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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Saudi Arabian Women in Zoe Ferraris' Finding Nouf

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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SAUDI ARABIAN WOMEN

IN ZOE FERRARIS' *FINDING NOUF*

BY

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BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabian women are often stereotyped, in Western media, not only as victims of the oppression of their male-dominant society but also as voiceless uneducated objects who are simply housewives. The aim of this paper is to challenge this representation of Saudi Arabian women by digging deeper into how these women are represented in the discourse of literature by an author from the United States. A mystery novel featuring Saudi Arabian women and their struggle inside Saudi Arabia has been chosen for Critical Discourse Analysis: Zoe Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* (2009). The novel was chosen not only for its genre, location, year of publication, international recognition of a prestigious prize, and plot of finding a lost Saudi Arabian woman, but also for its author's crucial ethnic and cultural backgrounds that are different from the women in Saudi Arabia. *Finding Nouf* is written by a U.S. female author who, being married to a Palestinian Saudi Arabian husband, had lived in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for 9 months in 1990.

The analytical framework of this paper is informed by Van Dijk's (1988) socio-cognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, in particular the notion of 'ideological square' which argues for binary oppositions of in- versus out-group. In Van Dijk's ideological square, members of a dominant society emphasize their positive actions and qualities (as in-group members) while emphasizing negative actions and qualities of others (as out-group). This polarization is manifested in their choice of lexicon and grammar. This paper analyzes how this polarization is achieved by looking, particularly, at descriptions of Saudi Arabian women and their use of the veil. This paper attempts to bridge the gap between stereotype and reality.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Being a Saudi Arabian woman in the US is a complex matter. As a female Saudi Arabian scholar who immerses herself in various environments with diverse individuals, I always find myself being stereotyped and perceived in a way that seems foreign to me. Hearing some of the prejudiced statements directed against Saudi Arabian women, I am acutely made aware that the type of Saudi Arabian women I know and the type being projected on me by people in the US have nearly nothing in common. What I personally know about Saudi Arabian women and the perceptions people in the US proclaim of them are drastically different. This introduction serves as a mediator between these two types of Saudi Arabian women. First, it presents the type of Saudi Arabian women I know, and then the type of Saudi Arabian women that I have been introduced to during my time in the US. Later, it lays out the significance of the study and the question I aim to answer through this research, as I analyze a novel written by a female US author. Zoe Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* (Ferraris, 2009*)* is chosen for this study not only because it is a mystery, situated in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, that features Saudi Arabian women but also because it is an international bestseller winning two awards: Los Angeles Times Book Prize and Alex Award.

In order to unveil the significance of my research, it is important to situate my positionality as a Saudi Arabian woman and how my personal background influences my view of the first type of Saudi Arabian women that I affirm exist. I was born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to a Saudi Arabian family of 12: two parents and ten kids (six girls and 4 boys). My parents are originally from a village located in the South of Saudi Arabia and had moved to Jeddah in 1980, a modern big city that is currently twice the size of New York City. Growing up in the late 1950s, my mother spent her teenage and early twenties showing her face to the whole public. It was only when the Islamic Revival movement

spread in the country in the late 70s that my mother started to wear a black *abaaya*, i.e., a cloak, and cover her face. As a result of living in an underdeveloped village in the South of Saudi Arabia where education was not emphasized at the time, neither of my parents went to school, despite the fact that some of their brothers and sisters (both older and younger) did go to school and obtain college degrees. My parents were both illiterate until my mother broke the curse 9 years ago. Seizing on the initiative sponsored by the government to erase the illiteracy that was widespread, especially among the elderly, she decided to go to an adult school that had just opened in the neighborhood, to learn Arabic letters and, thus, be able to read the Holy Quran. This came as no surprise since my mother had always been the head of the house striving for what is best for her and her family. In fact, she was the one who forced a family-oriented husband, working for his father who ran multiple businesses, to leave his parents in the village and go find a future for himself and the growing family he and my mother were building together. She gave my father an ultimatum that she would divorce him if he didn't leave the village, become independent, and get himself a "real" job in the city of Jeddah that would provide her with a life she was worthy of. She was in her early twenties. She was a mother of three children. The year was 1980.

It is through her actions that she instilled in her children many memories of her leading the family. Being the 8th child (the 5th among the girls) with an age gap of about 18 years between myself and my oldest sibling, I was fortunate to witness the beauty of a powerful working female mother, and how that had impacted my siblings. It was during my early childhood and early adulthood that I saw my mother manage a small business from home. I saw her spend extensive amount of time sewing prayer mats and clothes on

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a sewing machine as well as making different scents of Arabic incense and hair fragrances. Beside these homemade products, I saw her sell accessories, perfumes, clothes and shoes that she purchased from bulk warehouse stores. It was due to her dedication that she made her business work and operate for about two decades. The amount of her business had decreased, and eventually stopped, as she got older and busy with school. My last memories of my mother before I moved to the US were of her being an old woman yet walking to her school in the afternoons and studying for hours in her bedroom at nights. I know for sure that my mother is an example of many female Saudi Arabian leaders who are determined hardworking businesswoman and passionate learners.

She and my father, who has been pushed by her, have a strong aspiration for demanding a better life. Due to the many obstacles they experienced themselves as a result of their illiteracy, they have made sure to inculcate us with an appreciation for educational empowerment. As a result, the advancement of the educational level achieved in the family is marvelous, for it is from these two illiterate parents college degree holders come to exist, although such achievement is more visible in their female children than their male children. According to the annual statistics, from 1980 to present, posted on the website of Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, there are more Saudi Arabian women with a higher educational attainment (i.e., education beyond high school) than there are Saudi Arabian men. In some years, the number of female Bachelor graduates is double the number of male graduates. The truth of these statistics is reflected not only in my immediate family, but also among my cousins and friends.

Looking at my parents, for example, my mother *now* reads and writes, albeit slowly, whereas my father is still illiterate. All their six female children have college

degrees. The first three are Bachelor of Science degree holders: two in chemistry and one in Mathematics, and work as high school teachers. The fourth daughter is in her fifth and last year of an Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Program. She plans to go for a Fellowship, abroad, afterwards. I am the fifth daughter. I have obtained a Bachelor's degree in English and now I am a scholar sponsored by a Saudi Arabian university to pursue Master's and PhD degrees in Linguistics in the US. I am the first female to pursue graduate studies in my entire extended family, and decidedly the first to leave home. The sixth daughter, seven years younger, is currently pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Tourism while working as a Call Center Agent for a restaurant. We all have made King Abdulaziz University, located in Jeddah, our home for undergraduate education.

That said, the educational level of my male siblings is different. While all my sisters are college degree holders, my oldest brother has finished only elementary school. My second brother, 9 years after his high school graduation, has obtained a Bachelor's degree in Management through a Home Study program offered. Both brothers work for the Saudi Arabian Army. My third brother, after the announcement of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, has decided to seize the opportunity and go for a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering in the US after obtaining a 2-year diploma at the Higher Institute for Paper and Industrial Technologies (HIPIT) in Jeddah. He currently works as a flight attendant. My fourth brother, the youngest in the family, has moved to the US in Fall 2017 to study English as a Second Language. He is given the funds for his education abroad through my scholarship, which makes me the provider. In the system of Saudi Arabia, the mere fact of his gender qualifies him the privilege of being my male guardian, despite the fact that he is 9 years younger.

This is the family I come from, and my family is not uncommon in Saudi Arabia. The families of my cousins, relatives and friends reflect this truth, too. The Saudi Arabian women I know lead their family. They inspire the men in their families to follow in their footsteps. They demand what is best for them. Despite their age, they obtain better educations than their male counterparts. They are entrepreneurs. They make more money than the men they live with and, in many situations, are the ones who financially support the family. They hold a powerful position in the family where their say is often the final say, and their approval is the one thing everyone strives to get. In regard to the face covering, they form a beautiful mix where each Saudi Arabian woman has her own preference. My immediate family, for example, shows divergent expressions of covering. While my mother still maintains the face covering that she has adapted in her late twenties as a result of the Islamic Revival movement, half of her six daughters follow her steps whereas the other half choose not to. The veil itself, as I know of, does not act as a distinguishing factor, for both veiled and unveiled Saudi Arabian women not only have achieved great accomplishments but also have left their marks and contributions for a better Saudi Arabia. This is the type of Saudi Arabian women I have known firsthand during my 23 years in Saudi Arabia.

However, shortly after my encounter with people in the US, I came to realize that my type of Saudi Arabian women is different from the type of Saudi Arabian women most Americans believe exist. I was told that I must be a woman with limited resources and lack of courage to pursue her dreams, education, and career. I was told that me being in the US by myself was a surprise that was hard to believe. And, after finding out the reason behind my stay in the US (that is to pursue my graduate studies), I am often immediately asked if

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I was a rebel who managed to flee my native country looking for freedom that only existed in Western countries, and thus positing that I had planned to never go back to Saudi Arabia. Not to mention the waitress who, upon finding out that I am Saudi Arabian, asked me, "Seeing women outside being free, how does that make you feel?"

Hearing these narratives regularly, I was made aware that misperceptions of Saudi Arabian women exist. On that note, I grew curious wanting to know how *exactly* people in the US see me as a Saudi Arabian woman. My curiosity seemed to correlate with an interest expressed by an American audience who asked me, during my presidency of the Saudi Club at the University of New Mexico, to give a speech about Saudi Arabian women at the Arabic Language Festival. So, in early 2016 and in preparation for that speech, I navigated through Google Image using the two languages I speak: Arabic and English. I typed "Saudi Arabian women" and "Saudi women" in the two languages to see if there were any differences. The results were intriguing. Not only was the manifestation of the black veil overwhelming in my English language Google Image search as it was in every image, but also the clusters of women dressed in full black with no sign of gender mixture. There was no single woman with an exposed face. On the other hand, the search in Arabic language had a less overwhelming blackness. In fact, there was an image of a crowd of women surrounding the former King of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah. In that image, about 95% of these women had their faces exposed, while the rest had their faces covered. The image was celebratory in the sense that these women, veiled and unveiled alike, had achieved so much that they deserved to be standing next to the King himself. Consequently, I started asking the question "Why is there a difference?" That small experiment made me realize a need to correct these false narratives constructed by the West of Saudi Arabian women

who are described as veiled, oppressed, uneducated, isolated victims in their own patriarchal society.

My residency in the US privileges me in the sense that I am able to not only explore these Western representations but also address them in a Western language, i.e., English, as an attempt to have a dialogue with the Western audience. As a Saudi Arabian female scholar studying in the US, I attempt to bridge the gap and offer a clearer understanding of the women of my own society. In this paper, I feel compelled to challenge Western misconception of victimized, voiceless, uneducated Saudi Arabian housewives. I attempt to dig deeper into how these women are portrayed in Western literary works as the Other. For that purpose, I choose to critically and linguistically read one novel located in Saudi Arabia that features Saudi Arabian women as main characters and is written by a female US author. I present my work as a linguistic, feminist research.

Finding Nouf by Zoe Ferraris (2009) is selected for various reasons (explained in detail in Methodology Chapter). Its author, Ferraris, is an Anglo-American novelist who was born in Oklahoma in 1972 to a U.S. army officer and was married at the age of 19 years old to a Saudi Arabian/Palestinian man, whom she met in San Francisco. During the few years of their marriage, she flew to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1991 and lived with his family, whom she describes as Bedouin, for nine months. She says that her short time in Saudi Arabia has informed her writing of Saudi Arabian women. As a result of this background, her people regard her work authentic, since it is coming from someone who has a fair knowledge of Saudi Arabia, its culture and women. In fact, in one of her interviews, *Uncovering life behind the burqa*, Ferraris was described as an author "with an insider knowledge of Saudi Arabia" (Ferraris, September 17, 2010).

Therefore, in this study, I conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis of Ferraris' novel to explore how Saudi Arabian women are represented by Ferraris, an author coming from a primarily Western tradition, taking into account the exposure she had to Saudi Arabian society during her nine months in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. I narrow my analysis to focus on her use of the veil to depict Saudi Arabian women in her narrative. I employ Van Dijk's ideological square approach to Critical Discourse Analysis which argues for binary oppositions of in-group versus out-group (Van Dijk, 1998). According to Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, the polarization of in-group versus out-group makes it possible for members of a dominant society to emphasize their positive qualities (as in-group members) while emphasizing negative qualities of others (as out-group members). Bearing in mind my theoretical framework as well as the focus of the study, I ask: How does Ferraris portray Saudi Arabian women in regard to their use of the veil as out-group in comparison to American women as in-group?

Based on my analysis, it is evident that Ferraris, in her *Finding Nouf*, others and out-groups Saudi Arabian women as she casts them as different from her in-group American women. She portrays Saudi Arabian women as helpless victimized women who need their white American man rescuer. I believe that Ferraris fails to recognize the overall and nuanced social and cultural values of Saudi Arabian society, and therefore contributes to the continuous reinforcement of the erroneous representations of Saudi Arabian women.

My findings find manifestations of Said's *Orientalism* (1979) in Ferraris' narrative of Saudi Arabian women. According to Said, the West divides the world into two distinct groups: East/Orient and West/Occident. During their self-projection, the West, systematically and strategically, presents the Orient in an inferior way to proclaim their

Western superiority. For the West to associate negative traits to the Orient is to assert Occident's positive traits (e.g., claiming that the Orient is uncivilized is to say that the Occident is civilized).

Organization of the Paper

This research paper has 6 chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, discussion, and conclusion. In the literature review chapter, I explore the subject of the veil and how its meaning, to both the East and the West, changes throughout history. I present a historically informed assessment of how the veil, starting as a symbol of all three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), has changed over time and in political significance to become primarily associated with Muslim women. Also, I offer explanations on how the political atmosphere between two powerful parties: Ottoman Empire (Muslims) and Europeans (Christians), has influenced and shaped the meanings of the veil. It is due to the political discourse of the two parties that the veil has shifted from being invisible in Western literature during Western medieval times to being recognized as an Islamic emblem, and perhaps associated with extremism, at the time of the Western modern era. In addition, I shed light on the different meanings the veil has in the twenty-first century. I touch on some related works by feminist scholars. I give voice to different interpretations given by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In order to drive my argument for divergent meanings of the veil home, I present some ethnographic studies that examine Muslim women and society at different political times. Finally, I provide a literature review of the framework used in my study: ideological square by Van Dijk (1998).

In the methodology chapter, I put forward the methods and tools utilized to collect my data in order to address my research question. I present my reasons for choosing

Finding Nouf by Zoe Ferraris. I give a summary of the author's background as well as an overview of the novel. Lastly, I share the process I went through in order to collect my data. I choose excerpts carefully based on two main themes: veiling and unveiling.

In the analysis chapter, I present a detailed analysis of the selected novel. In this chapter, I lay out my analysis into three main sections: representation of in-group (American women); representation of out-group (Saudi Arabian women); and comparative representations of in-group versus out-group.

Finally, in my discussion chapter, I contend that Ferraris' negative representation of Saudi Arabian women is highly problematic. I offer statistics as well as pieces of news and opinions by various number of Saudi Arabian women in regard to Saudi Arabian women's veiling, education, employment, polygamy and rights. In my conclusion chapter, I acknowledge the limitations of my research as well as ideas and suggestions for a possible future research addressing the misperceptions of Saudi Arabian women in Western literature.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

"Whether to veil or not became a burning subject among women – Jewish, Muslim,

and Christians," Ahmed states referring to the status of women in Egypt back in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries after the European Occupation of Egypt by France in 1799 and then by Britain in 1801 (Ahmed, 2011, p. 39). Today, the use of the veil is still a topic that is intensely debated, particularly in the West, yet the focus of its significance has shifted to be primarily a concern of Muslim women. The West developed an "obsession with Muslim women's veil [as it] disgusts many Westerners and arouses their pity, and for many of them is an epitome of cruelty of Islam" (Ameri, 2012, p.1). As a result, there is no Muslim woman, regardless of her ethnicity, spared these negative associations of the veil.

Focusing on Saudi Arabian women portrayed by a female US author, this paper tackles the perceptions of the veil in the United States. It examines the constructed meanings of the veil worn by Saudi Arabian women from the perspective of Zoe Ferraris as portrayed in her novel, *Finding Nouf* (2009). The goal of this work is to analyze the way this US female writer, namely Zoe Ferraris, depicts the character of Saudi Arabian woman in her literary work through her characterizations of the influence and meaning of the veil. I do not consider Zoe Ferraris a representative of the entire nation of the United States. I do however assert that the perspectives in her work are dominant. The reasons behind choosing this particular author, who happens to have first-hand experience with Saudi Arabian culture, along with the selected literary work are explained in detail in the Methodology Chapter.

To explore the subject of the veil in the twenty-first century, one needs to go back through history to examine how wearing the veil has become an Islamic symbol (rather than a symbol of all three monotheistic religions), how it has become most often associated with social and political implications of radicalism, as well as how its presence and disappearance are highly influenced by the politics of the era. Thus, this chapter starts by

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putting forward the various meanings and contradictions of the veil's significance disseminated in discourse over time between the East and the West, and how this discourse reveals dominance and power in a way that it produces perceptions of Saudi Arabian women as 'other.' The second part of the chapter presents the theoretical framework employed in analyzing the novel *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris.

The Islamic Veil in Literature

Representations of Muslim women in relation to the veil.

To examine the veil thoroughly, we need to go back in time to the first appearance of the veil in literature. There was no trace of the veil in the literature before the nineteenth century. Although their studies explore the veil from different angles, both Kahf's *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: from Termagant to Odalisque* (1999) and Ahmed's *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (2011) affirm that the veil, as an Islamic symbol, was invisible and not found anywhere in the literature when the Muslims were the dominant party in the region. However, when Western Europeans started gaining power over the Muslims as a result of the European occupation that expanded to take control of major Muslim lands in the early nineteenth century, the veil suddenly became visible in the literature, European literature in particular, and thus was mentioned, discussed and debated almost everywhere, including in literary works. When Europeans were suffering during medieval centuries, the Muslims had their golden era, experiencing prosperity in various aspects of life including "technological expertise, magical knowledge, and superhuman power" which then became "the source of resentment in [European] medieval outlooks which equated success with right" and supremacy (Kahf, 1999, p. 4). Thus, the fact that Muslim, Christian and Jewish women wore the veil in

Islamic States did not come across as being wrong to the Europeans. Examining the development of Western representations of Muslim women in male-authored literary texts from the eleventh century to the nineteenth century, Kahf (1999) argues that not only was the veil non-existent in medieval texts, but also Muslim women were perceived and portrayed as exceptionally powerful figures in Western European narratives at the time. However, when Europeans became stronger in late eighteenth century as they expanded their political powers overseas to take control some of the major Muslim lands like Egypt in the 19th century, the veil did "become a prop associated exclusively with Islam" (Kahf, 1999, p. 5).

Before evaluating the impact of this power shift and the recognition of the veil as an exclusively Islamic symbol, it is important to first shed light on Western judgements and perceptions of Muslim people, particularly Muslim women, when Muslims had mastery over Europe. Kahf's work, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: from Termagant to Odalisque*, (1999) is an extraordinary account that examines the evolving and changing representations of Muslim women in Western male-authored literary texts over a few centuries (eleventh - nineteenth) in relation to two major religious political factions: Muslims and Europeans/Christians. Starting with Western medieval centuries, it is important to take into account the fact that it is during these centuries that the Muslims were flourishing. Said (1979) writes, "during its political and military heyday from the eighth century to the sixteenth, Islam dominated both East and West." (1979, p. 205). It is to say that when Christians were having their medieval era, the Muslims had their golden era. In fact, the Muslims were the influencers in various fields including astronomy, chemistry (hence the Arabic loanword alchemy), mathematics (hence the Arabic loanwords

algebra, algorithm, etc.), medicine, arts, agriculture, music, and pottery. They were the innovators of many technologies. On that note, Kalf argues that the Muslim woman barely appears in European medieval texts. She explains:

Western concerns about Islam in medieval texts cluster around concerns other than women. The success of the world of Islam was the source of resentment in medieval outlooks which equated success with right. How could blasphemy be allowed to gain power and glory? Technological expertise, magical knowledge, and superhuman power help explain this conundrum and constitute major elements in the medieval Western narrative of Islam. (p. 4)

Having that said, the Muslim woman still exists in medieval male-authored literary texts. Fundamentally, these texts appear to have implemented the tactic of wanting to "subdue" the Muslim woman rather than liberating her (Kahf, 1999, p.4). The prototypical medieval story depicts the Muslim woman as "the exuberant and overbearing […] termagant" (Kahf, 1999, p. 8). Kahf states that the character of a Muslim woman, long before Europeans have equated the veil with her identity, "typically appears as a queen or noblewoman wielding power of harem or succor over the hero, reflecting in this the earthly might of Islamic civilization. These figures are loquacious and transgress the bounds of traditional femininity, reflecting the failure of their parent religion to inculcate proper gender roles" (Kahf, 1999, p. 4). These literary texts "masculinize" the Muslim woman as they represent her as a powerful figure in the narratives (p. 53). Kahf (1999) explains in detail:

The basic plot of the story of the Muslim woman in medieval texts runs like this: A high-ranking noblewoman becomes attracted to a Christian man imprisoned by her

father or husband and aids him in a battle between Christians and Muslims. At the end of the battle, the lady converts, transfers the father's or husband's treasures to the Christians, embraces a more passive femininity, and becomes part of the European world. Despite this obligatory transformation, the image that remains dominant is the powerful female figure that was present through most of the text. Sometimes this exuberance is manifested in the physical size of Muslim "giantesses." In other instances, it is expressed as "wanton" or intimidating sexuality of the Muslim woman, who also holds higher social rank than the Christian hero. (p. 4-5)

Therefore, the utilization of the Muslim woman character in this way by European male authors is employed "not as a function of European supremacy over all others, but as a function of Christian resentment of superior Islamic power; she is differentiated as the intimidating and powerful female factor of an intimidating and powerful enemy" (p. 71).

However, as Europeans slowly gained power through their overseas political expansions during the Renaissance era in the seventeenth century, they felt the need to degrade a powerful threatening enemy like the Islamic Ottoman Empire. Although Europeans were taking control as they "had begun to take slaves systematically to build their own empires, they knew [they] themselves could still be randomly enslaved by Islamic powers" which made them "compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty and integrity of Islamic countries" (Kahf, 1999, p. 57). Trying to express their dominance without making the Muslims look more powerful, they slowly adjusted the image of the Muslim woman in their stories. A "sense of confraternity and equality with the Ottomans" was perceived, after a long period of regarding themselves as subservient to the Muslims

(Kahf, 1999, p. 60). With that, the presence of the veil along with the harem hardly appeared in their narratives of the Muslim woman. It is to say that the power dynamic of the time did not permit Europeans to project themselves as superior and thus find differences in the Muslim empire that can serve as traits and signs of inferiority.

Eventually, as the European modern era started in the nineteenth century, the sense of "equality" between the two religious parties had become a sense of "superiority" of the Christian/Europeans over the Muslims/Ottomans as the Europeans started colonizing major Muslim territories (Kahf, 1999). The veil and the harem became now fully widespread and exclusively associated with the Muslim woman who was represented as "odalisque" in Western literature (Kahf, 1999). This change of course to representing this woman as "the subjugated Muslim woman" in Western male-authored literary works "concurred with the build-up of British and French empires in the nineteenth century, which, in subjugating whole Muslim societies, had a direct interest in viewing the Muslim woman as oppressed – even as their policies had oppressive effects on flesh-and-blood Muslim women" (Kahf, 1999, p. 6). In these stories, there is a "battle between the Romantic hero and a Muslim man over possession of the Muslim woman, often figured as a contest of who can penetrate the harem wall and/or her veil and be the master of the gaze over her body" (p. 9). The Western literary representation of the Muslim woman became highly complicated in this era. Kahf (1999) explains:

> The dominant narrative of the Muslim women in Western discourse from about the eighteenth century to the present basically states, often in quite sophisticated ways, that the Muslim woman is innately oppressed; it produces Muslim women who affirm this statement by being either submissive nonentities or rebellious

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renegades–rebellious against their own Islamic world, that is, and conforming to Western gender roles. Their oppression is often figured as sexual oppression, and the corresponding submission or rebellion figured as sexual submission or rebellion. It is produced mainly in ways that are pleasurable from a heterosexual male perspective, and that rationalize and justify Western interests in the material domination of the Islamic world (p. 177).

Therefore, it is decidedly clear that the societal and religious dominance of a party plays an enormous role in determining how a particular group is perceived and thus depicted. The change of power discourse between two major parties (Muslims versus Christians) over a few centuries made it possible for the image of Muslim women to be completely transformed from being "bold queens of two worlds who bully, boast, and beckon in the early texts of Western Europe, to helpless harem slaves mutely making space for two sets of masters at the other end of history" (Kahf, 1999, p. 9). The discourse of the helpless oppressed Muslim woman in the modern era oftentimes evolves around her use of the veil and the political exigencies of the increasingly dominant non-Muslim Euro-Christian colonist. In the following section, I will examine how this piece of cloth has become an exclusively Islamic symbol as well as how its use has undergone significant complicated contradictory religious and political transformations.

The veil debate among Muslims.

According to Ahmed (2011), Egypt was the first major Islamic land of great import and cultural complexity to be under Europeans. It witnessed Napoleon's French invasion in 1799 followed by British forces in 1801. This occupation gave Muslims in the entire Ottoman Empire the feeling of urgency to "catching up with Europe" (p. 26). In other

words, it gave them the impression that the West, being the colonizer, was the superior cultural society whereas they, the colonized, were the inferior culture needing help from the former. Comparing between the two worlds, the veil worn by all Egyptian monotheistic women was one of the key differences that was heavily discussed by Europeans. As a result, Egyptian women, regardless of which of the three religions they adhered to (Judaism, Christianity, or Islam), started to unveil, since unveiling seemed to be "the prerequisite to the country's advancement and thus also to Egypt's gaining independence from Britain" (Ahmed, 2011, p. 31). However, "Christian and Jewish women seemed to be unveiling just slightly ahead of their Muslim sisters" which then resulted in Europeans perceiving the veil as "a uniquely Islamic practice" (p. 36-7). In addition, due to the huge debate about "the whole question of liberty in Western political discourse," Europeans included "the question of liberty for Muslim women" under the premise that veiling was to limit Muslim women (Kahf, 1999, p. 7).

As a result, Ahmed (2011) argues that Egyptians became divided into two main political groups, each with their own ideologies in regard to the British occupation. There are those intellectuals and politicians who welcomed the British presence to the extent that both parties could work together towards a Westernized Egypt, and those intellectuals and politicians who were completely against the British Occupation to the extent that they "called for Islamic unity and solidarity in the face of European imperialism, as well as for the restoration of ties with Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire" (p. 32). Since the veil was at the center of what the British wanted to change, it was utilized as a gesture to express one's political affiliation, either with or against the colonizers.

By the time these political divisions were established, a French-educated Muslim Egyptian lawyer named Qasim Amin came into the picture in the late nineteenth century during the European occupation of Egypt. Being a Muslim advocate yet a supporter of the colonization, Amin attempted to moderately reform the status of Muslim women in a way that pleased the British. In his book, *The Liberation of Women*, he dedicated an entire chapter titled "Women and the Veil" to discuss the Islamic veil (1899/2005). Ahmed (2011) believes that Amin's argument was one of the early and prominent, religious yet intellectual debates in history by Muslims. The lack of Muslim debates about the veil prior to Amin's argument may indicate invisibility of the veil to the Muslims. It seems that Muslims do not see the veil as a problem, but rather as a part of their regular clothing, perhaps similar to wearing a pair of shoes. However, since it has become heavily debated in Western discourses, Muslims feel compelled to response and engage in the dialogue.

In "Women and the Veil", Amin (1899/2005) presented the fact that the veil was not an Islamic innovation; it was a widespread tradition also found in many places where Christianity existed. As nations and religions interacted, Muslims adapted the use of the veil that was introduced to them. Although Amin's education was heavenly influenced by Western philosophers and thinkers who mostly condemned the veil, Amin chose to "still defend the use of the veil and consider it one of the permanent cornerstones of morality" (1899/2005, p. 35). Being an Islamic modernist, Amin relied on some verses of the Quran (the Islamic Holy Book) and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed that discussed the veil to encourage what he called "legal veil," as opposed to the "traditional veil" that had women cover their face, palms and feet. Like many others, he described the traditional veil that entailed the covering of the woman's face as "a great hindrance to a woman's progress,

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and indeed to a country's progress" (Amin, 1899/2005, p. 47). He valued the spiritual quality of the veil (i.e., chastity) not the material one (i.e., a piece of garment covering women's face) which secludes women from the world of men and begets limitations on their right to enjoy life. Therefore, the veil's common use among Egyptians, Muslim women in particular, should not have been so familiar to the culture to the point where no one questioned its use anymore. Intellectual debates on both the veil's advantages and disadvantages should have been more broadly disseminated, understood, and greatly encouraged (p. 46-7).

Eventually, Amin's call for the "legal veil" was widely accepted, and as a result a movement to unveil was taking place in Egypt by the end of the nineteenth century. Ahmed (2011) describes what unveiling meant at the time:

> Unveiling would become ever more clearly the emblem of an era of new hopes and desires, and of aspirations for modernity: of the possibility of education and the right to work for both women and men, and of equal opportunity and advancement based on effort and merit instead of inherited privileges be it of class or race. (p. 39)

However, Egypt, the same country that had widely accepted the unveiling practice, witnessed a veil movement half a century later (El Guindi, 1999/2003). In the mid-1970s, when a political party, the Muslim Brotherhood, gained power, young urban women studying in colleges would go out completely veiled in "an appearance" that was "unfamiliar to contemporary urban Egypt and [their] own parents" (El Guindi, 1999/2003, p. 586). Veiling was "unfamiliar" because it had undergone a significant transition to the point where seeing unveiled women became the norm (Ahmed, 2011). Therefore, when

wearing the veil became a political and activist movement in the seventies, the government felt threatened; hence they attempted to ban it in universities (El Guindi, 1999/2003).

The "veiling movement" in Egypt instigated by the Muslim Brotherhood coincided with another "veiling movement" in neighboring countries. Saudi Arabia, for example, experienced a dramatic sudden shift from a state that expressed a relaxed attitude toward the implementations of Islam, more particularly the use of the veil, to a more socially restricted one. The Arabian Peninsula had been predominantly an Islamic region since the seventh century. By the time Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932, it was already a Muslim state. However, similar to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Wahhabism, an Islamic doctrine in Saudi Arabia that was both religious and political, supported by the state of Saudi Arabia, had emerged as a result of the oil boom and the increasing number of foreign workers. It was an attempt as national/religious identity consolidation against the perceived muddying of identity which many felt was a risk resulting from immigration. Gaining power during the Islamic Awakening, or the Islamic Revival period between the 1960s and the 1980s in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim neighboring countries, Wahhabism, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, managed to shape the national and the Islamic costume of Saudi Arabian women by the end of the 20th century (Le Renard, 2014). Not only did Wahhabism forbid unveiling which was the norm in the country, it also managed to socially and politically paralyze Saudi Arabian women in many other ways. For example, when Doumato (2000) investigated the healing practices and rituals before and after the Wahhabism movement, she determined that Saudi Arabian women who inhabited areas which were dominated by Wahhabis (i.e., Najd and its surroundings) were deprived of the spiritual rituals that were practiced by Saudi Arabian women of other areas outside of

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Wahhabism's stronghold. She argued that the key that differentiated the practices, accesses, and limitations of women in Najd from their counterparts was the profound existence of Wahhabism in Najd. She concluded that women's experiences in Saudi Arabia before the Wahhabi movement in the area were different from their experiences after the movement, due to the restrictions imposed on them by that movement. For example, the spiritual rituals, which are performed by women and are rooted in the culture, have become restricted after Wahhabism.

Al-Rasheed (2013) agrees with Doumato in the sense that she blames both the state (Saudi Arabia) and the religion (Wahhabism as religious nationalism) for what she refers to as "persistent gender discrimination," addressed throughout her book which presents an extensive account of the political and historical backgrounds of Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, it seems impossible not to raise some doubts questioning the validity and motive of her arguments, considering her personal background and relationship with the current Royal Family of Saudi Arabia. She is the granddaughter of the last Emir of the Al-Rasheed dynasty who helplessly surrendered himself to the founder of the current Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz Al-Saud, who took control of Ha'il, the center of the Al-Rasheed Emirate, in 1921. Simply put, her personal familial ties and historical allegiances may hold great sway on her argument.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that most, if not all, of the restrictions which have been imposed on women by Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a means of limiting women's rights have no grounds in the Quran. Taking the veil argument as an example, the Quran does not "stipulate" nor specify how women should

wear one in public (Amin, 1899/2005, p. 37). The Quran says (English translation of the Arabic verses as given in Amin, 1899/2005, p. 37-8):

> Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is Aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigor, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment (Quran, 24:30-1)

Amin (1899/2005) argued that it was the jurists and Islamic scholars, not the Quran per se, who interpreted these two verses. They attempted to establish a specific and guided way for women to dress in public. They clearly defined what and what could not be shown. Although the previous verses address the covering of bodies (not faces or heads) while it encourages self-policing where modesty is concerned: averting or dropping eyes for both men and women, they included face in the discussion. They proposed different interpretations of the very same verses. The phrase "and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent" was what in particular had led to different understandings. One school asserted that the criterion to determine what could be "apparent" was necessity, whereas another school argued that it was based on the cultural and social norms of a Muslim community. This resulted in a debate on what could be considered a "necessity" and what could be a "cultural norm." For instance, is showing the face a necessity? Two

opinions emerged. First, showing the face is not necessary, and therefore women should cover it. Second, the face is essential to identify the woman, and therefore women are permitted to display their face. Wahhabism, for example, selectively imposed the former opinion on Saudi Arabian women, whereas Amin (1899/2005) supported the latter in his book which permitted women to show their face and palms. However, since the leaders of all these Islamic schools are men, the question of whether or not these guidelines for how women should dress in public are innately patriarchal is worth a deep investigation. It is possible that these male leaders have imposed nearly full-body covering upon Muslim women as a way of practicing their male dominance. This can be the case especially since Muslim clerks commonly refer to specific Quranic verses, including the ones above, as the "Veil Verses" when the word "veil," or its Arabic equivalent "*hijab*," is nowhere to be found in these verses.

In her Ted Talk *What does the Quran really say about a Muslim woman's hijab*, Ali (2017) argues that although the Quran has 114 chapters with more than 6,000 verses, there are only three verses that discuss the women's way of dressing in public, yet with no mention of the word "*hijab*" nor a list of guidelines. She says, "it turns out God does not give a bullet point of all the parts on a woman's body that He wants hidden from view." Moreover, on the lack of Quranic prescription for what should be covered, she explains, "I cannot stress enough that it is argued by many Muslim scholars that the reason these verses were left intentionally vague is so that a woman could choose for herself how to dress according to her specific culture and the progression of time." Lastly, although the word "*hijab*" is commonly used to refer to that piece of cloth covering women, she declares:

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In fact, [the word *hijab*] is nowhere in the Quran directly meaning a woman's veil. That is not to say that the word does not appear in the Quran because it does appear. But when it appears, it is actually used correctly, to mean a barrier or a divide. Such as the barrier or divide that exists between us humans and the divine, or between believers and non-believers. Or it means a barrier, like a physical screen, that men during Mohammed's time were asked to stand behind when speaking to his wives. Or it means the seclusion, the separation, that Mary sought when she was giving birth to Jesus. That separation and seclusion, that means *hijab*. That physical screen, that means *hijab*. That barrier, that divide, that means *hijab*. *Hijab* does not mean a woman's veil.

Therefore, if the Quran does use the word "*hijab*" to mean women's covering nor prescribes women's public dress, what else would be the agendas the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia have if it is not for patriarchal dominance and political expressions? The possibility that their imposed laws have hidden agendas, other than Islamic teachings, is highly feasible. For example, contrary to the policies of Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Quran, revealed in the seventh century and never changed, preaches for gender equality in situations like religious obligations, educational rights, and public societal roles, in a way that emancipates and "orient[s] women towards many spheres of life, [by] disregarding the gender ideology" (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Al Dighrir, 2015, p. 124). Moreover, Al-Mannai (2010) says that Islam has come to liberate women from the suffering they had prior to Islam. He argues that Islam gives women equal rights and equal duties to the ones of men, by projecting "the philosophy of being both equal and different" (Al-Mannai, 2010, p. 85). However, looking

at the current treatments Muslim women receive in Muslim states, he affirms that if there is any situation where a Muslim woman is not practicing her rights in a Muslim country, it is because she is "generally unaware" of the rights that were granted to her by the religion of Islam centuries ago (p. 85). He adds, being unaware makes it possible for their culture to constrain them, since the practiced culture and politics in these Muslim countries determine both the rights and the struggles experienced by their female citizens. Hence, culture and politics are more dominant than the teachings of Islam. It is therefore of utmost importance not to confuse religion with the state. It is the ruling party in an Islamic State that has the authority to shape how Muslim women live.

Contemporary meanings and (mis)perceptions of the veil.

The veil, a piece of garment placed over the face and the head, along with Muslims' shifting attitudes between veiling and unveiling, has drawn a lot of attention. It has been perceived in different ways, not only by those wearing it but also by those who see it worn by Muslim women. Therefore, it would seem to be of utmost importance for there to be dialogue surrounding not only veiling but also unveiling among both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Fundamentally, to Muslims, the unveiling practice was not necessarily viewed as a suggestion of secularism, particularly during the unveiling movement that happened in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Ahmed, 2011). Rather, it was a representation of modernity alongside piety. In other words, Muslims did not make the veil a requirement to expressing their piety and dedication to their religion. Rather, Muslims considered unveiled women pious and religious, not secular. However, after gaining power, the religious political groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Wahhabism

in Saudi Arabia, had established the unveiling practice as secular, or at least not following the 'true' Islam.

During the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism's power, the use of the veil was imbued with some political, not innately religious, meanings in both Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, both doctrines claimed pure Islamic premises for their movements. However, the truth is that in Egypt, for example, the veil simply means the presence of Islamists and the Brotherhood political movements, and, according to Ahmed, the ugly, traumatizing events she witnessed in her childhood as the Muslim Brotherhood gained power in Egypt (Ahmed, 2011). Similarly, Le Renard (2014) states that it was the discovery of oil in 1938 that made Saudi Arabia accessible and of interest to foreigners. Thus, Saudi Arabians, with the help of Wahhabism, have enforced the veil as a means of representing a national identity and distinguishing the Saudi Arabians from the non-Saudi Arabians who represented close to 50% of the workforce by the 1970s. This is to say that it was the immigration and the labor factor that drove the use of the veil, rather than a religious argument.

Wearing the veil therefore has a number of divergent meanings associated with it. This is the case not only for Muslims but also for non-Muslims. The most general contemporary meanings perceived by Western societies is that the veil is "irretrievably patriarchal" or is the emblem of "the inferior Muslim Other" (Ahmed, 2005/2013, p. 311). Taking as a case Amin's call for the "legal veil" in 1899 which resulted in the unveiling movement in Egypt, Ahmed (2011) argues that such a movement would not have happened if the West had not constructed negative meanings for the veil. She says, "one noteworthy fact about the unveiling movement is how it originated not in precolonialist Middle Eastern

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notions of the meaning of the veil, notions rooted in Islamic, Christian, Jewish local meanings, but rather in Western nineteenth-century ideas about the veil's meaning" (Ahmed, 2011, p. 44). It is important to note that these meanings emerge from Western discourses that aim to project Muslims as the one who has everything the West does not want to be associated with (Said, 1979). By doing so, the West proclaim their superiority over the inferior Muslims.

The veil was among the things that the West had constructed negative meanings to. Ahmed (2011) explains, "the process of unveiling occurred initially because the Western meaning of the veil–as a sign of the inferiority of Islam as religion, culture, and civilization–trumped and came to profoundly overlay the veil's prior indigenous meanings (common to all three monotheistic religions in the region) of proper and God-given gender hierarchy and separation" (p. 45). It is because of this, Amin called for abandoning the veil practice in 1899 as an attempt to "eradicate this sign of inferiority from his society" (Ahmed, 2011, p. 44).

Contemporarily, the veil has become the center of debates in the French Parliament for the past few decades (Le Renard, 2014). In French society, the veil symbolizes a wide range of constructs, including oppression of religion, oppression of men, threats to the West, lack of agency, backwardness, ignorance, and radical Islamic politics fostering terrorism. Therefore, it is not surprising to have the West respond and react to veiled women by trying to "save" them (Abu-Lughod, 2015). The ban of *burqa*, or face coverings, in France, in 2004, is a well-known incident which was fully supported by French feminists who believed that that they were saving Muslim women from the oppression of their male family members (Le Renard, 2014). In Afghanistan when the Taliban was still in power,

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veiled women seemed to be perceived as both threats to the West and victims of the Taliban oppressors who forced them to wear the veil. Because of the veil, President George W. Bush referred to these Afghan women as "women of cover," which in part was used as a justification for the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 (Abu-Lughod, 2015). The war was carried out to "free" those women from having to wear the blue burqa (Abu-Lughod, 2015; Ahmed, 2005/2013).

Thus, having a Muslim woman around, whether she is veiled or not, is toxic more than it is exotic. Revealing the identity of a Muslim woman, especially if she is unveiled, seems to be of vital importance to the West. In her examination of a documentary film of two Muslim women, Sotsky (2013) states that the identity of the two Muslim women are revealed merely to "confirm that they are not dangerous," despite all the safety risks such an act may lead to (p.798). These two women have different stances regarding the veil. On the one hand, there is a woman who wears the veil willingly in, perhaps, the number one place that detests it, Paris. On the other hand, there is a woman who resists wearing the veil in a state that enforces its use, Iran. Sotsky argues that the film does not acknowledge the existence of the opposing positions among Muslim women, positions that have the potential of rejecting Western narratives of what freedom is in the first place. The truth is that the veil is central to a Muslim woman's identity in Western narratives, since her identity is "encapsulated in her take on the veil" (Sotsky, 2013, p. 798). It says, implicitly, that a Muslim woman is perceived as one with all the attributes associated with the veil only if she is wearing the veil that indexes these meanings. Otherwise, if she is not wearing the veil, she is liberal, educated, free, and not dangerous. Therefore, wearing the veil, the emblem of Islam to Western narratives, in a non-Muslim country like France or the United

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States where Muslims are not only minorities but also victims of outright attacks (especially after 9/11) can potentially put the lives of Muslim women at risk. Nevertheless, the common narrative heard from veiled young Muslim women in the US is that they choose to put it on, sometimes against the will of their parents (Ahmed, 2005/2013). This very notion of having the veil accepted by some Muslim women in the US as the norm is the core question behind Ahmed's article *The Veil Debate – Again*. The reasons for wearing the veil (or not) and the meanings associated with wearing it (or not) are very complex. Ahmed (2005/2013) states:

> Wearing the veil or headscarf can be, for instance, at this moment in the United States, a statement of religious commitment, a statement of identity, of communal affiliation, national or international, a political statement, and an aesthetic and/or erotic statement. It can also be, to be sure, a statement of a commitment to a belief in men as the natural and God-ordained authorities in our societies, and it can be a silent but forceful rejection and even reversal of the veil as emblem of the inferior Muslim Other (much as the Afro was of African racial inferiority), and a stubborn affirmation, of, on the contrary, full moral equality. And of course too it can evoke and play on any combination of these–and many more–possible meanings (p. 313).

Yet, having the veil established as a symbol of the "Inferior Muslim Other," perhaps the "harmful other," within the framework of imperialism, superiority, and the moral obligation of the white man towards the less civilized nations, made it possible to view the act of abandoning the veil as "a commitment to the project of modernity [as well as] a commitment to women's full and equal participation without limit or qualification" (Ahmed, 2005/2013, p. 310). On the other hand, when Islamists wear the veil, as a response

to the previous view, it serves to indicate an "affirmed […] way of embracing modernity and feminism (Ahmed, 2005/2013, p. 310). For example, the veil movement that happened in Egypt in the mid-seventies led to what El Guindi called Islamic Feminism (1999/2003). El Guindi argues that Islamic Feminism is "feminist because it seeks to liberate womanhood; it is Islamic because its premises are embedded in Islamic principles and values" (1999/2003, p. 602). Although it is similar to Western Feminism in that it is there to emancipate women, Islamic Feminism, along with its voluntary wearing of the veil or Hijab, is to liberate women from "imposed, imported identities, consumerist behaviors, and an increasingly materialist culture" while giving them "greater access to Islamic literacy" (p. 602). Therefore, being predominantly a political and "a deeply feminist gesture," Ahmed (2005/2013) argues that the veil "gives visibility to Muslimness in ways which foregrounded issues of ethnic, religious, and gender justice" (p. 313). Moreover, El Guindi (1999/2003) asserts that it "combines notions of respectability, morality, identity and resistance. […] Resistance through *the hijab* or against it, in tangible form as attire or in tangible form as a code of behavior, has generated a dynamic discourse around gender, Islamic ideals, Arab society and women's status and liberation" (p. 602-3). Thus, wearing the veil in our times, especially in a non-Muslim country, constitutes much more than a religious emblem showing a desire to be obedient to God, or to be submissive to patriarchal orders.

Regardless of the deep connections Muslim women have with the veil, the perception of it as a threat, and as symbolic of a lack of agency, of backwardness and of oppression is interwoven in the Western narratives. One of the main reasons behind these false judgments is the lack of awareness of the holistic context out of which veiled women

emerge and are situated. The importance of understanding the historical, cultural, political, economic, and religious backgrounds of Muslim women and their countries should be acknowledged in order to better understand and interpret their social norms and values. Similarly, the failure to obtain an epistemological knowledge of the contexts that shape these societies is decidedly crucial, leading to misinterpretations and therefore misrepresentations of both the people of these targeted societies and their societal norms and values.

One of the many incidents that resulted in Western misinterpretation of Muslim women's use of the veil occurred after the Taliban's power was removed from Afghanistan in 2001. Against the West's expectations, the Afghan women did not take their veil off after the US invasion, which was touted to guarantee the liberation of Afghan women. In her *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, Abu-Lughod (2015) mentions one confession from the West that says, "Did we expect that once 'free' from the extremist Taliban these women would go 'back' to belly shirts and blue jeans or dust off their Chanel suits? We need to be more sensible about the clothing of 'women of cover,'" (Abu-Lughod, 2015, p. 35). Much to their surprise, Abu-Lughod (2015) argues that the blue burqa was not invented by the Taliban. It was the form of covering worn by women mostly from the Pashtun, an ethnic group in Afghanistan, where the Taliban are predominantly members. It is also a covering that was worn in the subcontinent of Southwest Asia. It symbolized respect, modesty, good socio-economic (not elite) status, as well as gender separation. It is for "good, respectable women from strong families who are not forced to make a living selling on the street" (Abu-Lughod, 2015, p. 38). Despite the existence of other forms of covering across Afghanistan, the Taliban had the covering worn by Pashtun women foisted on all women

as a unified form, disregarding all other traditional forms of covering, which in part is a regional imperialism. Thus, the removal of the Taliban would not result in Afghan women throwing off their burqa, or veil, out of euphoria for their "freedom" since the covering had already existed not only in the region of Pashtun but also in other neighboring regions who follow different religions, such as Hindus in the North of India before the arrival of religious Nationalist Muslim factions (Abu-Lughod, 2015).

It is clear that it is enormously problematic when Western feminists call for Muslim women to liberate themselves by "taking it off" in reference to the veil, which Western feminists consider a sign of oppression. El Guindi explains the complexity of the matter, "the early feminist lifting of the face veil was about emancipation from exclusion; the voluntary wearing of the *hijab* since the mid-seventies is about liberation from imposed, imported identities, consumerist behaviors, and an increasingly materialist culture" (El Guindi, 1999/2003, p. 602). In other words, Westerner opposition to the veil constitutes yet another way of reinforcing the absence of choice and tacitly enforces imported identities, consumer culture and materialism. In addition, the mere call for "taking if off" by Westerners is also a display of a profoundly ignorance-based act. As explained above, the veil is not just a garment that is put on a woman's head. It is interwoven with other spheres of life, and is thus a complex gesture that indexes different meanings to different individuals. It is the duty of both Muslims and Westerners alike to make an effort to understand and clarify more holistically what it means to wear, or not to wear, the veil. The question is: to what extent does the current Western dominance create a barrier (or barriers) to achieving such a goal?

Representations of Self versus Other from the eyes of a dominant society.

In today's world, few question the supremacy of the West, even though its dominance has been gained only in the last few centuries. Due to the power "imbalance between East and West [which] is obviously a function of changing historical patterns," the West, who wanted to see itself superior, had spread negative stereotypes of the East as the Other in order to boost Western discourse of dominance (Said, 1979, p. 205). It does so through what Said calls Orientalism, defined as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"" (Said, 1979, p.2). It involves "disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region" (p. 108). Describing the practice of Orientalism employed by the West as they started to gain power, Said asserts:

> Now one of the important developments in nineteenth-century Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient—its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness—into a separate and unchallenged coherence; thus for a writer to use the word *Oriental* was a reference for the reader sufficient to identify a specific body of information about the Orient (1979, p. 205).

Orientalism is a system where the West divides the world into two imaginative halves: East, or the Orient, that is associated with negative traits and West, or the Occident, that is associated with positive traits. In Orientalism, Western discourses "have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," and destiny, and so on" (Said, 1979, p. 2-3). In these discourses, negative portraits of the Orient are constructed. Yet, acknowledging complexity of "the Orient's

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special place in European Western experience," Said states, "the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (p. 1). He links the negative images of the Orient as the Other to Western political agendas. He writes,

> The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire. If this definition of Orientalism seems more political than not, that is simply because I think Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities. Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilization, peoples, and localities. (1979, p. 203)

However, although Said's work is "not meant to be a work of feminist scholarship or theory" since it does not concern itself primarily with women of the Orient, Abu-Lughod argues that "it has engendered feminist scholarship and debate in Middle East studies as well as far beyond the field" (Abu-Lughod, 2001/2013, p. 218). I personally find Said's *Orientalism* (1979) relevant to my research for it explores the role of power and dominance in depicting a certain group of people. In fact, the influence of politics and one's positionality investigated in *Orientalism* has a direct impact on feminist scholarship. According to Abu-Lughod (2001/2013), "a good deal of the most interesting feminist theorizing inside and outside of Middle East studies has been about the importance of positionality (the social location from which one analyzes the world), related to the insights of *Orientalism*" (p. 221-2).

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Looking at the representation of Muslim women in contemporary Western discourses, it is evident that Western representation of Muslim women has drastically change from being "bold queens of two worlds [...] to helpless harem slaves" in a matter of a few centuries (Kahf, 1999, p. 9). The present depiction of Muslim women in Western narrative is usually "vilified and stereotyped" (Ameri, 2012, p. 2). Investigating the visual images of Muslim women in North American print news media, Watt (2012) explores the roles of mass media, meanings readers construct out of seeing bodies and images of Muslim women printed in the news, and the impact of such meanings on people's intercultural relations. Sensing there is a problem, she calls for media literary education as a way of challenging the massive role of media in potentially contributing to constructing false meanings of "others."

Decidedly, the Western media has played a crucial role in shaping the public's perception of what it means to be a Muslim woman in a Muslim country. The amount of influence is enormous. However, the key problem arises as Western feminists present the struggles of those women from a Western perspective with the belief that all women, regardless of their background, experience the same kind of gender oppression. These attempts by outsiders are too limited to offer a solution to the real issue, which is claimed to be Muslim women's rights. Al-Mannai (2010) argues that employing solely "a gender lens" that detaches a society from its influential contexts has the potential of leading to "a very limited understanding of the big picture of women's lives and the dilemmas they are facing" (p.85). Moallem (2008) enforces the same argument and states that the exploration of Muslim women "outside the framework of civilizational thinking" is impossible (p. 109). Thus, Al-Mannai (2010) calls the studies that analyze the status of Muslim women

in the Middle East by feminists from a Western perspective "disturbing" for they group all Muslim women in one box, regardless of their geographical locations (p.86). Moallem (2008) asserts that the politics of the State these Muslim women live in should be taken into consideration, especially when they are represented in the media. Muslim women can be "a racialized group" as in countries like the US and UK, "a citizen of an Islamic state" as in countries like Iran, "a member of an oppositional social movement" as in Egypt, or "a religious minority under the majority rule" as in India (Moallem, 2008, p. 108). The remedy for this problem, in my opinion, is to have a full knowledge of the complexity of the veil in a way that it accounts for its historical, political and cultural implications onto the Muslims and the non-Muslims alike.

As a result of grouping all different Islamic societies into one box as has frequently been done since the European occupation of Egypt in the beginning of the nineteenth century, many Muslim thinkers and intellectuals have come to believe that not only are they inferior, but also that it is the West that should be followed to better their overall condition. Therefore, bearing in mind the political background of Egypt, it is not surprising to see Amin presenting a comparison between the status of Muslim women versus the status of European women as a way of demonstrating his position towards the veil in 1899. Ahmed (2005/2013) contends that Amin positions not only himself but all Muslims as inferior, but he does so while upholding the West as superior and dominant. The emphasis Amin expresses in his comparison of Egyptian women to Western European women and their respective takes on the veil indicates, explicitly, his views of what counts as advancement verses backwardness. Amin (1899/2005) states that the veil was a traditional custom in Europe, however they have advanced so much that they are not wearing it

anymore. Therefore, Egyptian women should follow the European women and do the same as a way of advancing, too.

Other Muslim or insider intellectuals have done the same; they have depicted their cultures from a Western perspective (Moallem, 2008). For instance, Al-Rasheed (2013), a Saudi Arabian female scholar living in the UK, expresses an exhaustive examination of Saudi Arabia's historical, political, and religious contexts, yet she keeps referring to Saudi Arabian women as "heavily veiled" throughout her book. Although one can argue that such an attribute is true about Saudi Arabian women, considering the way they dress when there is a non-relative man around, it is very disturbing to see how a social norm, enforced by political powers at a certain time, has been looked down on to the point where it is employed as a means to describe Saudi Arabian women. Although she accounts for the political agendas enforced by Wahhabism which played a role in women's covering in Saudi Arabia, her reference to Saudi Arabian women as "heavily veiled" is nevertheless tacitly pejorative. Decidedly, Saudi Arabian women have other traits to be described other than being "heavily veiled." Another example is Altorki, a Saudi Arabian female anthropologist who has lived most of her life in the US. She chooses gender segregation, another social norm practiced in Saudi Arabia, as the first criterion and measurement tool for social change and development (Altorki, 1986).

On the other hand, analyzing writings of nine authors whom she refers to as "the most influential contemporary Saudi Arabian women writers," Arebi (1994) affirms that it is very important to look at "indigenous literature" in the assessment of the veil and other cultural and political norms in order for the West to have a better epistemological understanding of how this particular society operates and treats its residents (1994, p.3;

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p.298). As a Western scholar, she realizes that Saudi Arabian women can articulate for themselves, reflect on their social issues and raise awareness for equality, in a way that is different from the West. On that note, I argue that Saudi Arabian women are indeed knowledgeable about their circumstances, struggles and choices. They are capable of voicing their rights, on their own terms and through their own historical lens.

However, although looking at works by insider scholars is of great importance, as it balances the often-divergent perspectives of Westerners and Middle Easterners, these accounts from insiders do not necessarily change the mainstream Western perception of Muslim women or, particularly, the Islamic faith. On the contrary, they have the potential to strengthen and reinforce the negative attributes associated with both Muslim women and Islamic faith in Western media. Since "[the] Muslim woman is of course, a woman who not only comes from a Muslim culture but whose religion is Islam," Western narratives have deeply established "a close relationship between the religion of Islam and the condition of the oppressed Muslim woman" (Ameri, 2012, p. 7). Thus, although these insider accounts might "have challenged a part of the discourse about Muslim women, that of the silent Muslim women," they fail to challenge "mainstream Western discourses on Islam, which frequently deem Islam backward and violent and oppressive to Muslim women" (Ameri, 2012, p. 7).

Therefore, when exploring the category of "Muslimwomen" in the media, questions such as "who is speaking on behalf of the Muslim women?" proposed by Moallem (2008) are highly crucial in determining power hierarchy. Who is holding more power in the region at a time defines not only how the "other" is perceived but also how little and insignificant this "other" thinks of themselves. A good case in point is when Amin

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(1899/2005) called for unveiling Egyptian women through positioning himself, and all Muslims, as inferior to the West. Ahmed (2011) considers this a "trope" of what Gayatri Spivak called in 1988 "white men saving brown women from brown men" (Ahmed, 2011, p. 24).

Thus, examining language production can reveal a lot about dominance. It is through language that states, institutions and individuals can convey their ideologies and beliefs, and, perhaps, persuade other individuals. Literary texts, as an example of language production, are a good source for analyzing power and dominance. For instance, through examining Western European literary works, Kahf (1999) confirms a connection between power and the portrait of Muslim women. It is evident that Muslim women's representation as overbearing agents coincide with the time when Muslims had power over Western Europeans. However, when this power moved to the Europeans, Muslim women turned into helpless victims in Western narratives.

Focusing on Saudi Arabian women and their use of the veil, this study analyzes their representations in a contemporary novel by a US female novelist: *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris (2009). The paper explores the discourse of power and dominance of Saudi Arabia versus the United States when the topic of the veil and Saudi Arabian women are discussed. In the following section, the theoretical framework in which the analysis of this literary text is grounded is discussed. The theoretical framework employed in this paper is ideological square informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

In this study a contemporary US novel, *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris (2009), featuring Saudi Arabian women, is analyzed to investigate the discourse of dominance that

emerges in relation to Saudi Arabian women and their use of the veil. I examine the different representations of veiled and unveiled Saudi Arabian women as portrayed by an outsider (Zoe Ferraris is a US novelist; an author who is ethnically and nationally different from Saudi Arabian women). This analysis explores the notions of "Self" versus "Other" and "Us" versus "Them" as practiced by Zoe Ferraris. To do so, this paper employs the framework: ideological square informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 1998).

Ideological square.

In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the exploration of power can be conducted on almost any discourse, including literary texts. Fairclough (1992), one of the prominent founders of CDA, argues that texts constitute discourse that can be analyzed from two different approaches: linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis. Linguistic analysis is the analysis that focuses not only on the "traditional" sentential levels, such as phonology, grammar, and semantics, but also on "above the sentence" levels, such as cohesion and structure (p. 194). Intertextual analysis is the analysis that looks at how "orders of discourse," (i.e., genres, discourses, narratives, etc.) depend on social and historical epistemology and resources in order to be put in texts (p. 194). Fairclough suggests that "intertextual analysis crucially mediates the connection between language and social context, and facilitates more satisfactory bridging of the gap between texts and contexts" while employing "its linguistic features" (p. 195).

The use of discourse analysis as a method for analyzing discourses, both written and spoken, has been around for decades (Van Dijk, 1988). It is "an interdisciplinary field of study that has emerged from several other disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, such as linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics, sociology,

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psychology, and speech communication" (p. 17). CDA has developed to profoundly analyze text and context. Van Dijk states that "in order to be able to relate power and discourse in an explicit way, we need the cognitive interface of models, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies and other social representations of the social mind, which also relate the individual and the social, and the micro- and the macro-levels of social structure" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). Therefore, sociopolitical stance is what makes CDA different from other types of discourse analysis. It examines the role of "dominance" in a society, which van Dijk defines as "the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial, and gender inequality" (p. 250). In other words, it concentrates on top-down relationships. Hence, in addition to dominance and power, CDA deals with the roles of other phenomena, such as ideology, prejudice, and representation in (re)production of control, and inequality (Tenorio, 2011). To do a CDA, Van Dijk argues that "an explicit sociopolitical stance" should be articulated by the analysts; they need to "spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large," since the goal they look for in their political work is "change through critical understanding" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 252).

One of the well-known and applied approaches to CDA is Van Dijk's ideological approach. According to Van Dijk (1998), power structure can be affirmed by binary oppositions of in-group versus out-group. In an ideological square, members of a dominant society emphasize their positive actions and qualities (as in-group members) while emphasizing negative actions and qualities of others (as out-group). This polarization is

manifested in the discourse throughout multiple layers of a text's linguistic features that convey opinions and judgement.

According to Van Dijk's ideological square (1998), there are a number of strategies employed to show binary oppositions of good Us versus bad Them. One of these strategies is choosing certain lexical items to convey positive or negative opinions of a certain people. He asserts, "Words may be chosen that generally or contextually express values or norms, and that therefore are used to express a value judgement (e.g. 'terrorist', 'racist')" (p. 31).

Another strategy is the use of propositions to express certain beliefs and opinions. These opinions are usually implied by a proposition's predicates, arguments and modalities. For example, active and passive constructions convey different meanings with regard to how responsible certain people are for the action. On that account, Van Dijk argues that "OUR people tend to appear primarily as actors when the acts are good, and THEIR people when the acts are bad, and vice versa: THEIR people will appear less as actors of good actions than do OUR people" (p. 32-3). Van Dijk also notes that opinions may be implied in a proposition. He contends, "propositions may be implied because they are presumed to be known (to be true) or presupposed, given a model of an event. They may be strategically used to obliquely introduce into a text propositions which may not be true at all. This is also the case for presuppositions that embody opinions" (p. 34).

Descriptions of events are another strategy that imply evaluations of certain people and their actions. Van Dijk asserts that "we may expect that Our good actions and Their bad ones will in general tend to be described at a lower, more specific level, with many (detailed) propositions. The opposite will be true for Our bad actions and Their good ones,

which, if described at all, will both be described in rather general, abstract and hence 'distanced' terms, without giving much detail" (p. 35).

Coherence of the discourse plays a big role in expressing opinions; "if coherence is based on models, and models may feature opinions, which in turn may be ideological, it should be expected that coherence too may involve opinions and ideologies" (p. 37). In terms of stories, for example, "storytellers thus may make a general claim, (…), and then add an example (which may turn into a complete story)" (p. 37).

Opinions can be expressed through semantic moves "at the local level of sentences and sentence sequences" (p. 39). Van Dijk explains:

> This is typically the case in the local semantic moves called disclaimers: "I have nothing against blacks, but …". In this so-called Apparent Denial, the first clause emphasizes the tolerance of the speaker, whereas the rest of the sentence (and often also the rest of the text) following the *but* may be very negative. In the same way, we may encounter Apparent Concessions in the same racist paradigm ("There are also intelligent black students, but …"), or Apparent Empathy ("Of course refugees have problems, but …"), and so on. (p. 39)

All these strategies influence the model of the discourse in various ways: *Volume*, *Importance*, *Relevance*, *Implicitness*/*Explicitness*, *Attribution*, and *Perspective*. (Van Dijk, 1998). Based on what Van Dijk called Volume, discourses will "say a lot about Our good things and Their bad things, and say little about Our bad things and Their good things" (p. 42). Also, the Importance of information is manipulated in the discourses so that "some propositions will only appear at the lower-level microstructure, others typically may function as overarching macropropositions" (p. 42). On that account, strategically, "we will

expect that information that is favorable about/for Us and unfavorable for Them will be constructed as important or topical macro-information, and vice versa" (p. 42). Furthermore, the Relevance of the information may also be controlled in discourses. This is the case since "trivially, we may expect Our discourses to feature information and opinions that are particularly relevant for Us, and irrelevant for Them, and vice versa" (p. 42). Likewise, discourses tend to manipulate how implicit or explicit certain information is. They "make explicit the information and opinions that are good for Us, and bad for Them, and vice versa" (p. 43). Additionally, discourses direct the Attribution of actions and events. Van Dijk illustrates:

> Agency, responsibility and blame may also be attributed as a function of ideological orientation: good acts will usually be self-attributed to Ourselves (or our allies) and bad acts other-attributed to the Others (or their allies), and in both cases these groups are assigned full control and responsibility for their acts. The converse is true for Our bad acts and Their good acts: Our bad acts will be de-emphasized and attributed to circumstances beyond our control, and the same is true for Their good acts ("they were just lucky"). These various attribution strategies may appear at all levels of action description, and also appear in word order (responsible agency may be preferentially expressed by grammatical subjects and in initial position). (p. 43)

Applications of CDA, with Van Dijk's ideological square notion of in-group versus out-group, are quite common, especially in studies that attempt to analyze media. Ramanathan and Hoon (2015) reviewed fifteen journal articles that were published over the time period from 2005 to 2015. The objective of their paper was to examine which methods that are commonly utilized in CDA analysis. They found that there were three

prominent approaches to CDA: Fairclough's social theory of discourse, Van Dijk's theory of ideology, and Wodak's discourse-historical approach. All three frameworks are used in various CDA studies that aim "to investigate the discursivity of text, […] to examine how dominating ideologies oppress the less powerful" as well as "to reveal stereotypes, presuppositions, hegemony, power, and ideological stances" (Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015, p. 66). Other reviews of previous studies with a narrowed focus have also been conducted. For instance, Jahedi, Abdullah, and Mukundan, (2014) presented an overall literature review of studies that investigated the role of mass media on Islam, Muslims and Iran. They argued that although the approaches adapted in these studies were different, they all agreed that "the dominant mass media tend to marginalize the Other and misrepresent the events" as a way to "portray a negative image of Islam, Muslims and Iran" (p. 304). It was well documented in the literature that the negative image of Muslims had increased tremendously after 9/11. Similarly, this paper asserted that the negative image of Iran had increased after President George W. Bush referred to countries like Iran as the "axis of evil".

In relation to Islam and Muslims in Western media, there are many studies that suggest mainstream misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in the West. Poorebrahim and Zarei (2013) did a study to critically investigate how Islam was portrayed in four Western newspapers: *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, and the *Times* newspaper, for news stories that were published overtime from 2008 to 2012. Their study employs two theoretical frameworks: Said's Orientalism and Van Dijk's ideological square. Taking a linguistic approach, their analysis examined headlines of the selected news stories in order to scrutinize the relationship between language and ideologies.

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Examination of linguistic choices and constructions of these news headlines revealed misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in Western media. They argue that these misrepresentations were achieved through emphasis on stereotypes of Islam and Muslims. A more recent study carried out a linguistic approach to analyzing a corpus of all editorials/leading articles with the theme 'War on Terror' discourse after 9/11 (Afsar & Mahmood, 2017). Articles were selected from two British newspapers: *The Guardian* and *The Times*. The time frame for these selected articles was from September 11, 2001 to December 31, 2011. The articles were coded semantically and grammatically using USAS and CLAWS from Lancaster's platform. The theoretical framework that was employed is Van Dijk's ideological square. The analysis revealed an overall positive self-presentation "of the UK", with an overall negative other-presentation "of Islam and Muslims" with words that revolved around "terrorists", "militants", "extremists", "militias", "fundamentalists", and "rebels".

With respect to Muslim women, Rahman (2014) conducted a critical discourse analysis on the portrayal of Pakistani Muslim women in the US magazine, *Time*, for articles that were published between 1998 to 2001. She examined the different ways in which *Time* had depicted Westerners as superior to Pakistanis. She also explored how the image of Pakistani Muslim women in this magazine made it possible for the Westerners to perceive these women as a source of fear to their safety. She adapted two theoretical frameworks: Said's Orientalism and Van Dijk's socio-political processes (including ideological square). Implementing a linguistic approach, she looked at headlines, overall theme and linguistic choices (such as reporting verbs, lexical choices and syntactic structure) of the selected articles. Taking the political context of the time, her study shows that when Pakistan had

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its first nuclear test in 1998, *Time* had a flow of articles that referred to Pakistani Muslim women in their publications. Another time that was associated with an increase number in reference to Pakistani Muslim women was 9/11. The veil in these articles was also present, thus examined. Rahman stated, the "symbol of veil was used either as a symbol of ridicule or of growing Islamic" radical fundamentalists (Rahman, 2014, p. 11).

Therefore, given that the goal of this study is to analyze the representation of Saudi Arabian women in a novel written by a US author in an attempt to examine the influence of being an outsider, I believe that adapting Van Dijk's approach (1998), namely ideological square, will guide my analysis in certain ways. This approach will help me measure proposed positive traits and negative traits of (un)veiled Saudi Arabian women in relation to the author's national and cultural affiliations. The question this paper poses is: How does Zoe Ferraris portray Saudi Arabian women, in *Finding Nouf*, in regard to their use of the veil as out-group in comparison to American women as in-group?

The following chapter will present the methods employed in the analysis in order to answer my research questions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this paper, I analyze one mystery novel through a linguistic and critical lens: *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris (2009). I approach the novel from a qualitative linguistic point of view that considers the importance of language production in conveying ideologies and beliefs. I aim to examine the constructed representation of veiled/unveiled Saudi Arabian women, compared to American women, in the discourse of literature. I investigate the role of Ferraris being an outsider author in presenting female Saudi Arabian characters in a literary work. The analysis is grounded in the framework of ideological square from Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Van Dijk (1988). According to Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, there are binary oppositions of in-group versus out-group, where members of a dominant society tend to emphasize their positive qualities and actions in their representation of their in-group members while emphasizing the negative qualities and actions of others as out-group members. The framework is discussed in detail in my Literature Review above.

This chapter presents a description of the methods utilized to address the research question: How does Ferraris portray Saudi Arabian women in her novel as out-group in comparison to American women as in-group? First, the chapter offers justification for choosing this particular novel for the study. Second, it gives a summary of the author's background as well as an overview of her novel. Finally, it presents the two phases of my data collection. It describes the motive for each phase along with lists of analytical socio-linguistic questions asked during each phase.

Reasons for Choosing *Finding Nouf*

An award-winning novel was selected for this exploratory analysis: Zoe Ferraris'
Finding Nouf. In order to address the research questions of this study, the novel was chosen
carefully based on several factors.

First, the debut novel *Finding Nouf* (2009), followed by two further novels, *City of
Veils* (2011) and *Kingdom of Strangers* (2013), is situated in Saudi Arabia, written in the
English language by a female Anglo-American author, and features Saudi Arabian women
whose struggles and conflicts are narrated. *Finding Nouf* was Ferraris' Master's thesis at
Columbia University. Originally published in 2008, it is expected to reflect the
contemporary perception of Saudi Arabian women in the US. Also, as a result of the
author's personal life which granted her an intimate exposure to Saudi Arabian culture and
society (when she resided in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for nine months with her then in-laws
in 1991 during her few-year marriage with a Saudi Arabian/Palestinian husband), the novel
is presumed to be a true accurate account of life in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the novel has
high readership, perhaps for it is a subject of interest, especially given that it won the Los
Angeles Times Book Prize as well as the Alex Award in 2009. This is manifested as,
according to Ferraris' Website, *Finding Nouf*, along with the two follow up novels, have
not only been international bestsellers but have also been published in 45 countries. All
these factors have made *Finding Nouf* a perfect fit for the research I have conducted to
examine the US perception and representation of Saudi Arabian women as the Other. A
summary of the author's background as well as the plot of the novel are presented next.

Who is Zoe Ferraris?

Zoe Ferraris is an Anglo-American novelist born in Oklahoma in 1972, to a U.S.
army officer (Ferraris, August 12, 2010). When she was 19 years old, she married a Saudi

Arabian/Palestinian man (whom she met in San Francisco), became a mother of a baby girl, and moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Having a new baby girl, she and her family of three went to visit his family in Saudi Arabia. She ended up living in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia with his Bedouin family for nine months. Her stay happened to be in 1991, in the aftermath of the First Gulf War that took place as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait that created a coalition of many forces coming from different nations, including Saudi Arabia, led by the US against Iraq. Ferraris says that her debut novel, *Finding Nouf* (2009), and two follow-up novels, *City of Veils* (2011) and *Kingdom of Strangers* (2013), are all inspired by her short time in Saudi Arabia.

It is important to note that Ferraris is chosen for this analysis due to her background as well as her motivation for writing about Saudi Arabia to her targeted American readers. First, her background (having had married a Saudi Arabian husband and having had lived in Saudi Arabia) has resulted in considering her account of Saudi Arabia and its women authentic by her people; Ferraris is described as an author "with an insider knowledge of Saudi Arabia" (Ferraris, September 17, 2010). Second, her goal behind writing about Saudi Arabia is to provide her American readers with a portrait of Saudi Arabian culture. In the same interview, she says, (the brackets are in the original)

> I really was surprised when I came back – and I shouldn't have been, I didn't know these things before I went – but I was surprised by the things that people didn't know. For years and years I was feeling that I know so much and [most] people know so little and that would be very, very helpful to present that to them. The mystery novel stemmed from my main character [who is a conservative Saudi male] needing a really strong motivation to pry into the life of a woman. It required

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something like murder to get him to do that. But it was more out of wanting to paint a portrait of the culture for the average American reader.

Although the novel *Finding Nouf* has been translated into a few languages, Arabic (the first language of Saudi Arabians) is not one of them. In an interview conducted in 2012, Ferraris says, "I would love to see an Arabic version, but I couldn't possibly do it myself - there would need to be a translator. And I know my sisters-in-law would love to read them, but they don't speak English well enough to read it in English." It is worth noting the fact that although it has been a decade since the novel was originally published and 7 years since the interview, neither the novel nor the two follow-up novels have been translated into Arabic despite being translated into other languages: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Dutch, Danish, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Czech, Polish, Romanian, Turkish, and Hebrew. Except for Hebrew, these languages are all Western European languages. Bearing in mind the fact that all these languages, except for Hebrew, are Western European languages, I find Ferraris' targeted audience a question worth investigation, especially since the novel has been translated into a language, Hebrew, that is from the same family as Arabic (i.e., Hebrew and Arabic are both Semitic languages). I wonder if the politics of the region has played a role, particularly Israel-Palestine ongoing conflict and the US involvement in the matter. Nevertheless, I raise the question: Who is the audience Zoe Ferraris is targeting to read her novel(s) and her narratives of Saudi Arabia and its women?

Having that said, it is important to acknowledge the novel's wide readership. As of March 3, 2019, the English language copy on Amazon is rated 4.3 stars out of 5 with 244 customer reviews. On Goodreads, on the other hand, the book reached 3.79 stars out of 5.

The book has 8,204 votes: 1,885 readers (22%) voted for 5 stars, 3,508 (42%) for 4 stars, 2,171 (26%) for 3 stars, 447 (5%) for 2 stars, and only 193 (2%) for 1 star. It has 1,310 reviews. Below are two contrastive reviews (5 starts and 1 star), selected randomly. First, an example of a review by a reader who has rated the book 5 stars reads:

I did look to find spoilers. I was confused by the names. Telling males or female characters by name had me pondering.

The book was detailed but it all came together at the end. I have a whole lot of curiosity and question as someone who has never imagined the discomfort or the cultural mandates of wearing a burka or the other things the Saudi Women are forced to do. It is definitely a male dominated society.

I was quite pleased with Katya's spirit. Her career. Her intelligence that was not ignored like it appears so many of the women are treated. And her Father. A good man to....allow it?

I will go on to the next book too. And a post note, I did not guess the real murderer! (Pat, posted on October 23, 2017)

On the other hand, an example of a review by a reader who has rated the book 1 star reads:

I was very excited when I heard a review of this book on NPR as I grew up in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and there are very few novels set in my hometown. However, after reading the book I was extremely disappointed as I did not recognise any of the Jeddah that I know in the book. Jeddah comes to life at night, and that is when the women would be shopping in the malls or open air souks, and not early in the morning before dawn prayers. I laughed at the scene where Katya's sandals start

melting in the heat and sticking to the pavement. The story was okay and the setting was interesting, though completely foreign to me. I would not recommend this book as an example of the culture of Saudi Arabia. (Shereen, posted on August 13, 2008)

What is *Finding Nouf* about?

Finding Nouf is a story about a sixteen-year-old Nouf, a daughter of a wealthy family, who goes missing a few days before her arranged marriage to her nineteen-year-old fiancé. Nayir ash-Sharqi, a pious Palestinian desert guide raised in Saudi Arabia thus he acts like a Saudi Arabian man, and is hired by her wealthy family to lead a search for her. Ten days later, Nouf is found dead, discovered by anonymous desert travelers. The condition of the cadaver makes Nayir suspicious. Determined to find out what happened to Nouf, he decides to carry out an investigation with help from a Saudi Arabian female lab worker at the coroner's office, Katya Hijzai. The question is: Did she escape and get herself killed, or was she kidnapped and murdered?

The novel explores the troubling restricted relationship between males and females in Saudi Arabia. However, due to the shared common pursuit of the two, Nayir and Katya try to find a way to work together in a manner that does not break the cultural and religious norms of the society they live in. Another recurrent theme in the novel relates to the different kinds of limitations imposed on both men and women, but particularly women. In the novel, Saudi Arabian women's only gateway leading to freedom is through outside help coming from white American men. In one scenario where Nouf, before she went missing, was working out an escape plan to the US with an American man living in Jeddah. This scenario is referred to frequently throughout the narrative. It started out as mere speculation of what might have happened to Nouf (like many rich Saudi Arabian women

who plot an escape plan to the land of freedom), and ended up as a key fact to solving the puzzle.

By the end of the novel, the puzzle is solved. Before her death, Nouf had become pregnant by her adopted older brother, who was in love with her but engaged to another woman. But in the end, she was killed by her younger sister who was jealous of Nouf's impending marriage. The feeling of love for the fiancé by the younger sister is put forward in the story even though the novel presents strictly observed practices of the veil and gender segregation: neither Nouf, being the fiancée, nor her younger sister had known or met the fiancé. It seems that the love for the fiancé was actually a love for the social status of being a married woman, since in Ferraris' version of Saudi Arabia, women experience high pressure to get married. The issue of the veil, the strict gender segregation, women's unemployment and women chasing marriage at a young age are the main themes of Ferraris' novel. All of these factors have played a role in Nouf's horrible destiny.

Data Collection

Having the theoretical framework and the focus of the study in mind, the analysis followed two main phases: sampling and linguistic analysis. The second phase was conducted in two steps: individual analysis of each excerpt, and comparative analysis of in-group/out-group.

   Sampling.

The first phase involved data collection or sampling. I collected my excerpts from the selected novel in three parts. First, I listed what physical or other aspects of a woman must be veiled in presence of the opposite gender (if not relative) and in public (from a Saudi Arabian context). My list contained the following: a woman's name, voice, feelings,

and body parts (such as face, eyes, hands, feet, legs, shoulders… etc.). Then, I excerpted the passages that mentioned any item from the list. Lastly, after I divided the excerpts into two groups (Saudi Arabian women excerpts and American women excerpts), I coded these passages into two main groups, based on the theme. Each passage was coded as either "passage denotes veiling" or "passage denotes unveiling."

Linguistic analysis.

The second phase involved a critical analysis: I analyzed the linguistic features of the selected veiling/unveiling excerpts, such as: word choice, grammar, and semantics. In this phase, I attempted to explore the author's ideologies with regard to veiled or unveiled Saudi Arabian women, informed by Van Dijk's ideological square (1988). Although Van Dijk (1988) presents many different strategies employed in discourses that reflect the individual's ideologies of certain groups (discussed above in the Literature Review), I chose to examine my excerpts for the following: coherence, description, active versus passive voice, and disclaimers. I created two lists of guiding questions to direct my analysis. First, guiding questions for each excerpt:

1- What is the main theme of this excerpt? What is the overall message this excerpt wants to convey? What does it say about the un/veil and the logic behind it?

2- What words and phrases are chosen in the excerpt, and how they might/do carry positive or negative connotations?

3- How is the sentence structured? Particularly, who is the agent of the action? Is the woman herself or someone else taking the lead? In other words, is the woman represented with an agentive role or a passive role?

4- Who discusses the un/veiling in the excerpt? Is it the woman herself, or someone else? Is the act of un/veiling represented as a proactive action done by the woman without the influence of external powers, or a reactive action done by the woman to abide by what others ask of her? More importantly, is the un/veiling represented as something positive or negative to the woman?

5- How does the use of the un/veil reflect the characteristics of the woman? For example, what is her level of education? Does she work? How does she take control of her life? How assertive or passive is she in the narrative?

Second, guiding questions for the overall comparative analysis between the two groups of women (Saudi Arabian women versus American women):

1. How are the two groups represented?

2. Is either of the two groups portrayed with an overall positive or negative image?

3. Does the background of the author (as an outsider to Saudi Arabian women) play any role in the way female Saudi Arabian characters and their use of the veil, in comparison to the American characters, are represented in the narrative? What does that say about the discourse of in-groups versus out-groups in the US?

Bearing in mind the answers of the above questions, I expect my linguistic analysis to reveal the characteristics of un/veiled Saudi Arabian women as portrayed by Ferraris in her *Finding Nouf*. For example, by looking at sentence constructions, Ferraris' ideologies about Saudi Arabian women and their agency, or passivity, will uncover. It is through such a linguistic Critical Discourse Analysis of a literary work by a female US author, this study tries to answer the question: How does this particular outsider American author portray

Saudi Arabian women as an out-group in comparison to American women as an in-group? How are female Saudi Arabian characters represented in *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris in regard to use of the veil? By comparing and contrasting the analysis of the two ethnic groups (Saudi Arabian women and American women) represented in the novel, this study mirrors the images of Saudi Arabian women that are constructed in the US, taking into account the author's background as a Westerner. The following chapter is a detailed description of the analysis.

Chapter 4

Analysis

In this chapter, I critically analyze the novel *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris with the research question: How does Zoe Ferraris as an Anglo-American novelist portray Saudi Arabian women, in *Finding Nouf*, in regard to their use of the veil as out-group in comparison to American women as in-group? While a brief background of the author along with description of the plot is provided in the methodology chapter, this chapter concerns itself with the critical linguistic analysis of the novel. Owing to the fact that the current study aims to employ Van Dijk's ideological square which involves the consideration of binary opposition of in-group versus out-group (Van Dijk, 1998), I intend to examine Ferraris' representations of two groups of women, Saudi Arabian women versus American women, according to their membership in in-group versus out-group. In this analysis, I attempt to shed light on how Ferraris constructs representations of "in-group" versus "out-group;" "We" versus "They;" "Us" versus "Them;" and "American women" versus "Saudi Arabian women." I examine whether Ferraris employs strategies found in Van Dijk's ideological square (1998) to manifest the binary opposition of Us versus Them, particularly passive versus active voice, Agent role versus Patient role, disclaimer, modality, and coherence.

To apply Van Dijk's ideological square in my analysis of Zoe Ferraris' *Finding Nouf*, I read the novel four times. The first read-through was to recognize significant plot points and plot twists as they relate to the analytical goals of my research questions. The second read-through was to identify excerpts making explicit or implicit mention of veiling/unveiling. The purpose of the third reading was to code these excerpts according to group (Saudi Arabian women versus American women) and theme, as described in Chapter 3 under the subsection on Sampling. The fourth reading was done as I analyzed each of

these excerpts, which occurred after identifying the main themes within the excerpts during phase 2 (see Methodology).

This chapter is divided into three main sections: representation of in-group/American women, representation of out-group/Saudi Arabian women, and comparative representations of in-group versus out-group. The second section, representation of out-group/Saudi Arabian women, is divided into sections based on the emerging themes found in the novel.

Representation of In-group/American Women

Although Ferraris' story is located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabian and is about a search conducted to find Nouf, a young Saudi Arabian woman, the reader finds traces of American women in the narrative. These few sporadic references to American women and the life they lead play a significant role in portraying the contrastive lifestyle they lead in comparison to the one Saudi Arabian women have. In other words, these references lay out the differences between the two groups of women, thus serve as a means for making the binary opposition vivid to the reader.

There are three main occasions in which Ferraris presents short descriptions of American women. It is through these occasions that Ferraris alludes to fine contrasts between the two groups: Americans and Saudi Arabians. First, during the visit Nayir and Katya have paid to an American compound as an attempt to look for Eric, Nouf's white American rescuer, she presents the American women in the scene as follow: "[Nayir and Katya] passed a table where three women sat talking. One woman shot [Nayir] a smile, but he looked away" and "beside the pool, two women were sunbathing" (p. 136-7). While bringing in five American women to the scene, she brings only one American man whom

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Nayir approaches to ask about Eric. Second, on the occasion where Nayir goes to an American event, located in a hotel conference room, to seek information about Eric, she starts the scene by stating: "a cardboard sign at the doorway read, WOMEN ONLY. Yet the doors were wide open, with people passing in and out—women mostly, all unveiled and smiling" (p. 148). In this event, Juliet, an American woman, is introduced. She is an artist who owns a stall to sell her artwork, described by Ferraris as "a tiny woman in a T-shirt and jeans […] absorbed in her work" and "unveiled, wearing tight clothes and apparently no undergarments" (p. 149). Juliet happens to know Eric, which makes Nayir talk to her. Third, before Ferraris presents the practice of polygamy in Saudi Arabia, she states, "in America, a man can't marry a second wife" (p. 129).

Active versus passive voice; Agent Role versus Patient Role.

Ferraris uses active voice to present the actions of American women. She attributes the Agent Role (i.e., a semantic role denoting the doer of the event) to American women. For instance, during Juliet's encounter with Nayir at the American event, she writes that Juliet has "leaned forward and took the bird," "let her eyes linger on his coat," "eyed him," "kept her eyes fixed on [him]," "extended a hand" to introduce herself, is capable to have "veiled herself within," and more importantly is the one to decide whether or not there will be children: "Miss I'll-Give-You-Ten-Children" (p. 150-2).

Moreover, Ferraris chooses verbs that tend to denote some sort of force. For example, during Nayir and Katya' visit to the American compound, she writes: "one woman shot him a smile" (the chosen verb is "shot," instead of simply "give"). Through these constructions, Ferraris indicates that American women are in complete control of their lives, presenting them as the agents of every action. According to Van Dijk's

ideological square (1988), attributing the Agent Role to a particular person indicates the responsibility of that person in the action. Therefore, ascribing the Agent Role of the scenes to American women, particularly during their interactions with strange men, Ferraris gives American women the agency, making them responsible for the course of their lives.

Representation of Out-group/Saudi Arabian Women

Because *Finding Nouf* has plentiful references to Saudi Arabian women in regard to their veiling, this section of my analysis is divided into 4 subsections, organized by the linguistic feature being analyzed: lexical items; active versus passive voice/Agent versus Patient Role; disclaimers; modal *should*.

On that note, it is important to explain the two pieces of clothes that are involved in the covering of Ferraris' Saudi Arabian women: a *burqa* (a black face covering that usually leaves a woman's eyes exposed) and an *abaaya* (the cloak a Saudi Arabian woman wears in public, described always as black in Ferraris' Saudi Arabia).

Lexical items.

According to Van Dijk's ideological square, lexical items are tools used to express one's opinions. He contends that "words may be chosen that generally or contextually express values or norms, and that therefore are used to express a value judgement" (p. 31). Ferraris' tendency to using words with strong connotations is manifested in her *Finding Nouf*. Below are subsections of words used in the novel: "an invasion of privacy;" "veil" and "cloak;" "black shapes;" "brick;" and "shrouded in black."

"An invasion of privacy."

In Ferraris' Saudi Arabia, to approach a woman's body is considered "an invasion of privacy" and therefore a privilege given only to family. On that note, the exact phrase

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"an invasion of privacy" is written twice at two different occasions (p. 10 & 43). However, due to the unfortunate circumstances of Nouf's body being found in the desert by strange travelers, Ferraris expresses Nayir's thoughts on the matter, "how degrading to think of the parade of strangers' hands and eyes that had already swept over her corpse" (p. 10). To depict the extreme shame in having strange men within close proximity to a Saudi Arabian woman's body, she chooses words and phrases with strong connotations for emphasis ("an invasion of privacy," "degrading," and "parade of strangers"). In Ferraris' Saudi Arabia, the slightest closeness to a woman's body is unwelcomed, regardless of how important it is, i.e., transporting Nouf's corpse to the city by strange travelers is vital to report Nouf's death. Starting the story by giving a scene of an extreme need for transporting a female's body yet being considered "degrading" and "an invasion of privacy" implies the strong negative opinion Ferraris holds of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia.

"Veil" and "cloak."

Ferraris uses "veil" and "cloak" as verbs to mean deceiving others, acting immorally and hiding one's shame. In the case of Fatimah, for example, the expression "cloaking of truth" is used to describe how Fatimah has deceived Nayir by not telling him the truth, despite her appearing religious. Ferraris writes, "thinking about Fatimah, [Nayir] realized that the thing he most resented was her cloaking of truth, her failure to tell him that she was entertaining other men while she courted him" (p. 278-9). More importantly, Ferraris, instead of making Nayir responsible of what has happened, gives Fatimah the agency in her immoral behavior: she writes "her failure to tell him that she was entertaining other men while she courted him." This is yet another example of Ferraris attributing

negative traits and actions to Saudi Arabian women. This time, she utilizes Their piece of cloth, i.e., cloak, to describe Their bad behavior.

These verbs are not exclusive to women. Upon learning that his friend, Othman, has committed a sin (intimately loving and being engaged in a sexual relationship with his sister to the point where he has her impregnated), Nayir finds himself not able to "confront" Othman about what he comes to know (p. 279). Ferraris describes Nayir: "he stood adorned in a dishonorable silence, plumped and feathered with false piety" while "veiling himself to hide the shame of Othman's naked sin" (p. 279).

More importantly, the *abaaya* is employed as both a physical and metaphorical tool to hide things; Ferraris refers to the *abaaya* being worn by women to hide bruises of domestic violence. While trying to conceal and veil marks of domestic violence, the novel depicts Saudi Arabian women as hiding themselves in their *abaayas*, helplessly, as a sign of submission and silence. Ferraris writes: "[Katya] unzipped the front of the black cloak and slid out of the garment, revealing a white button-down shirt and a long black skirt. Salwa came closer, unbuttoned Katya's cuffs, and used her pencil to raise the sleeves. Katya realized she was looking for bruises" (p. 55).

Based on the above uses of veil and cloak, I argue that Ferraris has negative opinions of women coverings, i.e., both the veil and the cloak are worn in Saudi Arabia to hide immoral behaviors such as dishonesty and domestic abuse. This denotes Ferraris' judgements against the covering practices preserved by Saudi Arabian women.

"Black shapes."

Ferraris' depiction of "fully covered" and "all cloaked and veiled" Saudi Arabian women is highly recurrent throughout the novel. According to Ferraris, the entire body of

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Saudi Arabian woman must be veiled: her face, eyes, body, voice, name, etc. She describes women with their eyes shown as women who "were not veiled completely—their eyes were showing" (p. 25). In fact, the description of Saudi Arabian women being "fully covered" seems to be the most important piece of information Ferraris wants to tell her readers about her Out-group Saudi Arabian women. Looking at the scene where Katya leaves to meet her fiancé, for example, Ferraris writes: "she came out fully covered" (p. 186). To Ferraris, the depiction of Katya being "fully covered" is more important than, say, Katya's feelings as she is meeting her beloved fiancé. According to Van Dijk, it is expected to see the "information that is […] unfavorable for Them […] be constructed as important or topical macro-information" (p. 42). On that note, this excerpt irrefutably shows how Ferraris selects what information to be highlighted in the scene, which in part reveals how Saudi Arabian women's veiling practice disturbs her. It is the one thing she wants her readers to picture of Saudi Arabian women.

However, "black shapes" and "the dark shapes of night" are the strongest metaphors, found in the novel, describing the appearance of Saudi Arabian women. Ferraris writes:

> The only other movement came from black shapes flitting through the streets. Normally men inhabited these sidewalks, but this early in the morning there were women, as quiet and alert as deer, stealing the opportunity to wander unmolested. A man would be a blot on the picture, his robe glowing whiter than the moon, chasing away the dark shapes of night. (p. 50)

In the above excerpt, Ferraris chooses "black shapes" and "the dark shapes of night" to describe Saudi Arabian women. When walking fully covered, she pictures them as

"black shapes" moving. She argues that these "black shapes" are not saved from men's harassment, making it particularly important for them to choose a certain bizarre time ("before dawn" (p. 48)) to go out. By carefully observing the time when men are least expected outside, women are "as quiet and alert as deer, stealing the opportunity to wander unmolested," otherwise men are habitually "chasing away the dark shapes of night." This clear simile of Saudi Arabian women and animals ("deer") confirms Ferraris' perception of Saudi Arabian women as inferior creatures. The frequent use of verbs like "scurry" and "flit" (verbs that are used more often for tiny animals, such as mice and birds, to express them running away in fright) are used to refer to the movement of Saudi Arabian women. All these lexical items and expressions, used as metaphors, serve to depict Saudi Arabian women as vulnerable tiny animals, rather than humans. It is obvious that Ferraris wants to draw the attention of her readers to a particular image of Saudi Arabian women, that of not only being fully covered and harassed but also of looking like a vulnerable tiny animal running in fright.

"Brick."

According to Ferraris' frequently used metaphor, the veil is brick. Although Ferraris argues that the veil is brick for women and men alike, this paper concerns itself with the veil acting as brick for women only.

For women.

Ferraris contends that it is as impossible for women to see the outside world through the veil as it is for men to see the women's world through it. Ferraris writes, "[Saudi Arabians] were ridiculous–what else could you say about a wealthy society that consciously veiled half its population and pretended the other half could see through

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brick?" (p. 145). In the previous statement, Ferraris explicitly presents her opinion of the veil calling it "brick" and of Saudi Arabians describing them "ridiculous." She is confidently presenting her judgment by raising the question: "what else could you say?"

Arguing for its resemblance to bricks, Ferraris argues that it is the *burqa* that makes Saudi Arabian women unable to function properly. In Ferraris' world, the *burqa* causes vision and hearing impairments on Saudi Arabian women. Evidence of this argument is given on many occasions. Taking the excerpt of when Ferraris describes Katya's experience of looking for her destination as an example, Ferraris contends, "gazing around, her head swiveling with every turn since the *burqa* clipped her vision" (p. 210). Taking the disability imposed by the *burqa* to another level, Ferraris presents an incident where Katya is unable to see a person who is standing right in front of her eyes: "[Katya] had lowered her *burqa*. "Is he gone?" she whispered" (p. 143). Katya's question gives the impression that a Saudi Arabian woman loses her ability to see, including bodies of people, due to her *burqa*. Additionally, Ferraris associates the *burqa* with hearing and speaking impairments. For example, she writes of Katya responding to Nayir asking whether she has heard the words of another person, "[Katya] made no sign that she heard them. Her *burqa* was down, and her hands were tucked into the sleeves of her cloak" (p. 145). Finally, after describing the presence of Katya in an American compound during the short moments she no face covering, Ferraris attributes the seclusion Katya has undergone *again* to the *burqa*: "[Katya] had hung back by the door. Her *burqa* was down again" (p. 137).

Based on the excerpts above, it is clear that Ferraris draws a direct link between veiling (the *burqa* and the cloak) and a Saudi Arabian woman's seclusion, vision, and hearing and speaking impairment. In the above scenarios where Ferraris gives examples of

these impairments, she explicitly offers her explanations behind these experiences to the covering: "since the *burqa* clipped her vision" (p. 210), "[she] had lowered her *burqa*" (p. 143), "her *burqa* was down, and her hands were tucked into the sleeves of her cloak" (p. 145), and "her *burqa* was down again". These explanations either directly precede or directly follow the mention of the struggle being described. It is through this repeated direct connection between two actions (wearing a *burqa* and not being able to see; wearing a *burqa* and not hearing nor participating in a conversation; wearing the *burqa* and being isolated) that Ferraris' opinion of the veil that it causes impairment is declared.

Moreover, Ferraris seems to carefully choose words that have strong implications. For example, the verb "swivel" in "her head swiveling with every turn since the burqa clipped her vision" pictures a strange, bizarre image of the movement made by Katya's head and *burqa*. Similarly, the verb "clip" in "since the *burqa* clipped her vision" denotes a severe negative impact of the veil on a woman's ability to see. Lastly, the verb "hang" in "[she] had hung hack by the door" points to the extreme isolation enforced on Saudi Arabian women due to their covering. All these linguistic features employed by Ferraris play a significant role in shaping Ferraris' image of Saudi Arabian women as the impaired Other, who suffer a lot due to Their veil practices.

"Shrouded in black."

It is well argued in Ferraris' novel that unveiling is equated with strength, bravery, and independence. In fact, Ferraris refers to the Saudi Arabian woman who exposes her face as "a woman full in the face" (p. 281) whereas veiled faces are referred to as "faces […] shrouded in black" and thus "accompanied by men" (p. 299). It is important to note the use of a singular form in "a woman full in the face" whereas a plural form in "faces

(…) shrouded in black," for it expresses Ferraris' opinion of Saudi Arabian women, the Other. Ferraris implicitly states that it is rare to see a Saudi Arabian woman with an exposed face, thus a brave, strong, independent woman, and hence the singular form in "a woman full in the face." Contrastively, she asserts the ubiquitous view of veiled Saudi Arabian women, thus weak, dependent, timid, and cowardly women, and hence the plural form in "faces […] shrouded in black" who are in need of being "accompanied by men." The word "shrouded" itself denotes the overwhelmingness of this black covering that is imposed on Saudi Arabian women's faces.

On that note, Ferraris writes of Saudi Arabian women encouraging each other to give up their *burqa*:

and it was Salwa who, in the spirit of making women strong in the workplace, had encouraged [Katya] not to wear her burqa. "men don't respect you when you follow the rules all the times. Sometimes you have to address them directly and show them your face, even if you put your burqa down later" (p. 57).

In the above excerpt, Ferraris offers explicit direct statements about the conditions for respected Saudi Arabian women in the workplace that she puts simply: giving up the veil which, as a result, allows for the women to address men in the face. She expresses her beliefs of the destined consequences of the *burqa* that can be reversed once it is taken off in two ways: first, by narrating the event where Salwa pushes Katya, and, second, by putting words in Salwa's mouth.

The following is the second linguistic feature that is examined of Ferraris' Out-group Saudi Arabian women.

Active versus passive voice; Agent versus Patient Role.

In *Finding Nouf*, it is evident how the semantic roles of Agent versus Patient are given to Saudi Arabian women systematically. It appears that Ferraris places her Out-group Saudi Arabian women in the Patient Role. Only when the actions being described are negative does Ferraris attribute the Agent Role to Saudi Arabian women in the active voice. The following subsections shed light on these negative attributes: passivity and conformity; oppression; seclusion; polygamy; conditional strength; and inferiority to Americanness.

Passivity and conformity.

Passivity and conformity are one of the traits Ferraris describes Saudi Arabian women as the doers of. She writes: "[Fatimah] covered her head, she said, because it was the modest thing to do, and then she joked that her face wasn't pretty enough to cause much disturbance among men but she would veil it to spare them the fright" (p. 82). In this example, Fatimah, a Saudi Arabian woman, is given the Agent Role in the active voice. That gives the impression that Fatimah is responsible of the actions being described. In other words, she is the doer of covering up her face so that she confirms not only to what the society expects of her ("because it was the modest thing to do") but also to what pleases men ("spare them the fright"). Her having the Agent Role in the active voice for these actions indicates her responsibility for the subjugation she undertakes.

Oppression.

Saudi Arabian woman's face in this novel as a part of the body warrants particular consideration as it relates to veiling. Ferraris refers to a woman by her face: "a veiled face peered down" (p. 95), not a veiled woman peered down. More importantly, instead of telling her reader that "Nayir sees a veiled face" (giving the veiled face the Patient Role),

Ferraris chooses to give a woman's face, being "a veiled face," the Agent Role in the active voice.

However, when it comes to the *burqa* itself, Ferraris gives the *burqa* the prominence. She writes: "[Katya] (…) checked that her *burqa* was securely fastened, and quickly got out of the car" (p. 53-4). The construction "her *burqa* was securely fastened" is in the passive voice appearing in the middle of an active voice sentence ("she (…) checked (…) and quickly got out of the car"). This passive construction places the *burqa* early in the phrase ("her *burqa* was securely fastened") thus indicates the force it has on Saudi Arabian women. Instead of making the entire sentence in the active voice: "she checked that she securely fastened her *burqa*, and got out of the car," Ferraris writes "she checked that her *burqa* was securely fastened." To Ferraris, it is more important to place emphasis on whether the burqa is fastened rather than Katya checking it. The use of words like "checked," "securely" and "fastened" emphasizes the care Saudi Arabian women take to ensure the veiling of their faces.

In fact, the powerful implications of the *burqa* are heavily reinforced in the novel. In many occasions, the *burqa* has been attributed the Agent Role in the active voice, making the Saudi Arabian woman the Patient. For example, Ferraris writes: "since the burqa clipped her vision" (p. 210). Instead of maintaining the same topic ("Katya gazing around as her vision was clipped by the *burqa*"), she shifts the topic of the sentence from Katya "gazing around" to "the *burqa* clipped [Katya's] vision." This shift of topic in order to assert prominence to the *burqa* is a recurrent practice. To give another example, Ferraris writes: "[Katya] had hung back by the door. Her *burqa* was down again" (p. 137). Actually, she tells her readers, in multiple occasions, that a Saudi Arabian woman always has an

extra *burqa* handy. In *Finding Nouf*, Saudi Arabian women are portrayed as women whose faces are enforced to be covered by the *burqa*, a piece of cloth.

Seclusion.

Ferraris asserts that a Saudi Arabian women's first names must be "as private as her hair or the shape of her body" (p. 13). To reinforce the private-ness of a woman's first name, she names Nayir's boat *Fatimah*, the first woman Nayir has met in his life. However, Ferraris makes sure that she strikes out the name ~~*Fatimah*~~ every time she mentions Nayir's boat. In addition, she makes seeing a woman's first name on an ID tag shocking: "[Nayir] was surprised to see [Katya's] first name on the tag" (p. 13). In this sentence, Ferraris puts Katya's name in the passive voice. Instead of "displaying her name surprised him," she writes "[Nayir] was surprised to see her first name on the tag." This passive construction that distances the Agent gives prominence to Nayir's feeling of surprise (Nayir being the Patient) rather than Katya's action of showing her name (Katya's name being the Agent).

On another occasion, Ferraris tells of three strange women visiting the Shrawi family. She writes: "one of the women introduced herself, explaining that her husband had come to make a donation. The other women remained happily anonymous, but Katya guessed that their husbands were visiting the house too" (p. 178). This example of strange women introducing themselves by their husbands, rather than by their first name, is a piece of information added to complete the whole story around the necessity of having a woman's first name not only private but also concealed by introducing the husband's instead. The fact that these three women have the Agent Role in the active voice indicates their responsibility in secluding themselves. In other words, Ferraris emphasizes the idea that not only do Saudi Arabian women never reveal their first names but also they identify

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themselves by their husband's names, thus underlining the lack of identity Saudi Arabian women are subjected to. After all, none of these three women give their first name. The description "the other women remained happily anonymous" emphasizes the idea that Saudi Arabian women do not mind being unidentified, even if it is to other women. The Agent Role is given to all three strange women as they are practicing their passivity and anonymity, which in part makes them responsible for this seclusion. This is a negative trait that Ferraris emphasizes, as a part of portraying the negative Saudi Arabian women; the negative Other. Ferraris believes that Saudi Arabian women not only have no identity but also are content being identified by their husbands.

Polygamy.

Ferraris introduces polygamy, as a common practice in Saudi Arabia, while describing the wives being "all cloaked and veiled." She writes:

[Polygamy] was ludicrous, and yet [Nayir] saw these families all the time, these husbands who juggled four wives and twenty children. He saw them picnicking at the Corniche, the children running around like small tribes of bandits, the wives bickering while they laid out enormous rugs and set up elaborate outdoor kitchens with camp stoves and dozens of coolers. He would sit on a bench and watch from a distance, studying the wives all cloaked and veiled, and try to determine if the husband was actually treating them equally. In most cases the husband would sit on a separate rug with other men, above the fray. If the children approached him, they did so with trepidation. The women never approached except to bring food. At least, Nayir thought, the husband was ignoring them all. Equally. (p. 130)

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This long, detailed description of polygamy in Saudi Arabia, associated with the use of veil, is contrastive to the short description of monogamy in the U.S. ("in America, a man can't marry a second wife" (p. 129)). Ferraris makes a clear distinction between Us and Them. According to Ferraris, American women are always in monogamous relationships thus treated fairly with a lot of attention, whereas Saudi Arabian women are all in polygamous relationships thus treated poorly with a lot of discard and indifference. More importantly, Ferraris attributes the Patient Role to Saudi Arabian women making them subjects to Nayir's observations. The results of these observations are: "the wives bickering while they laid out enormous rugs and set up elaborate outdoor kitchens with camp stoves and dozens of coolers," "the wives all cloaked and veiled," "The women never approached except to bring food," and finally, when it comes to equality among the wives, "the husband was ignoring them all. Equally."

Looking at these phrases, it is apparent that Saudi Arabian women are attributed the Patient Role and their demeaning actions are described in the adjunct clause, indicating insignificance. The excerpt has only one sentence that gives Saudi Arabian women the Agent Role: "the women never approached except to bring food." It is important to note that this sentence, that has Saudi Arabian women as the Agent, does not explicitly mention the Patient, i.e., the husband. This absence of Patient suggests Ferraris' perceived ideologies of patriarchal Saudi Arabian society where women can never do something to men. The sentence "In most cases the husband would sit on a separate rug with other men, above the fray" indicates the gender inequality, as portrayed by Ferraris. The words "separate" and "above" symbolizes the higher position men hold in Ferraris' Saudi Arabian society. Moreover, the sentence: "the husband was ignoring them all [the wives]. Equally."

is an emphasis that serves as an indication of the absolute gender inequality practiced in Ferraris' Saudi Arabia where no woman is viewed better than her female counterparts. They are all "equally" inferior to men. Othering Saudi Arabian women, Ferraris contends that this inferiority to men is manifested "all the time" and in places like the Corniche where fun and happiness are expected to be the theme of the scene. To sum up, the actions that Ferraris makes Saudi Arabian women part of, both as the Agent and the Patient, are negative: Saudi Arabian women are part of polygamous relationships where they are not only made responsible for heavy house chores but also are treated miserably by their husbands. These actions denote oppression and inferiority of Ferraris' Saudi Arabian women.

Conditional strength.

Ferraris presents an occasion where Nayir sees an unveiled Saudi Arabian woman in a market she names The Royal Bazaar:

> He looked around for the nearest beverage kiosk, and what he saw drained the blood from his face. Beyond the next stall was a woman, alone. The front of her cloak hung open to expose a naked, well-formed body. She was the softest brown, caramel pudding, glistening with sweat in the neon lights. She smiled at Nayir. A second later she melted into the crowd. (p. 92)

In the above excerpt, a Saudi Arabian woman gets the Agent Role of the event, albeit after the sentence which describes the open cloak, i.e., the *abaaya*. In this scene, Ferraris shifts the voice of the sentence from passive "beyond the next stall was a woman" to active "she smiled at Nayir" and "she melted into the crowd." The shift happens after the mention of the open cloak: "The front of her cloak hung open to expose a naked, well-

formed body." It is also worth noting that this is the first time Ferraris makes a Saudi Arabian woman the doer of an action that is pleasant, i.e., smiling and being present in public by herself despite the crowd. The use of the word "alone" seems to declare the independent status this unveiled Saudi Arabian woman has. Also, Ferraris gives a beautiful description of this unveiled body ("a naked, well-formed body. She was the softest brown, caramel pudding, glistening with sweat in the neon lights"), which might suggest the attractiveness behind unveiling, a practice Saudi Arabian women lack due to their veiling. Thus, the construction of this scene (the change from passive voice to active voice after the open cloak along with the positive actions involved as a result of this open cloak) indicates Ferraris' conditionality of unveiling for Saudi Arabian women to be responsible of their lives in a positive light. In other words, to Ferraris, being unveiled is a requirement for being strong. Thus, if a Saudi Arabian woman wants to be the responsible agent of her life, she has to take off her veiling.

Inferiority to Americanness.

Ferraris presents American environments as superior to those of Saudi Arabians. On that note, Americans, and their spaces, dominate Saudi Arabians, particularly women. Ferraris writes of Katya's experience in an American compound, "[Katya] seemed subdued, perhaps a little nervous. With a casual movement, she lifted her *burqa*," and the reason being: "it was the effect of the Americanness around [Katya] that made her relax" (p. 138). Similarly, she writes of Nouf reaction during her first encounter with Eric (her American rescuer): "and when she saw [the Americans] she threw a scarf on her hair and wrapped it around her face" (p. 161).

In both events, these two Saudi Arabian women (Katya and Nouf) are given the Agent Role in active voice sentences. In the first event, although made the Patient of American influence ("[Katya] seemed subdued" and "it was the effect of Americanness […] that made her relax"), Katya is given the Agent Role in her action of lifting the *burqa* ("she lifted her *burqa*"). In the second event, Nouf, being the Agent, is totally in charge of how she veils, or rather unveils ("she threw a scarf on her hair and wrapped it around her face").

More importantly, Ferraris' perceived judgements of Americanness' superiority (particularly of American women over Saudi Arabian women) is also realized by her Saudi Arabian characters. She writes of Nayir's thoughts on the matter:

Had [Nouf] spoken through a *burqa*, or was she modern enough to show Eric her face? Eric was American, and Americans had a habit of annihilating the rules; when you talked to one, it was sometimes okay to act as they acted. Nayir had seen it himself with Juliet [an American woman Nayir has met], the way he looked right at her face. Nouf […] probably did show Eric her face. She probably shook his hand and looked directly into his eyes, trying to prove that she could be American too (p. 165).

The influence of the Americans on Saudi Arabian women is demonstrated throughout the excerpt. Ferraris attributes the agency of events to Saudi Arabian women who are gaining power, as a result of them being surrounded by Americanness and wanting to become like American women. It is due to this Americanness that not only do Saudi Arabian women are attributed the Agent Role but also their actions are described in the active voice, which emphasize their responsibility in the events. During their interactions

with Americans, they are presented as the ones initiating the actions. Instead of "Eric sees Nouf's face", Nouf is the one to decide "to show Eric her face" and "probably did show Eric her face." Instead of "Eric shakes Nouf's hand and looks at her", it is Nouf who "probably shook his hand and looked directly into his eyes." This is the case because, according to Ferraris, Nouf (like any other Saudi Arabian women) is "trying to prove that she could be American too."

Furthermore, it is evident that Ferraris has given a detailed account of "the effect of Americanness" on Saudi Arabians throughout her novel: "when you talked to one, it was sometimes okay to act as they acted." This effect extends to influence everyone, including a Palestinian man raised in Saudi Arabia: "Nayir had seen it himself with Juliet [an American woman Nayir has met], the way he looked right at her face." Giving three different Saudi Arabian characters affected by Americanness: Katya in an American compound, Nayir with Juliet in an American event, and Nouf with Eric, is an indicator of Ferraris' ideologies that state binary opposition: superior Americans (as in-group) and inferior Saudi Arabians (as out-group).

The following is the third linguistic feature that is examined of Ferraris' Out-group Saudi Arabian women.

Disclaimers.

According to Van Dijk (1988), disclaimers in sentences like "I have nothing against black people *but* …" are widely employed by language users to present their ideologies of the negative Other. In disclaimers, language users present something positive to introduce something negative about a certain group of people. Van Dijk explains, "disclaimers are used as strategic prefaces to the negative part of the text" (1988, p. 40). He argues that the

reason behind using disclaimers is for the language users "to avoid the negative impression of being intolerant, ignorant bigot" (p. 40). In *Finding Nouf*, Ferraris employs disclaimers in her representation of the Out-group Saudi Arabian women. Below are two examples of disclaimers.

First, Ferraris presents only one Saudi Arabian woman who questions the Quranic commands of the veil. She writes:

> Fatimah loved to debate the finer points of Islamic interpretation, like whether or not the veil should cover the face or just the hair. She quoted generously from the Quran without ever touching the book. One time she recited the whole four-page section from sura An-Nur that dealt with the veil: *Believing women*, it said, should *draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands*. She believed that covering the bosom was a literal prescription but the rest was up to the individual. She covered her head, she said, because it was the modest thing to do, and then she joked that her face wasn't pretty enough to cause much disturbance among men but she would veil it to spare them the fright. Nayir smiled at the joke, although he privately disagreed. Her face didn't dazzle, but it drew him in anyway, becoming lovelier as the days went by. She was half his height, and from what he could tell through the black cloaks she always wore, voluptuous as well. (p. 82).

In the above excerpt, Ferraris utilizes a type of disclaimers that Van Dijk calls Apparent Concession, as in statements like "There are also intelligent black students, but …" (p. 39). Strategically, Ferraris presents Fatimah as a critical thinker who educates herself in matters that concern her, like the Quranic instructions of the veil, and thus reaches

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the conclusion that it is only the bosom that has to be covered, *but* she is nonetheless conforming in her actions. Emphasizing her description on Fatimah's submission, Ferraris states that Fatimah is submissive not only to what her society considers "the modest thing to do" (covering her head) but also to what should "spare [men] the fright" of being disturbed by her "not pretty enough" face (covering her face). This example of disclaimer indicates Ferraris opinion that Saudi Arabian women are not only passive in their lives but also submissive conformists to whatever is expected of them.

Similarly, Ferraris revolves the story around one of the main female characters, Katya, who is presented as a PhD degree holder in molecular biology and a lab technician at a coroner's office, which are good positive traits. However, it is Katya who is found silenced in multiple occasions. Ferraris asserts that Katya is an independent educated working Saudi Arabian woman in one hand *but* she is a passive woman led by the men around her, family and strangers alike in the other. She writes: "for all her independence, she was in some ways still a sheltered woman" (p. 212).

The second example of disclaimer is thought-provoking. Writing about Nouf's interaction with Eric (her American rescuer), Ferraris lets Eric describe Nouf's character: "She seemed nervous speaking to us, but she asked if we were American, and we said yes" (p. 161). In this example, instead of mentioning a positive trait to introduce a negative one, Ferraris does the opposite, i.e., the negative trait comes first introducing a positive action. The shift from having a negative trait to having a positive trait has occurred as a result of one's exposure to Americanness. In this scenario, it seems that Ferraris is being strategic to describe Nouf as someone who is innately nervous to approach strangers (like other Saudi Arabian women), *but* because she is around Americans, she now talks to strangers.

I wonder if Ferraris' reversed order of disclaimers (negative then positive, instead of positive then negative) serves the same purpose Van Dijk argues for disclaimers to have, i.e., "to avoid the negative impression of being intolerant, ignorant bigot" (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 40).

The following is the fourht linguistic feature that is examined of Ferraris' Out-group Saudi Arabian women.

Modal *should***.**

When it comes to the argument of veiling, Ferraris asserts that the Quran has commanded and obliged Muslim women to wear the veil. She offers the veil argument through one of her female Saudi Arabian characters, Fatimah. She writes:

Fatimah loved to debate the finer points of Islamic interpretation, like whether or not the veil should cover the face or just the hair. She quoted generously from the Quran without ever touching the book. One time she recited the whole four-page section from sura An-Nur that dealt with the veil: *Believing women*, it said, should *draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands*. She believed that covering the bosom was a literal prescription but the rest was up to the individual. (p. 82).

In the above excerpt, Ferraris utilizes direct statements with the implications that they are true when they are completely false. First, the idea that the Quran has discussed the veil in a "whole four-page section [in] sura An-Nur." The truth is that there are only 3 short verses that discuss women's covering in all the 114 chapters with more than 6,000 verses. These three verses are scattered in three different chapters, and none of the verses takes four pages in the Quran. In fact, if we are to combine these three verses, they barely

make up a half page. More importantly, according to her Ted Talk *What does the Quran really say about a Muslim woman's hijab*, Ali (2017) states that none of these verses has the word "veil" or its Arabic equivalent "*hijab*."

Second, Ferraris gives a verse that she italicizes making it appear a direct quote from the Quran, when it is not. The verse Ferraris writes in her *Finding Nouf* is: "*Believing women*, it said, should *draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands*." The actual verse she is quoting says, "And [O Mohammed] tell the believing women to [...] guard their private parts and expose not their adornment except that which appears and to draw their garment over their bosoms." It is apparent the differences between the two verses: the one in the Quran and the one in Ferraris' *Finding Nouf*. In the Quran, it is God asking the prophet to tell the believing women to be modest in their clothing, whereas in Ferraris' *Finding Nouf*, it is a direct quote where the believing women *should* cover themselves with *their veils*. Ferraris' manipulation of the verse is problematic simply because the Quran has only one version in Arabic, which has been reserved to zero change since its revelation in the 6th century. In other words, there is no possible way for Ferraris to have found a version of the Quran that has a different modal than the one I mentioned above. Thus, this shift observed in her quote is meaningful in my analysis.

I will not analyze Ferraris' English translation of the Arabic word "khimar" (garment) to "veil," simply because Ferraris is not a speaker of Arabic to be examined for her word choices. In addition, the translation of "khimar" to "veil," when should have been "garment," is common. I argue that the reasons behind these common beliefs ("khimar"

meaning "*hijab*" and "garment" meaning "veil") are deeply rooted in patriarchal practices, which can be a topic of a future research (see Literature Review).

However, I attempt to examine the use of the modality *should* in Ferraris' supposedly direct quote from Quran, in comparison to the actual Quranic verse. The linguistic term "modality" is defined as "the semantic domain [that] covers a broad range of semantic nuances–jussive, desiderative, intentive, hypothetical, potential, obligative, dubitative, hortatory, exclamative, etc" (Bybee & Fleischman, 1995, p. 2). Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca (1994) classify modality into four types: agent-oriented, speaker-oriented, epistemic and subordinating. Owing to the fact that this analysis concerns itself with the semantic differences between Ferraris' allegedly Quranic verse and the actual verse, I will only examine each verse separately.

First, examining Ferraris' allegedly Quranic verse, "*Believing women*, it said, should *draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands*," we see that Ferraris employs the modal *should* which she added to the verse (not italicized). Ferraris' use of *should* expresses an agent-oriented modality, defined by Bybee as the one that "reports the existence of internal and external conditions on an agent with respect to the completion of the action expressed in the main predicate" (Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca, 1994, p. 177). Agent-oriented modality denotes deontic statements from "obligation, desire, ability, permission, and root possibility" (Bybee & Fleischman, 1995, p. 6). *Should* in particular gives the meaning of obligation (Dixon, 2005). For Bybee et al. (1994), *should* denotes weak obligation. The explain, although *should* and *must* are both agent-oriented modality that denotes obligation, the two are not the same. The difference between *should* and *must* is that the former expresses "weak obligation" whereas

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the latter expresses "strong obligation" (p. 177). On that note, Bybee argues that the obligation sense in *should* implies a sense of probability, unlike *must* that implies a sense of certainty. They assert, "the meaning of *must* is not as eroded as that of *should*; *must* expresses strong obligation and in that sense has more semantic content than *should*. In addition, *must* has not generalized to the wide set of uses that *should* has" (p. 201). However, it is important to note that although Ferraris uses the modal *should*, she, throughout *Finding Nouf*, make her Saudi Arabian women obliged to wear the veils as if the modal used is *must*.

On the other hand, the actual Quranic verse, "And [O Mohammed] tell the believing women to […] guard their private parts and expose not their adornment except that which appears and to draw their garment over their bosoms," employs speaker-oriented modality, which is defined as utterances that "include all […] directives [such as, commands, demands, requests, entreaties, and warnings] as well as utterances in which the speaker grants the addresses permission" (Bybee et al., 1994, p. 179). The key difference between the agent-oriented and the speaker-oriented modalities is that "speaker-oriented modalities do not report the existence of conditions on the agent, but rather allow the speaker to impose such conditions on the addresses" (p. 179). The lack of marker, i.e., auxiliary modals, usually denotes "total commitment to the truth of the proposition" (p. 179). However, it is important to note that the verse does not command the believing women directly; the command is subordinated in another command. In other words, the directive: "the believing women […] guard their private parts […]" is a subordinate clause of the main directive clause "And [O Mohammed] tell the believing women." The use of this construction is meaningful in the discourse, for the Quran rarely employs subordinating

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modalities where the main addresses is the Prophet being asked to do something. In fact, the preceding verse employs an unmarked directive, without a subordinate clause, in the form of imperative (defined: "the form used to issue a direct command to a second person" (p. 179). It reads, "O you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded." Thus, the semantic meanings behind utilizing a subordinate clause in "And [O Mohammed] tell the believing women to […]" may have the potentiality of wanting to mitigate and decrease the total commitment of the proposition that is perceived by lack of modality marker.

Therefore, Ferraris' change of modality, from subordinating speaker-oriented to agent-oriented, along with giving false facts about the amount of veil discussion in the Quran are highly problematic yet very relevant, owing to the fact that modality expresses one's opinions in regard to certain matters. According to Depraetere and Reed (2006), "the basis [is] that all modal utterances are non-factual, in that they do not assert that the situations they describe are facts, and all involve the speaker's comment on the necessity or possibility of the truth of a proposition or the actualization of a situation" (p. 269). In *Finding Nouf*, Ferraris argues that the Quran not only discusses the veil in a lengthy manner ("the whole four-page section from sura An-Nur that dealt with the veil") but also obliges its believing women to veil (the use of *should* which sure feels like *must* in her novel). She expresses her beliefs that the veil is a *must* in Islam. Considering her negative construction of the veil onto veiled Saudi Arabian women throughout her novel, Ferraris contributes to the Western narratives that assert oppressive Islam, thus oppressed Saudi Arabian women. According to Van Dijk (1988), Ferraris' narrative is constructed in a way that wants to be

coherent with Western narratives about the identity of Saudi Arabian women. The veiling is perceived in the West as a negative practice. Therefore, using a modal that denotes obligation for Their negative practice imposed by Their religion, along with the emphasis of it being a lengthy discussion in Their Holy Book, serves as a strategy employed by Ferraris to emphasize the negative traits associated with her Out-group Saudi Arabian women.

After laying out the analysis of Ferraris' novel *Finding Nouf* according to two groups of women: American women versus Saudi Arabian women, I attempt to reiterate the findings in a summarized comparative manner.

Comparative Representations of In-group versus Out-group

Examining the representations of American women versus Saudi Arabian women in Zoe Ferraris' *Finding Nouf*, it is undeniable that Ferraris has established a clear distinctive binary opposition between the two groups. Being an American woman herself, she offers an overall positive account of American women on the one hand, and an overall negative account of Saudi Arabian women on the other. These two distinct representations can be explained by Van Dijk's ideological square theory that asserts a binary opposition of Us versus Them in discourses depending on memberships (1988). These binary squares are manifested through linguistic features of the discourse. Beside touching on which words and phrases have be chosen in Ferraris' depiction of the two groups of women, I will focus on the use of lexical items, active versus passive voice, Agent versus Patient role, disclaimers, modal *should*, and coherence.

Lexical items.

In terms of general contrastive descriptions of women in regard to veiling, Ferraris employs direct words that tend to have strong connotations. While choosing words like "all unveiled and smiling" (p. 148), "unveiled" and "no undergarments" (p. 149) to present her In-group, she chooses "fully covered" (p. 186), "all cloaked and veiled" (p. 130), and "shrouded in black" (p. 299) for her Out-group. Being judgmental of the gender segregation practiced in Saudi Arabia, she calls the minimum necessary gender interaction "an invasion of privacy" (p. 10 & 43). While verbs denoting force like "shoot," "lean forward," "take," "linger," "eye," "fix," and "extend" are used to describe the actions of her In-group, she utilizes "scurry" and "flit" (verbs that are used often for tiny animals, such as mice and birds, to express them running away in fright) to tell of her Out-group. Also, she uses the words "veil" and "cloak" as verbs in the context of acting immorally, i.e., deceiving others and being dishonest.

Metaphors and similes are also used in Ferraris' representations of Saudi Arabian women in a way that resemble them to animals and shapes. Beside employing "scurry" four times in the novel to describe Their movements, she pictures her Out-group's appearance in public spaces as "black shapes" and "the dark shapes of night" along with an explicit simile: "as quiet and alert as deer" (p. 50). Moreover, she names the veil worn by Saudi Arabian women "brick" (p. 145). It seems that Ferraris wants to paint a vivid picture of Saudi Arabian women: an object ("shapes") who has a brick wall right in front of her face and moves like a tiny animal.

Active versus passive voice; Agent Role versus Patient Role.

Examining the sentences which have Saudi Arabian women and American women in *Finding Nouf*, it is evident that Ferraris tends to attribute the Agent Role to her In-group

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women in the active voice whereas the Patient Role to her Out-group women in the passive voice. The actions attributed to American women not only are inherently positive but also denote a level of courage to initiate actions and be the Agent of the scene. For example, in *Finding Nouf*, American women are the ones not only to smile and sunbath but also to extend a hand to introduce themselves and tell men whether or not they want to have kids. On the other hand, in the case of Ferraris' Out-group Saudi Arabian women, it is the *burqa* and the *abaaya* that are oftentimes constructed in sentences to be the agent of the lives of Saudi Arabian women (e.g., "since the *burqa* clipped her vision" (p. 210)).

That said, Saudi Arabian women are attributed the Agent Role in the active voice in two main scenarios: when they are doing actions that are perceived negative, especially to Ferraris, and when they are acting like American women as a result of being surrounded by Americanness. Among the many negative traits Ferraris attributes to Saudi Arabian women is passivity that is associated with veiling: "[Fatimah] covered her head, she said, because it was the modest thing to do, and then she joked that her face wasn't pretty enough to cause much disturbance among men but she would veil it to spare them the fright" (p. 82), and "[Katya] (…) checked that her burqa was securely fastened, and quickly got out of the car" (p. 53-4). This passivity of Saudi Arabian women extends to have them happily anonymous: "The other women remained happily anonymous" (p. 178). Moreover, being Patients of polygamous relationship "all the time," these women are the Agents to participate in a life that treats them as if they were slaves: "The women never approached except to bring food" (p. 130).

The second main scenario involves the character of Saudi Arabian women being affected by Americanness. In this case, Ferraris attributes positive traits to Saudi Arabian

women. This theme is manifested in multiple occasions. For example, when Katya is in an American woman, Ferraris writes: "With a casual movement, she lifted her *burqa*" (p. 138). Similarly, during her interaction with Eric, an American man living in Saudi Arabia, "[Nouf] threw a scarf on her hair and wrapped it around her face" (p. 161) as well as "shook his hand and looked directly into his eyes" (p. 165). The reason behind this gained agency is explained in both situations, respectively: "it was the effect of the Americanness around [Katya] that made her relax" (p. 138) and "[Nouf] trying to prove that she could be American too" (p. 165). However, it is important to note that Ferraris gives superiority to Americanness over Saudi Arabian women: "[Katya] seemed subdued," "it was the effect of the Americanness around [Katya] that made her relax" (p. 138).

According to Ferraris, the strength of Saudi Arabian women is encapsulated by her take on the veil. Only when she unveils does she become the agent of her life in a positive light. Ferraris writes: "and it was Salwa who, in the spirit of making women strong in the workplace, had encouraged [Katya] not to wear her *burqa*" (p. 57). The strength bestowed upon the character of a Saudi Arabian woman as she unveils is illustrated: "a woman full in the face" (p. 281), and "[there] was a woman, alone. The front of her cloak hung open to expose a naked, well-formed body. […]. She smiled at Nayir. A second later she melted into the crowd" (p. 92). Only in these excerpts does Ferraris gives the character of Saudi Arabian woman the Agent Role in an active voice while the action being described is indeed positive.

Disclaimers.

Ferraris utilizes disclaimers to depict her Out-group throughout the story. She uses Apparent Concession disclaimers as a means to portray an image of "there are good Saudi

Arabian women *but* ….” This use of Apparent Concession stresses the negative qualities of Saudi Arabian women that come after *but*. For example, Ferraris tells of Fatimah who critically analyzes the veil verses in the Quran and reaches her own interpretations *but* conforms to what is expected of her. She also presents Katya who is a PhD degree holder in molecular biology and an independent working woman at a coroner’s office *but* is a passive woman led by the men around her, family and strangers alike: “for all her independence, she was in some ways still a sheltered woman” (p. 212). Furthermore, to argue for the influence and the superiority of Americanness, she describes Nouf as a nervous Saudi Arabian woman *but*, due to being around Eric, she initiates not only a conversation but also a business deal to escape to New York City: “She seemed nervous speaking to us, but she asked if we were American, and we said yes” (p. 161).

Modal *should*.

Examining the argument of veiling presented in *Finding Nouf*, I argue that Ferraris not only presents false information in regard to the Quranic discussion on the matter but also changes the original modal found in the Quranic verse in a way that expresses her opinions on the veil. First, although the amount of veil discussion in the Quran is minimal (they are three verses scattered in three different chapters that do not make a half page if combined, and one of which addresses *only* the Prophet’s wives), Ferraris claims that there is a “whole four-page section from sura An-Nur that dealt with the veil” (p. 82). Second, she manipulates her verse quotation from the Quran. While the Quran has a subordinating speaker-oriented modality in its verse: “And [O Mohammed] tell the believing women to […] guard their private parts and expose not their adornment except that which appears and to draw their garment over their bosoms,” Ferraris chooses an agent-oriented modal,

should, in her direct quote: "*Believing women*, it said, should *draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands*."

The modal *should* in Ferraris' allegedly Quranic verse denotes obligation on Saudi Arabian women to wear the veil. In fact, looking at the descriptions of Saudi Arabian women who are fully covered at all times in Ferraris' *Finding Nouf*, the modal *should* definitely feels like the modal *must*, which denotes strong obligation. This use of modality expresses Ferraris' beliefs on the veil, i.e., Muslim women are obliged to wear the veil. Considering the negative ideologies Ferraris has for veiling demonstrated throughout the novel, this use of modality thus reveals Ferraris' views of Islam as an oppressive religion.

Coherence.

Coherently, she evolves her story with the argument that Saudi Arabian women are in dire need of finding a white American man to save them from the brown Saudi Arabian man. In fact, according to Ferraris, they are already escaping their country to the US with the help of a white American man. She starts her *Finding Nouf* with a scene of a search group looking for a missing young Saudi Arabian woman, Nouf, while pondering a theory of her having escaped with a White American man to his land of freedom, since so many Saudi Arabian women have done so. She writes: "[the] men developed a theory that Nouf had eloped with an American lover to escape her arranged marriage. […] There had been a few cases of rich Saudi girls falling for American men, and they were shocking enough to linger in the collective memory" (p. 4). Halfway, she asserts that what this search group has speculated as a theory is now a reality. She unfolds a planned deal Nouf has arranged with Eric, a white American man. In exchange for money, Eric will help Nouf flee her native country and live in his United States. By the end of the story, she unfolds the tragedy

of Nouf being impregnated by her older adopted brother and killed by her younger sister who feels jealous of Nouf's approaching marriage.

Ferraris' story is a representative of a prototypical Western plot of the Inferior Other that mirrors Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's well-known sentence: "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak, 1988. p. 296). In *Finding Nouf,* Ferraris presents Saudi Arabian men who physically and emotionally abuse Saudi Arabian women. It is the brown Saudi Arabian man who does not allow the Saudi Arabian woman to unveil, study, work, travel, leave the house, go to a beach, decide what is best for her health (such as an eye examination) or choose what she wants for herself (from choosing her own sandals to choosing her own husband). It is due to this severe subjugation that a Saudi Arabian woman is on a mission to look for her white American hero to save her from her brown Saudi Arabian man. Based on *Finding Nouf*'s plot and according to Van Dijk's ideological square, Ferraris employs the strategy of coherence (locally as well as globally) to portray the Other. Looking at the scenarios of *Finding Nouf*, it is clear how Ferraris others Saudi Arabian women by making her novel an example, or rather a piece of the complete story, i.e., "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak, 1988. p. 296). She regards Saudi Arabian women as the inferior Other who suffer a great deal, and thus it is the job of white American men to save them.

On that note, it is clear how Ferraris controls her coherence and description throughout the novel. While she gives long descriptions of how Saudi Arabian women are passive, abused, and silenced in their lives thus live miserably, she offers long descriptions of how American women are in control of their lives thus live happily. When it concerns Saudi Arabian women, she gives mention to men's control, judgments, subjugation,

dismissal of these Saudi Arabian women. However, when it concerns American women, she reveals all the smiles, the sunbathing, the unveiling, and the freedom these American women have. That said, she does not touch on any of the struggles American woman face (e.g., the gender discrimination and pay in the workplace) nor on the opportunities Saudi Arabian women have (e.g., there are more Saudi Arabian women with college degrees than Saudi Arabian men).

To sum up, Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* is an evidence of how Ferraris, throughout her novel, emphasizes *only* the good traits about her In-group in one hand, and *only* the bad traits about her Out-group in the other. According to Van Dijk's ideological square, controlling what information is presented in the narrative is a strategy used to offer a clear binary opposition between two groups. While Ferraris gives a coherent image of strong independent American women in the one hand, she presents a coherent image of weak imprisoned Saudi Arabian women in the other. Importantly, she implicitly relates the status of each group of women to whether or not they wear a veil, referred to as "brick" in the story.

To highlight the contrastive representations of the two groups of women, I quote some of Ferraris' propositions. On the one hand, she writes of her In-group American woman: "[she] was ridiculously free, Miss Shake-My-Hand-and-Watch-Them-Jiggle, Miss I'll-Give-You-Ten-Children, and by the way what's your name?" (p. 152). On the other hand, she writes of her Out-group Saudi Arabian woman: "[Saudi Arabians] were ridiculous–what else could you say about a wealthy society that consciously veiled half its population and pretended the other half could see through brick?" (p. 145), and "These days everyone was watching the new team of female police officers, recently sent into the

field for the first time. They weren't remarkable officers, but what could be expected from a group of women who couldn't drive cars or ride bicycles and who didn't even have the power to stop a man on the street?" (p. 168).

In the next chapter, I discuss how Ferraris' negative representation of Saudi Arabian women is problematic.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Through examining *Finding Nouf* by Zoe Ferraris, it becomes evident how Ferraris represents her Out-group Saudi Arabian women in a negative light. Through making the veil highly visible in her narration of Saudi Arabian women, she makes the veil a symbol of inferiority and oppression of women. She equates the veil, referred to as "brick," with being silenced, uneducated, unemployed, oppressed Saudi Arabian women. I argue that this negative light is problematic for it not only focuses and exaggerates the negative traits of Saudi Arabian society but also lacks truth in so many aspects. In this chapter, I attempt to explore the problematic nature of such depiction of Saudi Arabian women. I do so as I bring statistics as well as voices of prominent Saudi Arabian women. I touch on four categories: veiling, education and employment, polygamy, and self-advocacy.

Veiling

In *Finding Nouf*, Ferraris presents all veiled, all cloaked Saudi Arabian women. In fact, she stresses on the idea that Saudi Arabian women have this appearance every chance she gets in the story. Princess Reema, the current Saudi Arabian ambassador to the US, calls this amount of stress on Saudi Arabian women's veiling "fixation on the appearance" that needs to shift to address their "capacity and capability" (El Geressi, 2018).

Moreover, Ferraris brings Quranic verses in her novel to give the impression that this has always been the case for Saudi Arabian women. Yet, rejecting the idea that wearing a veil is a sign of conservatism and traditionalism, Princess Reema states: "I need us to get over the word conservative being linked to a woman that is fully covered because I have found profoundly liberal women who are covered top to bottom and very conservative women that look and dress like myself" i.e., a woman who unveils herself except for a small part of her hair (El Geressi, 2018).

Moreover, although Ferraris shows her familiarity with the veiling in Islam by citing a Quranic verse, she fails to acknowledge the complexity of the cultural political background of Saudi Arabia which plays an enormous role on how women and men dress in public. Enforced only late 1970s, this dress code (i.e., the *abaaya* for women and the *thoub* for men) is a national identity that serves as a distinction between the Saudi Arabians and the foreigners, who held more than half of the workplace as a result of the oil discovery (Le Renard, 2014). On that note, while *Finding Nouf* manifests Ferraris' failure of understanding the veil's complexity and politics in Saudi Arabia, literary works by female Saudi Arabian authors recognize the perplexing nature of it. *The Dove's Necklace*, for example, written by a female Saudi Arabian novelist, brings a female Saudi Arabian character, Aisha, who addresses intricate matters in her private letters (Alem, 2010). On the subject of the veil, one of Aisha's letter reads:

> We were raised in subterranean worlds, and when the time came for us to be allowed out, our faces had to be effaced with black—an invisibility cloak that makes us a non-existence—so the masculine world would not notice us. […] The weird thing was that this regime of effacement was a sign of modernity […], for throughout the neighborhood's history, right up until the early twentieth century, women's faces had remained uncovered for all the world to see, for the sun to shine on." (Alem, 2010/2016, p. 44-5)

In terms of legality, Raoum, a 24-year-old Saudi Arabian social media influencer with 144K YouTube subscribers, argues, on her *What's it like to live in Saudi Arabia as a female*, that "legally, what women have to wear in the country is the *abaaya*. Now women here are becoming creative with it, adding colors, styles, and it is kind of a way of

expression" (Sukkari Life, 2018). Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* (2010) reflects the different ways of covering among Saudi Arabian women. In Alem's world, a Saudi Arabian woman's way of covering (or uncovering) does not dictate her way of living. In other words, the veil does not create a differentiated impact on women. Regardless of whether a woman veils or not, she undergoes the same kind of challenges, gets the same kind of opportunities, and reaches the same kind of achievements.

Contrastively, while Ferraris argues that a woman's first name has to be veiled, Alem makes her female character, Aisha, veil her lover's name in her private letters. One letter writes, "David, I'll use this symbol to address you: ^. You need to be concealed in case someone discovers my messages" (Alem, 2010/2016, p. 64). In Alem's Saudi Arabia, women's first names are known not only to everyone in the neighborhood but also to the strange man acting as a detective. In fact, it is perhaps the man's name that gets veiled from the public. More importantly, the plot of *The Dove's Necklace* involves a search for a *hijab*, which translates to "amulet" in Alem's Saudi Arabia; another meaning of the word *hijab* in Arabic.

Another theme frequently presented in Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* is that Saudi Arabian women are forced to wear an overwhelmingly black veil to please their men and society. Ferraris argues that the veil is brick, for it hinders Saudi Arabian women on many different levels. However, on her YouTube video *What's it like to live in Saudi Arabia as a female*, Raoum (Sukkari Life, 2018) explains:

Many people think that women here are forced to wear these [hijab, niqab, burqa]. Sometimes yes, that is the case. […]. But I know many women who personally choose to cover up, whether it is covering their face or just wearing the hijab. I

know many women who wear the hijab here or cover their faces here but don't do so when they're traveling outside the country. […]. Personally, for me it is like a love hate relationship. […]. However, it does not stop women over here. I have seen women jog, and run […] in the *abaaya*.

Education and Employment

According to Ferraris, it is shameful for a Saudi Arabian woman to work to the point where she hides it. In *Finding Nouf*, there is only one educated employed woman. Katya Hijazi is a PhD degree holder in molecular biology and a lab technician at a coroner's office. All other Saudi Arabian women are uneducated and unemployed. This representation of Saudi Arabian women is problematic for two main facts. First, Ferraris' novel is located in Jeddah where Dar Al-Hanan, the first school for girls in Saudi Arabia, was founded in 1955 with an enrollment of 30 girls, which then jumped to 100 girls in the second year (Al-Zahrany, 2017). In a place of people who were the first to promote women's education in the country, seeing *only* one educated woman in the story with references to staying-at-home women with no education is impossible to process. Second, the statistics about women's education does not support Ferraris' representation. According to annual statistics published by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, from 1980 to present, there are more Saudi Arabian women with a higher education (i.e., education beyond high school) than there are Saudi Arabian men with higher education. In fact, in some years, the number of female Bachelor graduates is double the number of male graduates.

However, it is important to note that Saudi Arabian women's employment and social roles are not necessarily a reflection of their education. Although the three qualities

(education, employment, and social roles) are relatively intertwined with each other in the Western feminism, this does not seem to be the case in Saudi Arabia. In her socio-economic research in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, Alsuwaigh (1989) asserts that although it was salient that the younger generation had the best education after the oil boom, they were the ones who not only did not work but also denied employment with 'no' "indignantly" (p.74). Moreover, in another simultaneous ethnographic study, yet of women in Jeddah, Altorki (1986) argues that these younger women (1976-1984, in comparison to 1971-1973, 1974-1976) showed control for their property rights, which she interprets as a hint for minimization of the male power in the society. Having that said, the executive director of Human Resources at the Middle East's largest company, Saudi Aramco, is a Saudi Arabian woman named Huda Al-Ghoson (Arab News, 2018). She has been holding leading position of one of the world's largest and prestigious companies since 2012, shortly after the publication of Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* in 2009. It is important to note that prior to this position, she was the director of the Human Resources Policy and Planning between 2006-2009 and the head of the Training and Development Division between 2009-2012. According to Arab News (2018), "Al-Ghoson ranked fourth in a Forbes list of the most powerful Arab women in the field of executive management. She came seventh in a 2015 Arabian Business list of the most influential figures in the energy domain and won its Arab Woman Award in 2014." Moreover, in February 2019, Princess Reema Al Saud is appointed as the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the US. She is the first female to take on this political position (Sidi & Robertson, 2019; Ghanem, 2019).

Naturally, the work by Alem (2010), *The Dove's Necklace*, reflects the reality, for in it, Saudi Arabian women work, young and old alike. Aisha, a young woman, is teacher,

a bookworm, and an outstanding writer. She is a cause of resentment for men; for she obtains books men dream to have touched, and writes about topics men lack the audacity to speak of. Azza, another young woman, is a charcoal artist and has exhibitions. Halima, an old mother, is a coffee server at parties. Lastly, Umm al-Sa'd, another old mother, is an excellent stock broker whose brain is frightening to all men in the neighborhood. Among them all, only Halima who is not educated; everyone else is. Similarly, Raoum (Sukkari Life, 2018), on her YouTube video *What's it like to live in Saudi Arabia as a female*, asserts that "many women in this country have achieved great accomplishments in the health industry, and in the mathematics industry, science in general, technology, information, business, entrepreneurship." Acknowledging the challenges Saudi Arabian women face yet overcome, she says, "even with all the limitations [they] have been put through, they've exceeded them all."

Polygamy

In portraying polygamy in Saudi Arabia versus the United States, Ferraris gives propositions expressing statements to indicate binary oppositions of the two groups. While on the one hand, she writes of her In-group, "in American, a man can't marry a second wife" (p. 129), she, on the other hand, states of her out-group, "he saw these families all the time, these husbands who juggled four wives and twenty children" (p. 130). However, it is important to note that the statistics on polygamy in Saudi Arabia does not support Ferraris' representation of Saudi Arabia. In October 2016, Alarabiya.net (an online service of the Al Arabiya News Channel) wrote on the annual statistics of polygamy in Saudi Arabia. According to Saudi Arabian General Authority for Statistics (GAStat), there were more than half a million polygamist Saudi Arabian men (Saudi Arabian men engaged in

relationships with more than one woman at a time). Yet, to assess whether polygamy is a common practice in the country, one needs to look at the population of married Saudi Arabian men that year. According to GAStat, there were 4,009,902 married Saudi Arabian men (Saudi Arabian General Authority of Statistics, 2016, Table 17). Therefore, the percentage of Saudi Arabian polygamists is roughly 12.47 % in the country. Nevertheless, to present the Other, Ferraris chooses to draw the readers' attention to polygamy, a negative action, no matter how uncommon this action is actually practiced in real life.

In comparison, if we are to define polygamy as the engagement of a married person in an intimate relationship with more than one person, it makes sense to look at the numbers of married Americans being in a sexual relationship with someone who is not their spouse. The statistics on infidelity in the US will be used to assess the widespread polygamous relationships among Americans. According to Divorce Statistics Website, published in 2012, the percentage of married men who have cheated on their wives is 22% while the percentage of married women cheating on their husbands is 14% (Divorce Statistics, 2012, May 12). Unfortunately, the statistics does not state how many married men are in 2012. Yet, to get a rough estimate of how many American men are polygamists, one should consider the population of the US in comparison to the one of Saudi Arabia. Based on the latest United Nations estimates, the population of the US is 328,170,336 whereas it is 33,906,290 of Saudi Arabia, as of February 7, 2019 (Worldometers, 2019). Therefore, if the percentage of Saudi Arabian polygamists is roughly 12.47% in the population 33,906,290, it is plausible, in fact, to assert that the percentage of infidelity in the US is a lot higher than polygamy is in Saudi Arabia. The polygamy in the US that takes the form of infidelity is definitely an important issue that Ferraris has failed to mention in her

Finding Nouf, perhaps due to her wanting to emphasis on the positive traits of her In-group while giving dismissing the negative ones.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the low percentage of polygamy in Saudi Arabia (~12% in 2016) is reflected in Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* (2010). In Alem's Saudi Arabia, none of the Saudi Arabian women are in a polygamous relationship.

Opinions.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the voices of Saudi Arabian women in the matter. Being against polygamy, Al-Mogren (2016), on her *Organizing Polygamy*, encourages women to have a monogamous marriage as a condition to agreeing to marry. Reminding her female readers of their "legitimate rights guaranteed by Shariah," she writes: "The bride has the right to make it a condition that if her husband marries another woman, the marriage contract will become automatically nullified. On the other hand, the groom has the right to reject such a condition." She concludes:

> Perhaps it is appropriate here to mention that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade Ali from taking a second wife alongside Fatima (may Allah be pleased with them). The reason given by the Prophet was that he feared this would hurt Fatima. For us, as women, it is important to remember that Fatima Al-Zahra is our leader. Whatever hurts her femininity hurts every woman.

On her *Polygamy and Saudi Society*, Al-Alkami (2016) acknowledges the mistreatment some women have in polygamy. She writes, "Some men use polygamy to humiliate women while others use it to threaten their wives if they disobey them. Some men believe that Shariah has given them this right because they are better than women. They are all wrong." However, rather being neutral, she calls for awareness programs: "our

real problem does not lie in polygamy which is permissible in Shariah. Our Divine Law calls on men to treat women gently and kindly." On a similar note, Al-Sibai (2017) argues that "associating polygamy with Islam is one of the persistent myths. Islam did not encourage or outlaw polygamy, rather it regulated and restricted it."

Promoting polygamy, Hawazen Mirza, a professor at King Abdulaziz University located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, suggests opening an academy for polygamy. According to Al-Behairi (2017), Mirza asserts that her surveys show a significant number of her students who have expressed their preference in polygamous relationships where they meet their husbands for only two days a week. She says that some of the students reveal that a single man does not attract them as a husband. More importantly, she contends that the number of these students increase survey after a survey.

Since the opinions of Saudi Arabian women vary on polygamy, the professor's proposal is welcomed by some people and rejected by others. In the aftermath, Linjawi (2017) titles her blog with the question: *When did polygamy became blasphemous?* She raises a few questions reasoning the freedom of women's choices regarding marriage, in a way that validates and protects both sides:

> In an Islamic society, I ask the Saudi government: Where are the institutionalized procedures that give women the freedom to choose to be in a polygamous or monogamous marriage? I ask Saudi society that was so quick to retaliate against the university professor, what about the women who wish to be in a polygamous marriage? Where is their voice in the matter? Who is standing up for them? Do they not have the right to live comfortably in society and have the same resources that monogamous couples have?

Concluding, she contends that creating such academy is a sign of advancement, since it will "ensure that our society pays equal respect to both monogamous and polygamous marriages and gives the freedom of choice to both men and women, which is a privilege that many developed societies do not have."

In summary, Ferraris' representation of polygamy in Saudi Arabia is highly problematic. First, it refers to polygamy as a ubiquitous practice among Saudi Arabians when the statistics does not support the claim. Ferraris' mention of polygamy in Saudi Arabia seems controversial when the US suffers from infidelity in a higher percentage. Second, it ignores the varying opinions of Saudi Arabian women in regard to polygamy. More specifically, some women actually prefer polygamous relationships. If the US claims to grant individuals their freedom of choice, Ferraris should recognize and acknowledge the existence of opinions that are different from hers. Different opinions are, by no means, inferior.

Self-advocacy

According to Ferraris, Saudi Arabian women are silenced and always in the recipient end of the action, hence attributed the Patient Role throughout the novel. Ferraris presents many incidents of events where Saudi Arabian women not only are voiceless but also are ignored and dismissed when they talk. This representation of voiceless Saudi Arabian women is very problematic. Although it is hard to assess how Saudi Arabian women act with their family members behind closed doors, the news nevertheless attests to their courage in public. Protests and campaigns carried out by Saudi Arabian women for different causes are plentiful. In regard to women driving, an issue Ferraris points to in her novel, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a protest by Saudi Arabian women, on the streets of

Riyadh (the capital of Saudi Arabia) right before Ferraris' visit to Jeddah with her then husband. On November 6, 1990, in the midst of the Gulf War, a group of Saudi Arabian women "staged a public protest against their country's ban on women driving. For half an hour, they drove their cars in a convoy around the capital city of Riyadh until they were stopped by police" (Murphy, 2008). Calling the protest "well-planned", NBC News (2008) explains:

> The women said the presence of the international media covering the Iraq-Kuwait developments guaranteed their story would reach the whole world and that any government action would be less harsh than if the journalists were not there.
>
> They chose a Tuesday for the protest so they could listen to the gossip about them when they went to work on Wednesday. The names of the women became public the following Friday.

Despite their awareness of the ugly possible consequences this behavior might result in, they proceeded with the plan regardless. NBC News (2008) writes of the punishments:

> The protest, which made headlines around the world, cost the 47 female drivers and passengers dearly. They were arrested, lost their jobs for 2 1/2 years, were banned from travel for a year and were condemned by the powerful clergy as harlots. To this day, some say they have not been promoted at work because of their protest.

The protest is celebrated annually by a reunion of these 47 women. However, considering the timing of Ferraris' visit to Saudi Arabia that happened in the aftermath of this huge protest along with its severe punishments, which might have possibly led Ferraris

to know about it, I raise the question: Why Ferraris does not slightly allude to the strength and courage Saudi Arabian women have to speak up, in the face of their country, for their rights, especially since she refers to the ban against women's driving? If it happens that Ferraris is not aware of the protest that had just happened, I ask: To what extend did Ferraris interact with Saudi Arabian women to write about their character? The truth is one of the two. It is either she knew about the strength these women have but did not want to portray any positive traits her inferior Out-group Saudi Arabian women possess, or she did not, which then argues for Ferraris' ignorance of the character of Saudi Arabian women.

The advocacy of women right has never stopped since 1990. Contemporary, the news is filled with names of Saudi Arabian women who protest and advocate for their rights, and thus get arrested. In 2014, Loujain al-Hathloul, a well-known Saudi Arabian activist, at the age of 25 years old, got arrested for trying to protest the unwritten ban against women's driving by driving across the borders into Saudi Arabia (The Guardian, 2014). The argument was: since there was no written law against women's driving, women should be able to drive without being stopped. Today, she is arrested since March 2018, among other female activists.

On the subject of restrictions, on the other hand, a campaign started summer 2016, by Saudi Arabian women, to end the male guardianship system that although it does not require women to take permission to study and work, it does require them to have one in order to obtain a passport, travel internationally, and, in some cases, marry and get access to healthcare (Sidahmed, 2016). The campaign *Saudi Arabian Women Demand an End to the Male Guardianship*, which is still going, first took place on social media, particularly Twitter. A number of 14,682 signatures were signed on an online petition for the cause

(Sidahmed, 2016). Saudi Arabian women marked the launch of the campaign with the number 1 (i.e., Day 1) by the end of the Arabic hashtag "سعوديات-نطلب-اسقاط-الولاية" (which can be translated as "Saudi Arabian Women Demand an End to the Male Guardianship"). A year later, they celebrated the pass of 360 days of their campaign (Erem News, 2017). Today, almost a thousand days have passed, albeit Saudi Arabian women are still persistent in their demand to end the guardianship system while marking the days. A few reforms have been established in response to the campaign, but they do not seem to be enough yet, thus the continuation of the campaign. What these Saudi Arabian women want is a complete end of the system.

It is important to note that this campaign gave birth to the viral hashtag "أنا ولية أمري" (translated as "I Am My Own Guardian") which originally came from a title of a body of art created by a Saudi Arabian woman in 2012 (Saffaa, 2019). Saffaa (her pseudonym) protested and expressed her views on the subject of male guardianship through art (Hegarty, 2017; Saffaa, 2019). The pieces of art she titled "I Am My Own Guardian" are drawings of a woman's face wearing the Saudi Arabian man's headdress.

There are many other campaigns organized by Saudi Arabian women for different causes. The space here does not allow to mention all of them. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that Saudi Arabia does not tolerate freedom of speech, these incidents of activism where Saudi Arabian women are speaking up against their governmental laws and, thus, advocating for themselves and their rights without fear makes Ferraris' representations of Saudi Arabian women as the helpless, silenced, weak women highly disturbing. If these women are able to speak up in the face of a government despite the risks, then they are more than likely to voice their opinions against their families behind closed doors.

Plausibly, they will not let a strange man (Nayir) decide for them (Katya) whether they should get an eye exam, as Ferraris suggests. For the presence of Saudi Arabian women's voices in public spaces makes imagining muted voices in private spaces impossible. Out of frustration, Princess Reema, in one of her interviews, raises the question: "how much louder do you want us to be about the fact that we are pivoting?" (El-Geressi, 2018).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

After scrutinizing the reality of the character of Saudi Arabian women in four categories (veiling, education and employment, polygamy, and self-advocacy) in the Discussion Chapter above, it has become apparent how Ferraris' representation of these women as the concealed, "shrouded in black", uneducated, unemployed, abused in polygamous relationships, and silenced is blatantly implausible. Nevertheless, I argue that it is Ferraris' linguistic choices in *Finding Nouf* that have made the creation of an overall negative representation of Saudi Arabian women possible. As a result, Ferraris' linguistic choices have controlled the reader's perception of what it means to be a Saudi Arabian woman. On the basis, instead of showing different approaches to veiling practiced by Saudi Arabian women, Ferraris chooses to demonstrate a "fully covered" "black shapes" Saudi Arabian characters. Thus, she contributes to the idea of having a monolithic image of Saudi Arabian women. Moreover, asserting helpless Saudi Arabian women, she repeatedly controls the semantic roles given to her female Saudi Arabian character.

Linguistic choices are indeed powerful. Henly, Miller and Beazley (1995) examine the impact of using passive voice sentences in media news to report violence against women. They contend that it is due to the frequent use of passive voice in news about rape, which omits the agent (i.e., the doer responsible of the rape), that readers, from both genders, not only have attributed "less harm to the victim/survivor and less responsibility to perpetrator" but also have "showed more acceptance of rape, battering of women, and rape myths" (p.79-80). They argue:

> These effects […] may be due in part to the focus on the patient's role in the passive sentence, in contrast to its role in an active sentence. But the chance in voice does more than change the topic; it changes the actual content, in the realm of degree. It

is as if attenuating modifiers were inserted: "A woman was *sort of* raped in the parking lot last night"; "Mr. B. *somewhat* beat his wife." (p. 81)

Therefore, whether or not Ferraris is aware of the impact her chosen linguistic features has made on her readers, her *Finding Nouf* has nevertheless created an inferior image of Saudi Arabian women. It is due to her control of Agent Role versus Patient Role in active and passive sentences that Saudi Arabian women are depicted and perceived as the helpless muted recipient of actions. It is due to her use of modal *should* in her allegedly quoted verse from the Quran that Saudi Arabian women are portrayed as the oppressed victims of Islam. It is due to her use of disclaimers that Saudi Arabian women are thought of as a lost cause, who regardless of having a few traces of strength and power, such as being critical, educated and independent, are still passive, conformist, sheltered women. It is due to her construction of the plot that Saudi Arabian women are deemed, coherently, victims who need Westerners' help to be saved.

Moreover, owning to the fact that this research examines Ferraris' representation of Saudi Arabian women around their veil practice, it is nevertheless interesting to realize this overwhelmingly negative weight of the veil in Ferraris' *Finding Nouf*. This raises the question of how Ferraris views the veil in the first place. Exploring her work, she makes the veil the core description of each female Saudi Arabian character. Her utilizing the veil to portray a negative image of Saudi Arabian women speaks for the power dynamic she tries to depict. The plentiful references to the *burqa*, and the *abaaya* shed light to her conviction of the status Saudi Arabian women hold in their society. She uses these pieces of clothes to denote, according to her beliefs, the veil's *negative* influences on the lives of Saudi Arabian women. In *Finding Nouf*, she differentiates between a veiled and an unveiled

woman. Denoting strength gained, conditionally, by exposing the face, she writes that the unveiled woman is "a woman full in the face" (p. 281) who is found "alone" (p. 92). Inferiorly, she asserts that veiled Saudi Arabian women are "faces […] shrouded in black" and thus "accompanied by men" (p. 299).

I argue that this tactic of calling attention to the veil in a negative light expresses Ferraris' ideologies on the veil as a symbol of Othering, and on Saudi Arabian women as *the* Inferior Other. In other words, mirroring Said's argument in his *Orientalism* (1979), I believe that it is because Ferraris wants to claim her self-projected American superiority, she strategically pinpoints at different cultural practices found in Saudi Arabia in order to associate negative meanings to them. By attributing negative traits to things Saudi Arabians do but Americans do not, she asserts her positive superior being, which in part reflects Ferraris' "imaginative geography that divided East and West, confirming Western superiority and enabling, if not actually constituting, [Western] domination of those negatively portrayed region known as "East"" (Abu-Lughod, 2001/2013, p. 218). Moreover, her desire to mention the veil as an emblem of Othering makes her ignore the presence of unveiled Saudi Arabian women in Saudi Arabia. This lack of reference to unveiled women in Saudi Arabia enforces the differences between the two groups thus the American superiority. This strategy is explained by Van Dijk's ideological square which contends binary oppositions that emphasizes the negative traits of Other as the Out-group (1988).

Having that said, Ferraris' deliberate stress on the negative side of the story creates an overwhelmingly negative image of Saudi Arabian women who need to be saved. This representation made by Ferraris not only lacks touches with the reality of women's lives in

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Saudi Arabia but also does not account for the complexity of these lives. "These women are not seen in their everyday lives (as Euro-American are)—just in these stereotypical terms. Difference in the case of non-Euro-American women is thus congealed, not seen contextually with all of its contradictions" (Mohanty, 2003/2013, p. 546). That said, I do not, by any means, claim that Saudi Arabian women are leading struggle-free lives, for the struggles in Saudi Arabia are existent. I do, however, argue that these struggles are not the whole story. After all, do we know of any woman who is not a subject of injustice? Nevertheless, the truth is: history has witnessed many stories of brave strong Saudi Arabian women who are more than capable of voicing their own opinions and demands. Although the battles Saudi Arabian women are fighting appear different on the surface from those of American women, or Western women in general, I contend that they all stem from women's demand for gender equality. If Saudi Arabian women were fighting for their rights to drive (Saudi Arabia has passed a law that allows women to drive starting June 24, 2018 (AFB, 2018)) and are still fighting the end of male guardianship system that considers women less than their male counterparts in certain circumstances, American women are fighting for their rights to have equal pay.

Having that said, it is important to note that the priorities for Saudi Arabian women and American women can different. The lists of things demanded by Saudi Arabian women and American women are not necessarily the same. If American women demand their freedom to be topless through their "Free the Nipple" campaign (Babcock, 2015), Saudi Arabian women want to express their freedom to veil, or not veil, in a way that demands no judgements on their choices (Le Renard, 2014),). Additionally, while polygamy is widely rejected in the US, the percentage, studied in surveys, of young Saudi Arabian

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women expressing their preference for polygamous relationships is increasing lately (Al-Behairi, 2017). Appearing opposite on the surface, these two groups of women demand their rights in choosing not only how they dress in public but also the state of their sexual relationships. Definitely, neither group of women has tolerance to oppression. However, witnessing the opposite way of expressing one's freedom without being aware of the hidden agendas, both groups are equally at risk of perceiving the other subjugated. On that note, I urge dialogue between the two groups of women, otherwise shared understanding is impossible. The mere female gender does not necessarily make the manifestations of all patriarchal laws and beliefs, imposed on women, monolithic. Every woman's experience is unique, and thus should not be put in a box among other experiences of women.

Having that said, I strongly believe that a dialogue between two groups of women coming from two different backgrounds is possible. Similar to Orientalism, Mohanty (2003/2013) explores the importance of one's positionality in feminist scholarships. She contends that "cross-cultural feminist work must be attentive to the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes" (p. 537). Mirroring Mohany, I, too, call for a "feminist solidary model" that "requires understanding the historical and experiential specificities and differences of women's lives as well as the historical and experiential connections between women from different national, racial and cultural communities" (p. 548). This model is called "feminist solidarity model because, beside its focus on mutuality and common interests, it requires one to formulate questions about connection and disconnection between activist women's movements around the world" (p. 549). Only

through this model do we "democratize rather than colonize the experiences of different spatially and temporally located communities of women" (p. 549).

On that note, I stress on the problematic model Ferraris explores in her *Finding Nouf* that, in order to argue for power dynamic that favors Americanness, focuses on the differences between the two worlds. Her approach does not open a dialogue between American women and Saudi Arabian women. In fact, it not only hinders collaboration between the two groups of women but also fuels tensions among these women. The fact is: no Saudi Arabian woman will appreciate the negative representation made by Ferraris. As a result, Ferraris' model has the potentiality of making Saudi Arabian women want to retaliate and pin point the struggles American women are facing. A quick look at social media, Twitter in particular, is enough to show the amount of frustration Saudi Arabian women have against Western narratives of them. They reply to Western news and documentaries about the unfortunate lives Saudi Arabian women are leading by providing a wide range of evidences of the unfortunate lives Western women are leading. They attach links to numerous news, documentaries, statistics of infidelity, rapes, pay gap, etc. Their narrative is: fix your own problems before talking about ours.

On that note, I conclude: a feminist solidarity dialogue is not a choice anymore. It is a must. Given the fact that the veil is invisible to Saudi Arabian women, i.e., it does not create differences by itself between the ones who wear it and the ones who do not, "I would like for the dialogue of what we [Saudi Arabian women] look like to no longer be in the narrative," Princess Reema, the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the US said in one of her interviews (El-Geressi, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

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The current study aims to contribute to the assessment of the role of Western media in shaping the perceived identity of Saudi Arabian women as well as the implications of such representations on the power dynamic. Although my analysis of Ferraris' *Finding Nouf* reveals clear binary oppositions of in-group versus out-group, it is too ambitious to articulate an argument based on the analysis of one literary work written by a female US author. Nevertheless, considering the political discourse of Saudi Arabia (both inland and international) as well as the increasing number of news, documentaries, literary works, and ethnographic studies about Saudi Arabia and its women, I contend a need for linguistic analyses of these accounts. Only after conducting several studies on the representations of Saudi Arabian women do we, linguists, have the ability to form a solid argument about the ways the West aims to portray the out-group Saudi Arabian women in Western media, in comparison to the ways Saudi Arabian women represent themselves as in-group in Saudi Arabian media.

Advocating for Mohanty's feminist solidarity model (2003/2013), I urge future researches to take either of these two paths. First, it is plausible to study other forms of Western media that concern themselves with Saudi Arabian women. There is a wide variety of written and spoken pieces carried out by Westerners that are worthy of a linguistic critical discourse analysis. Owing to the fact that "how people interpret a message may depend, in part, on the verb voice used to phrase that message" (Henley et al. 1995, p. 60), a future research may examine the frequency of active voice versus passive voice in sentences about Saudi Arabian women and its impact on the reader's perception of Saudi Arabian women. Considering how Westerners give prominence to the veil, it seems

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interesting to explore the use of modality in sentences that argue for veiling in Saudi Arabia.

Second, linguists should also consider works produced by Saudi Arabian women for analysis. It is highly relevant to see how Saudi Arabian women portray themselves in their work as in-group on one hand, and compare it to how Westerners view Saudi Arabian women on the other. Is it possible that Saudi Arabian women represent themselves and their struggles differently from the way they are represented by Westerners? A future research may examine the use of voice in these accounts for a comparative analysis. For example, one research may examine how Alem chooses the voice of her sentences in *The Dove's Necklace* (2010), in comparison to Ferarris' *Finding Nouf* (2009). Bearing in mind that Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* is originally written in Arabic, a linguist may compare the Arabic copy to its English translation. For example, has the voice remained the same or changed in the English translation?

To situate these analyses as feminist studies, the researcher may explore how the positionality of the author(s) influences their representation of Saudi Arabian women

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