is a jurisprudential requirement to reclaim Arab Muslim women’s rights in several issues including: guardianship, polygyny, divorce and public testimonies (Al Hibri, 56).

2.2.1. Men’s Guardianship or *Qiwamah* in Islam

The following verse from the Qur’an states that men are assigned with guardianship: “Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth” (Qur’an, 4:34). This verse assigns men the role of protecting women, because it was revealed to a patriarchal society which its duty was to protect and support women financially (Al Hibri, 64). Moreover, during the revelation of this verse, women did not work or spend on their households due to insecurity as well as wars. Therefore, men were the supporters of women because they satisfied the law of maintenance (Ibid, 63). However, in the modern society, women work, have wealth and support themselves as well as their households. Consequently, men are no longer the financial maintainers of women and guardianship is not always assigned to them but rather to the financial maintainer (Abu Sarhan, 49).

2.2.2. Polygyny in Islam

A verse from the Qur’an states that: “if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly [with them], then only one, or that which your right hand possesses. That will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice” (Qur’an 4:3). It was revealed to encourage

men to marry more than one wife in order to protect and help the widows who lost their husbands in battles for example, the battle of Badr (624 AD) as well as Uhud (625 AD) in support of Islam. Moreover, these widows were Meccan immigrants. Therefore, it was difficult for them to return to their clans (Ahmed 52). Furthermore, this verse encouraged men with financial capacity to marry more wives in order to help these dependent widows and orphans. For instance, the majority of prophet Muhammad's wives were widows of Muslims killed in support of Islam (Ibid). Indeed, polygyny was permitted in Islam in order to help the widows as well as orphans.

2.2.3. Divorce

Although Muslim women are allowed by the law to negotiate their right to divorce as a marriage condition, their right has not been properly given to them whereas men are given the right to an automatic divorce. Therefore, the Islamic jurisprudence as well as the court practices are biased in favor of the male according to some scholars. For this reason, they have claimed that they need an urgent reform in order to grant women their right to divorce (Al Hibri, 71).

2.2.4. Legal Testimonies in Islam

It is mentioned in the following verse from the Qur'an that men's public testimony equals the testimony of two women: "and call upon two of your men to act as witnesses; and if two men are not available, then a man and two women from among such as are acceptable to you as witnesses so that if one of them should make a mistake, the other could remind her" (Qur'an, 2:282). Islamist scholars have argued that due to women's exclusion from public life, their role in public testimonies have been reduced. On the contrary, Muslim feminists have claimed that this issue oppresses Muslim women as well as it decreases their rights (Abu Sarhan, 47).

From the foregoing discussion we can say that although Islam has granted women's rights as well as equal opportunities, certain laws have sought to dominate women by denying their rights. Therefore, some scholars have argued that Arab Muslim countries need to engage in the process of ijtihad in order to maintain Islam's fundamental principle of justice (Al Hibri, 55). As a result, Arab intellectuals fought to secure Arab Muslim women's rights and improve their status by the end of the nineteenth century.

2.3. Arab Muslim Women's Quest for Liberation

The Arab world witnessed intellectual ferment and quest for social justice as well as equality among all people at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Particularly, many Arab Muslim intellectuals sought changes in several fields including culture, society, politics and women's status. For instance, Qasim Amin the Egyptian writer, jurist, nationalist as well as advocate of women's rights pursued to improve Arab Muslim women's rights and opportunities through education, custom change and their engagement in public life (Ahmed, 145). In his book *The Liberation of Women* (1899), he has rejected the perpetuation of certain medieval and pre-Islamic traditions while living in a world influenced by political systems, cultural exchanges, religious beliefs and technological advancements. Furthermore, he has argued that nations should be open to social, cultural as well as political change in order to dispose the oppressive traditions imposed by the society. He has claimed also that the nations' liberation cannot be achieved without women's liberation because they reflect their nations' civilization (Amin, 6).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Arab world witnessed intellectual resistance in order to change the power structured relationships that oppress both Arab Muslim nations as well as women. In particular, many women quested for their rights and opportunities. Egyptian intellectuals, writers and feminists including Malak Hifni Nasif sought educational as well as marriage reforms in order to secure women's rights (Ahmed, 182) and Safiya Zaghloul the political activist and feminist quested for women's engagement in political activities. For instance, parliament membership. Fortunately, between 1907- and 1912-women's status in the Arab World improved in many domains. First, several organizations that advocated women's intellectual as well as social advancement were founded by the Egyptian nationalist and feminist Huda.

Sha'arawi (Ibid). Second, women became engaged in writing newspaper articles with Malak Hifni Nasif's writings. In addition, literary and cultural salons were organized by upper class intellectual women. For instance, the Lebanese Palestinian writer Mai Ziada's salon that offered cultural, social and literary exchanges between women and men, Arabs and Europeans or Americans.

Together, this evidence suggests that Arab Muslim women created their own feminist discourse in order to share and explore their voices and experiences through writing different genres including poems, stories, articles, novels, plays and autobiographies.

2.4. Arab Muslim Women Writers

Women's writing in the Arab world has originated from an ancient unique tradition. In fact, women were influential writers since early Arab civilization. For instance, the Arab poet Al Khansa' as well as the Sufi mystic poet Rabia' al Adawiya (Ashour et al, 1). However, modern Arab women started writing and publishing fiction as well as nonfiction by the end of the nineteenth century in many countries including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and North Africa (Cooke, 1). They shared their experiences, voices as well as creative ideas. But they did not receive critical attention until in the 1950's and 1960's with Amina al Said's *The Defiant Woman* and Latifa al Zayyat's *The Open Door* (Ashour et al, 7). Also, Iraq and Palestine witnessed women's creative writing. For example, Nazik al Malaika's as well as Fadwa Tukan's poems. In North Africa, women's writing was influenced by their national education as well as the Arab women's writings. They explored themes of national and female identity.

Although Arab Muslim women's experiences and social interactions have been limited due to some oppressive traditions, they perceived the importance of representing themselves in the cultural field. Moreover, they sought to share their struggle to overcome the social and cultural subjugation that they faced in the social, cultural and intellectual domain by creating their personal narratives. Therefore, Arab women writers including Nawal El Saadawi, Fadwa Tuqan, Latifa al Zayyat and Fatima Mernissi have written their autobiographies in search for liberation and self-expression that were absent in the previous discourses (Ashour et al, 150).

Based on these data, it is apparent that Arab women writers and intellectuals have created their own discourses based on their societies, cultures and philosophies to secure women's advancement in the Arab world as well as to empower them to participate in the modern world.

3. Arab Women Writers and the Transnational Feminist Theory

The Western feminist theory has focused on issues of sexuality and patriarchy without relating the woman's question to politics, economics, culture as well as religion. In fact, it hegemonized the feminist discourse. Consequently, Third World women writers and intellectuals have criticized the Western feminist approach for being ethnocentric due to its emphasis on European and American women's status (Morton, 77) and ignorance of the Third World women's diversities in culture, race, religion, class and nationality as well as complicit in the imperialist expansion project (Ibid,

90). Postcolonial feminist thinkers including Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty, Nawal El Saadawi and others have sought to create a feminist thought that considers the Third World women's struggle against multidimensional oppression (gender, racial and religious) as well as their different forms of resistance (Herr, 2). Furthermore, these thinkers have declared the urgent need to explore the local and global conditions that shape women's oppression in different parts of the world including the Arab World (Morton, 90). Accordingly, many branches of feminist activism as well as scholarship occurred in the Arab world. Third World feminism, transnational feminism and Islamic Feminism.

Third World feminism focuses on women's activism and scholarship within their nations. In contrast, transnational feminist activism and scholarship is a branch of feminism interested in feminist networks as well as movements that take place beyond the local or national level (Grewal and Kaplan. qtd in Herr, 2). Moreover, it has the intention of pursuing gender justice at the transnational level against neoliberal economic globalization, imperialism and religious fundamentalism (Herr, 2-9). In other words, transnational feminists have argued for a feminist practice that is transnational in its response to neoliberal global economy, because women have been exploited by the dominant multinational corporations in the Third World as they represent the new source of cheap labor (Morton, 72) as well as religious fundamentalism which is supported by the dominant neoliberal powers to violate women and reinforce gender inequality. Among the Arab feminists who have advocated the transnational feminist activism and scholarship is the Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi. In fact, she has declared the need for transnational feminist politics in the contemporary context of neoliberalism as well as religious fundamentalism (Baksh and Harcourt, 83). In addition, she has claimed to build transnational feminist movements inspired by the Egyptian women's revolution struggles (107).

4. Arab Women Writers and the Islamic Feminist Theory

The resistance to women's oppression in the Arab Muslim world has taken many forms. Particularly, some Muslim academics including Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Leila Ahmed and Azizah Al Hibri created a feminist discourse that analyses some aspects of the Islamic history as well as hermeneutics that has aimed to seek justice as well as liberation for Muslim women (Cooke, 61). Moreover, they have sought to improve Muslim women's rights and opportunities by reconciling feminism with Islam. They claim that Muslim

women's oppression has not been created by Islam but rather by sexist, misogynist and patriarchal interpretations of the Islamic fundamental references (Qur'an and Hadith). According to them, these interpretations have formed the Islamic Law that has regulated the Muslim societies (Faruqi, qtd in Isac Alak, 36). Other scholars have argued that the Muslim female identity has been created through religious beliefs as well as cultural dimensions that have constructed gender roles (Isac Alak, 36). Therefore, these Muslim feminist scholars sought to challenge the traditional understandings of holy texts by declaring the need for reinterpretations of some verses of the Qur'an or Hadith that led to women's oppression from a feminist perspective (Muhamad Shukri, 8). This academic branch is called Islamic feminism. It emerged in the 1990's by some Iranian feminists. Its definition has been provided by the Saudi scholar Mai yamani as follows: "Islamic feminism represents the ideology which describes the discourse and the actions of those who protect women's rights within the context of authentic or well-understood Islam" (qtd in Isac Alak, 32). Moreover, it has the intention of recovering justice which is the fundamental principle of Islam also, it aims to achieve normative reconciliation between Islam and feminism and most importantly to give a theological authority to women's rights movement in the Arab Muslim world as well as to achieve egalitarian re-readings of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Indeed, the Islamic feminist project (activism and scholarship) has aimed to improve the status of Arab Muslim women by reinterpreting the fundamental Islamic references to serve the public interest of women in the modern society despite the accusations as well as the difficulties that it has confronted.

Islamic feminism terminology has been criticized for being an oxymoron. However, Muslim feminist scholars have argued that the two concepts are compatible due to feminism's flexibility that allows the Islamic position to be included (Isac Alak, 32). Furthermore, the Islamic feminist project has been challenged by the political as well as discursive influence of religious fundamentalism (Ibid 33). It has accused it of subversive manifestation of neo-imperialism that seeks to destroy the Arab Muslim identity and weaken the religious basis of the family as well the society (Ibid, 35). Therefore, the Islamic feminist project is possible only through the creation of opposing interpretations and counter discourses against the oppressive theocratic regimes (Ibid 33).

Conclusion

This chapter explored the historical background of Arab Muslim women's quest for justice, equality and self-representation. In addition, it discussed also the theories (the transnational feminist theory and the Islamic feminist theory). This chapter has proved also that less attention has been paid by scholars to Arab Muslim women's distinct resistance to different forms of oppression and their quest for liberation and self-representation in order to dislodge the Western stereotypical representation of Arab Muslim women as well as to empower the Arab Muslim female reader.

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