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The Woman in the Contemporary Arab World
in Norma Khouri's *Forbidden Love*:
Perceived by Culture or Religion?

This Dissertation is Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Master Degree in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Civilization

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, and all who encouraged me to fulfill this work.

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Extra Notes

- The concept Forbidden Love when it is not italicized, it does not refer to the book.
- The concept *Haram* is used for religious context.
- (P.B.U.H) refers to Peace and Blessing be Upon Him (The Prophet of Islam Muhammad).

General Introduction

Many women in the Arab world are facing cultural challenges against society, that are considered as gender inequalities. Whether the woman is a young girl, wife and mother, the man is considered superior than her in some cases. This dissertation studies the main issues of the contemporary Arab woman as well as the main reasons behind Arab and society's guidance. In this case, is the contemporary Arab woman conducted by a true follow of Islamic values or is it just a matter of respecting traditions and Arab customs to maintain the good personal reputation among people? Second, what are the major cultural norms that women are fighting?

Meanwhile, the cultures represented by religious movements remain the only legitimate challengers to the domination of culture in the Arab world concerning the status of the woman.

The first chapter gives different facts concerning the Arab woman although she got better chances in the contemporary Arab world compared with the previous decades. Yet, she is still fighting for her rights.

Social loyalty is of a great importance in Arab culture, and the Arab's most important characteristics is protecting the family honour. Since the woman is to be biggest threat on the family's honour, she is men's worst nightmare in this matter. The same chapter shed the light on women's major problems from a very young age and the way they are treated by the men of their family. Men and women's interaction or social exchanges happen very seldom when they are not close relatives. Any relationship with a non-relative man could cost the woman her life for dishonouring herself and her family. This act is the so called Honour Killing. Men justify this act by claiming it is religious duty. The Arab world is very influenced by Islam though not all Arabs are Muslims. This chapter attempts to clarify whether cultural practices of Arab society exist in Islam, or are they simply made up by masculine community for the sake of protecting their honour through discriminating women and preventing them from their rights. On the other hand, Chapter One argues that the previous claims are not being practiced on all Arab women, because there are other women teachers,

doctors, journalists and so on. The woman in the Arab world has the right to attend school and college, as well as the right to vote.

The woman's voice is heard through her writings too, portraying the Arab women in their novels. The last point of the chapter shows that the feminine literature is no more marginalized, but rather appreciated and even rewarded.

The second chapter deals with Norma Khouri's *Forbidden Love*, a story of a young Arab Muslim girl falling in love with a Christian boy. Kouri claims that this girl named Dalia was her childhood friend facing all the problems of being women in an Arab society together. In this chapter, a portrayal of women through the novel where the story took place in Jordan, a Middle East country.

Chapter two also reveals the author's lie as she claimed that the story is a real one and her novel is one of Australia's literary hoaxes. Except Norma, none of the other characters ever existed.

The story is based on Dalia's murder for dishonouring her family by being involved in a forbidden love story, and the measures taken by her male close relatives (father and brothers) to punish her. Therefore, this chapter analyzes the women characters and the case of killing for honour; it also contains the impact of the book on the image of the Arab world and Muslim communities.

Chapter One:

Women in Arab Societies

Introduction:

This chapter explains the state of the woman in the contemporary Arab world and Muslim communities, from both cultural and religious views, from her birth till she 's married including adolescence period when the girl start discovering life and creating her own personality. It deals with a serious issue in Arab societies, forbidden love and relationships between unrelated men and women that lead to another issue that is honour killings.

Then, the role of the married women in society and her duties towards her family. This chapter also provides the rights that the woman obtained she did not practice before.

And finally, it deals with women literature and how it portrays the Arab society in her writings mentioning some successful women writers in the contemporary Arab world.

1.1. Women in Arab Societies:

Families are generally delighted when they hear a new born is coming, a new life is created; a new member will be added to the family. In Arab societies, a baby is better received when it is a boy than a girl. From her birth, the woman is a disappointment. As any object in the house; the woman is the talking object whichserves and obeys the men of the house without negotiation. She is taught so from a very early age. The transfer from her being a child to an adult comes also very early and quickly, and she couldn't catch a breath to recognize the changes occurring at that period. In Magida Salman's *The Arab Woman*, she describes the woman as a captive being and a threatening body, saying:

They hoped for a boy, her coming will bring opprobrium to her mother, a shock to her father... The Arab girl's childhood is all too brief, it mirrors and prepares all too soon for the negative and submissive role which is assigned to the Arab woman, to endure men without really knowing them or being understood by them (6).

1.1.1. The Muslim Adolescent

The woman in the Arab world as an adolescent is already a woman and should act as an adult. Zubeida Bittari, in her autobiography, entitled *Oh My Muslim Sisters Cry*, tells of the sufferings and the shock she endured when, after her first menstruation, her Algerian parents—already modern in their way of life—took her out of school forcibly and obliged her to wear a veil on her face and then put pressure on her to learn household work so that she would be ready to marry and build her marital foundation with her life partner, a man whom she had never known or met beforehand. Bittari's early life and marriage are reflected in her writing. She reveals, in her book, the suffering of the Algerian young girl. Parents, and very often the father, force their daughters in an early age to marry once their hands are asked from them. Her opinion does not matter, they decide whether the man is good for her or not. They prefer an educated man who has a job. His reputation speaks on him. The moment the family decides her destiny, the girl is crying from the inside showing no intentions of disapproval, not because she is satisfied but she knows nobody would listen to her and that she doesn't have the right to negotiate her parents' decision thinking that they are taking the best decision concerning their daughter.

Among MENA¹ countries, Yemen is one that has the highest rate of child marriage, 52 percent of Yemeni marriages occur before the bride turns 18 (Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa 16). Forced marriages differ from arranged ones, which may have been set up by a relative or friend, but are willingly agreed to by the couple in which the girl is often very glad and happy to prepare her wedding to an unknown man. Although planned by her parents; she is glad because she has been indoctrinated as such. Louis Althusser argues that individuals in a community accept their own repression because they were trained to think that it is a normal thing in a concept he called Ideological State Apparatuses. He explained that family in a modern capitalist state have been promoting consumerism to children from an early age, similarly these values have been passed to the following generations (4).

¹ MENA Refers to Middle East and North Africa countries.

Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses the State Apparatus contains also the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc (Althusser). In Islam on the other hand, forced marriage is unaccepted. Al-Bukhari and Muslim² narrated that the prophet of Islam (peace and blessing be upon him) said that a non-virgin woman may not be married without her command, and a virgin may not be married without her permission; and enough permission for her is to remain silent³. Thus the Prophet (p.b.u.h) prohibits forcing a virgin in marriage without her permission, whether it is her father or someone else. Furthermore, Ayshah⁴ said that she asked the Prophet (p.b.u.h) that in the case of a young girl whose parents marry her, whether her permission should be sought or not, he replied that she must give her permission." (Taymiya).

This *Hadith*⁵ refers to marriage conditions according to Islamic laws. The girl's approval is one of the conditions; she must not be forced to marry. Arab societies have no mercy and people keep their eyes on each other. The daughter at the period of adolescence is supposed to open her eyes on the real world and stop dreaming of being a princess, she was a child and she is growing up. The adolescent is still not adult enough to take responsibilities. However, the Arab girl makes a challenge against the culture of *People Say* which is a culture in which neighbors, acquaintances and relatives chitchat when the girl is unmarried. Thus, this is one of the factors which forced marriage in an early age. Young age at marriage, spouses chosen by elders... Early marriage also promotes consent and compliance and allows for the further socialization of girls into their unequal role. (Offenhauer 57). Under the influence of globalization, youth in the Arab world adopt new attitudes, new habits, new thoughts and even new cultures, young people are most directly affected by globalisation and therefore central to current debates on identity (Bourn). They try to build a new kind of relationship between girls and boys, and this is not a part of the Arab world culture.

² Al Bukhari and Muslim are from those who collect the saying of the Prophet of Islam Mohammed peace and blessing be upon him.

³ Because the nature of the woman to be shy, her silence is considered as an approval.

⁴ The wife of the prophet of Islam Mohammed (P.B.U.H)

⁵ Hadith is the collective body of the sayings or actions of Muhammad or his companions, together with the tradition of its chain of transmission.

1.1.2. Coping with Forbidden Love and Loveless Marriage:

Love before marriage in Arab communities is forbidden. In fact the relationship between the man and woman is prohibited. When we talk about love, it is no more than a feeling and there is nothing wrong in that. One can hold emotions for a particular person and the right way to get to know that person is by engagement because taking specific actions or steps might be deemed as *Haram*⁶. Islam dictates strict rules concerning male and female interaction; it forbids all types of dating and isolation with the other sex, touching and kissing are *Haram* because this leads to temptation and adultery. The nature of the human being is weak and easy to fall in the trap of the temptation in this matter. Al-Tirmidhi narrated that when the Prophet (p.b.u.h) saw a young man merely looking at a young woman, he turned his head so as to make him look away, and then he said: "I saw a young man and a young woman, and I did not trust the devil not to tempt them." (Ibn Baz).

From the cultural point of view in Arab communities, society does not accept the relationship between the male and female, but this type of relationships is found especially in big cities; where the woman is being liberated and is trying to get her right in education and work. Children are often raised to be obedient, with the idea that they have to conform to their parents' orders and decisions. Obedience is the act of following orders without question and every person at some time in their life has followed a superior without questioning why they are doing what they are doing (Constable). But, this is not the case of every person in which individuals disobey or break the rules of the society. This is what is happening in the Arab world and Muslim communities. Boys and girls, men and women build a kind of secret relationships and meet in secret. In the temporary world of technology, there are many ways that keep the relationship hidden from the eyes of society, like cell phones and internet. But society is still cruel with the woman because it is a society that allows men and forbids women when it is a matter of a sinful individual.

⁶ Haram is anything that is forbidden by Islamic law.

Religiously speaking, the *Haram* relationship between the male and female concerns both genders. Culturally speaking, however; it is a matter of the girl's honor, her reputation and virginity. She brings shame to her family when she has a relationship with a boy, and to clean the family's honor the father or the brother(s) put an end to her life. This appears to be non-existent in some Muslim-dominant countries, such as Oman, and less frequent in others, such as Algeria and Tunisia (Parker) while it still exists in others.

1.1.3. Honor Killings and Violence Towards The Arab Woman:

The culture of honor appears mostly in Countryside, *Bedouin*⁷ and among people who have little allegiance with the government once the culture of honor exists, it is difficult for its people to make a transition to the culture of law. Honor killing in most Arab countries and Muslim communities is the act of cleaning the family's honor; when the virgin girl brings dishonor to her family by having an illegal relationship with a boy.

The act of honor killing took the lives of many young girls and women committed by male family members against female family members, who are accused of bringing dishonor upon the family. To kill for honor in Arab societies is justified and allowed, although the honor killing has never been mentioned in Quran and *Hadith*; and Islamic scholars prohibit any kind of extra punishments of such. Despite the fact that Islam has no support to this act, some use it to justify honor killing. According to Islamic laws *Sharia*⁸, there are severe punishments prescribed for adultery by both men and women. Adultery is forbidden in Islam, Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an: "Do not come near to adultery, indeed it is a shameful deed and an evil way" (The Qur'an, *Al-israa*17.32).

A study conducted by Eisner and Ghuneimin Jordan confirms that honor killings are likely to be supported culturally wherever notions of patriarchy, family honor and

⁷ A member of any of the nomadic tribes of Arabs inhabiting the deserts of Arabia, Jordan, and Syria, as well as parts of the Sahara

⁸ Sharia is the body of canonical law based on the Quran that lays down certain duties and penalties for Muslims

the preservation of female virginity are widely accepted. Yet, the act of honour killings is not defined as crime but as acts that cleanse the family honor of the shame caused by the woman (10).

The execution of the Saudi Arabian princess Misha'al⁹ is a clear example of an honour killing in which the execution did not follow any Islamic religious court proceeding, but was ordered directly by her grandfather after she admitted adultery (Amin A).

Like all other religions, Islam strictly prohibits murder and killing without legal justification. Allah, Most High, says: “Whoso slayeth a believer of set purpose, his reward is Hell for ever. Allah is wroth against him and He hath cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom” (The Qur'an, *An-Nisa'* 4.93). The so-called *Honor Killing* is thus an act of ignorance and disregard of morals and laws, which cannot be abolished except by disciplinary punishments. In Jordan also, in 2003, an article was reported in the *Jordan Times* newspaper, telling that two sisters, were hacked to death by their own brothers for an honour matter (Honoring the Killers 01). Some women are killed each year in honour cases by men who expect lenient treatment under the law.

1.1.4. The State of Arab Women in Marriage:

Marriage is holy in all religions; it is a sacred relationship between the man and woman. It is a necessity for every human being. Marriage is a formation of a family through which one can find security and peace of mind, this eternal, natural relationship between man and woman, which is filled with security, love, understanding and compassion (Ghisa). The role of the wife is not an easy task. The wife maintains and takes care of her husband, the value of fulfilling the duties of a proper spouse is also reflected upon when considering Jihad (Amini 10) and a good wife should respect her husband and be a comfort to him. The husband expects his wife to be loving as he looks towards her to find friendship and love. He deserves her

⁹ Princess Misha'al bint Fahd was a member of House of Saud, who was executed on the explicit instructions of her grandfather for alleged adultery, at the age of 19. She was a granddaughter of Prince Muhammad bin Abdulaziz, who was an older brother of King Khalid.

kindness because he struggles hard to earn living for their marital foundation. Islam appreciates the woman who fulfills her duties as a wife.

Among a woman's duties is cooking, if the wife is a skillful cook, her husband enjoys eating at home rather than eating outside. She must also keep the house clean, wash the clothes and do all the housework thus her husband never avoids his house. The woman succeeds to make her husband love her. However the woman is not the only one who has duties to fulfill. Yet, many men in Arab societies misunderstand Islamic laws. Although the contemporary Arab woman is developing, but there still are women suffering from inequality and men forcing them to stay in the house without education especially in *Bedouin* areas. Their ideas are inherited from their ancestors, that the wife must obey her husband and serve him. This is unfair in Islam, according to Quran, the relationship between the husband and wife should be based on mutual love and kindness. Allah says: "And among his signs is this, that he created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and he has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are signs for those who reflect". (The Qur'an, *Ar-rum*30.21)

The husband and wife could face some problems in their marriage, and one may hurt the other, they can get upset with each other. Through negotiation and discussions any problem might be solved peacefully without harming each other. Beating women is neither accepted, nor allowed in Islam. Any excess, cruelty, family violence, or abuse committed by any "Muslim" can never be traced to any revelatory text, Quran¹⁰ or *Hadith*. Such excesses and violations are to be blamed on the person(s) himself, as it shows that they are paying lip service to Islamic teachings and injunctions and failing to follow the true *Sunnah* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). The Prophet (p.b.u.h) was very clear in the *Hadith* when he said: "Do not beat Allah's bondwomen" (Yahya).

Unfortunately, many wives in Arab societies suffer from their husbands' abuse, even if they beat them; women have no right to complain, a study found that "Arab Muslim community feel that woman abuse arises out of the frustrations and

¹⁰ Qur'an is the sacred text of Islam, considered by Muslims to contain the revelations of God to Muhammad.

disappointments of husbands finding themselves unemployed or underemployed, and from the so-called ‘disobedience’ of wives” (Baobaid 17)

The parents from another side push the daughter to remain in her husband’s house no matter what happens as she is not welcomed to rebel against him. The sense of patience is by the female side, she must keep silent although she has been badly treated. True following of the Sunnah is to follow the example of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) who never resorted to that measure, regardless of the circumstances.

1.2. The Educated Woman in Arab Societies:

Education is the key of knowledge. According to a new report released Monday by UNESCO; the Arab world is among the most unequal regions in the world when it comes to gender and education (Lutz). Those girls and women have been very lucky to have comprehensive parents, especially the father who allows his daughter to study and finish her studies. Because the case of restricted and severe parents, the daughter might enter primary school and her best chance is middle school. This challenge of inequality in a man-dominated world has been taken long time ago. Arab women are known for the fragility of their situation in light of the prevailing economic and social conditions due to the low levels of education compared with men

Data from UNESCO for the year 2009 shows that the rate of illiteracy in the Arab world is about 30%, it is higher among women as it reaches about 50%. The highest percentage of illiteracy found in several countries such as Iraq 61%, Sudan 50%, Egypt 42%, Yemen 39%, and Morocco 38% (Rohami).

The education of women is particularly essential and necessary to build a new society since women comprise half of the total population, and their contribution to the nation building process is a must.

It is also important to know that official education for girls was initiated at different times in the various countries of the region. In Bahrain, for example, the first girl's school was established in 1928, while in Kuwait it began in 1937. In Qatar,

however, there was no girls' school until 1954, followed by the Emirates in 1955. (Ghazoul and Mekdash 254).

Here are some graphs that show the rate differences between boys and girls concerning school enrollment.

Primary school enrollment rates by country, 2000 and 2012:

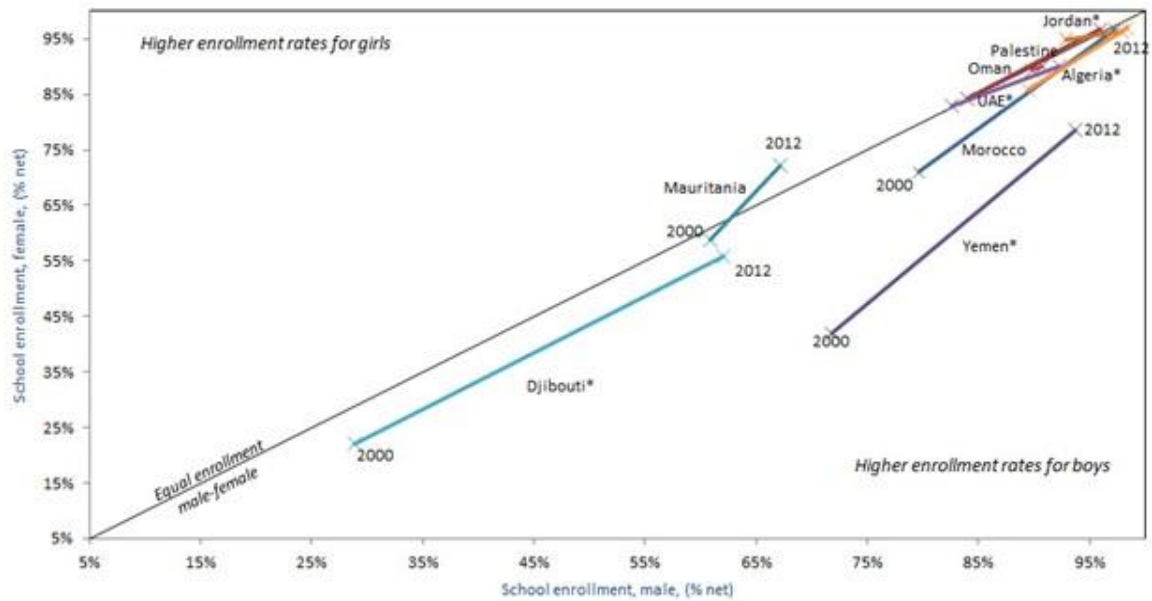


Figure 1

Secondary school enrollment rates by country, 2000 and 2012 Figure 2

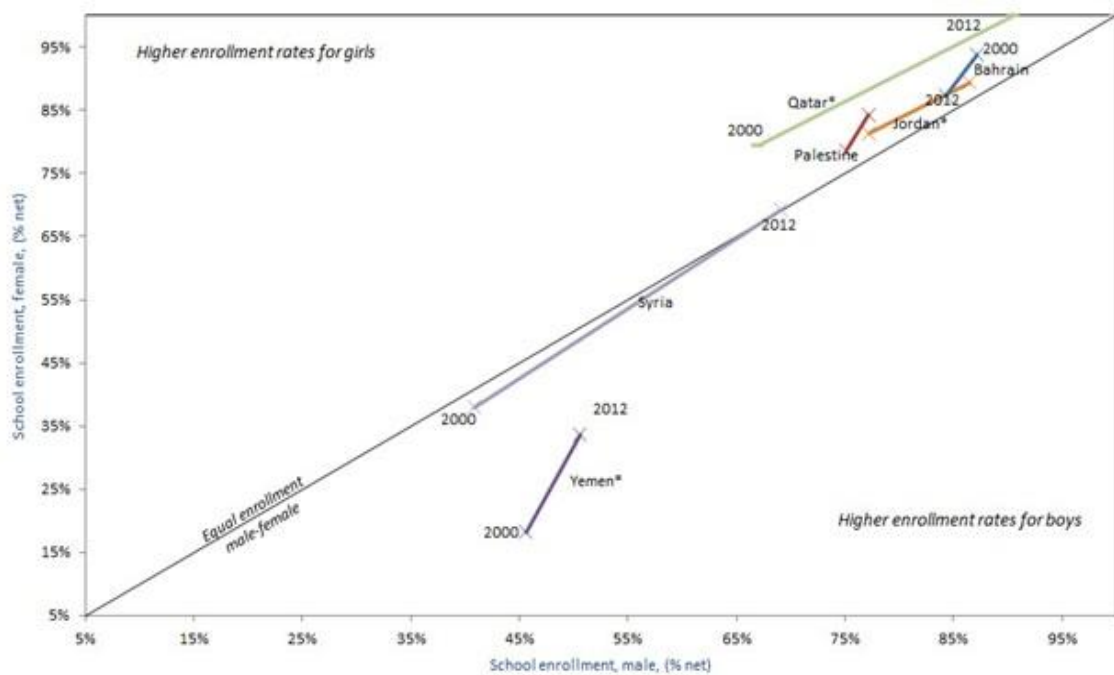


Figure 2

(Jalbout).

1.2.1. Legal Positions and Rights:

Women's legal positions and rights involve equal rights of those that men practice. A woman should have the right to study and work to survive. The contemporary world with economic crisis and failure oblige both genders to cooperate. Arab women are under-represented in parliaments in Arab states, although they are gaining more equal representation as Arab states liberalise their political systems. By the efforts done, step by step, the woman proves her ability in changing the world's values. The woman, like the man, is now an effective writer, a journalist, a teacher in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco and Syria; while there are rural women in Yemen for example, deprived of access to education and any public role, face completely different problems and probably need more outside support. (Ottaway 6). However, the new categories of successful women career are able to escape from the traditional stereotypes that enclose her in household of a wife and mother. Compared with the previous generations, today's young Arab women are more likely to work outside their

homes in paying jobs. (Rashad 1). Therefore, like the recent Moroccan Family Law that is both within the framework of Islamic laws and which entitles an adult woman (regardless of her marital status) to self-guardianship and the free and independent exercise of that right (5).

1.2.2. Women's Right to Vote in the Arab World:

Women in the Middle East and North Africa did not witness only a social transformation, but also a political transformation in the contemporary Arab world. Among their legal rights is voting, which grants them the right to put their choices and opinions into consideration concerning political decisions.

Fourteen centuries ago, reported the Prophet Muhammad as saying that a nation commanded by woman will not prosper (Arab Women). That means that a woman should not run a nation and its people. This is a man's task, but there is nothing wrong in giving the woman her right to vote.

The contemporary political system is based on elections in many Arab countries. Women were granted the full right to vote on a universal and equal basis in Lebanon in 1952, Egypt in 1956, Yemen in 1967, Iraq 1980, where Syria in 1949 with restrictions or conditions lifted in 1953 and in Kuwait in 1985 but later removed and re-granted in 2005, Tunisia in 1959, Mauritania in 1961, Algeria in 1962, Morocco in 1963. After one year, women in Libya and Sudan were able to vote also in 1970, Bahrain in 1973, Jordan in 1974, and Oman in 1994 (Tamimi).

Concerning the kingdom of Arabia Saudia's women, King Abdullah gave them the right to vote in 2015. He said in a speech: "Because we refuse to marginalize women in society in all roles that comply with Sharia, we have decided, after deliberation with our senior *Ulama*¹¹ ... to involve women in the *Shura*¹² Council as members, starting from the next term," (Lemmon).

¹¹ Islamic scholars trained in the whole body of Islamic law.

¹² The process of decision-making by consultation and deliberation.

According to the King's speech, giving women the right to vote does not violate Islamic laws and what keeps this step late can be justified by social norms. Unlike

Other Arab countries, Saudi women got their right of voting after a longer challenge, and to be granted the right to vote is a big step for them. He added that women will be able to run as candidates in the municipal election and will even have a right to vote.

1.3. Understanding Contemporary Arab Societies Through Literature:

1.3.1. The Arab Woman in Literature :

Each writer writes for a purpose whether as a hobby or a professional career. The Woman, to fight the discrimination against her found a way to share the true story of her lifestyle in the Arab world. Through literature written by women, the reader might understand the values of Arab societies and on which principles they are based. Women writers have, in varying degrees, attempted to delineate their struggle to assert their personalities and individualities as human beings.

Ahlam Mosteghanemi is an Algerian author and the first female Algerian author of Arabic-language works to be translated into English. She became one of the first Algerian Arab writers by broadcasting her poetry on national radio to support her family due to her father's ill-health. She earned a B.A. in Arabic Literature from the University of Algiers in 1973, and also published her first poetry collection *The Harbour of Days*. She published her first novel, *Memory in the Flesh* in 1993 in Beirut, Lebanon where she recently lives. To date, it has sold over a million copies across the Arab-speaking world. It was translated into English by the American University in Cairo Press in 2000, after winning the 1998 Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature. Her last work is *The Black Suits You*.

Nawal El-Saadawi, on the other hand is one of Egypt's most respected living authors and a key figure in the early feminist movements in the Arab world, she has had a huge influence on writers across the region.

Liana Badr a Palestinian writer who was forced to leave her country, she managed to succeed in her career. *The Eyes of the Mirror* is one of her effective novels written in Arabic and it was translated in English by the journalist Fadia Faqir. Through this novel Badr describes the lives of the people in the camp, as she draws on the rich oral tradition of Arab culture. The voices of women, which frequently cannot be distinguished from one another (Badr viii).

Another feminist work *The Blue Aubergine* was written by an Egyptian author Miral al-Tahawy, it follows an Egyptian woman from youth to adulthood as she searches for her place in society, joining a covert religious organization only to find herself disillusioned by the reality of a once promising philosophy of political Islam.

Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, writer and one of the best known Arab Muslim feminists, she dealt regularly with women's issues and also their status in Islam. Her recent work *The Veil and the Male Elite* (Esposito), Mernissi continues to challenge the traditional Muslim discourse on gender and the status of women.

1.3.2. Arab Women Prized Novelists:

Among the most prominent prized Arab writers, the Iraqi-Danish author Hawra al-Nadawi, her work *Under the Copenhagen Sky* was the only book by a female author named on the 2011 long list for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF).

In 1998, *Memory in the Flesh* was awarded the Naguib Mahfouz Prize for Literature, it was written by Ahlam Motaghanemi, and in 2013, her *Black Suits You* was on the long list for the Sheikh Zayed Book Award.

Conclusion:

The main ideas of this chapter provided the culture and religious environment surrounded the Arab woman as a child, adolescent and a married woman and dealt with the main problems of the society. The contemporary woman witnessed some changes concerning her rights like education and voting. Culture unlike religion is not

always right. The chapter also showed the importance of literature in reflecting the life of woman on her real life.

CHAPTER TWO:

An Analytic Study of Norma Khouri's

Forbidden Love

Introduction

This chapter attempts to describe women of the Arab world and Muslim societies through the novel *Forbidden Love* by Norma Khouri. This will be done by first defining the writer providing her real life followed by revealing Khouri's lies and her novel being one of Australia's frauds, then, giving a summary of the novel. In addition to that; the light is shed on a brief study of Arab women's state who took part of the novel reflecting their social life in Jordan. After that, this chapter deals with the issue of forbidden love in Muslim societies, this is done through the story and the main character, who is Muslim, falling in love with a Christian. As a result to that the causes behind such behaviour, and the behavior itself, considered as a dishonor to the family, lead to the practice of honour killings in Arab societies. This chapter ends by the world's reaction over the book as a literary hoax putting its larger impact on the people.

2.1. Who is Norma Khouri?

The truth about Norma Khouri is different of what was told in her book. Her real name is Norma Majid Khouri Michael Al-Bagain Toliopoulos. In 1993 she married John Toliopoulos, the father of her two children, Zoe and Christopher. Norma khouri is not the same Norma in the book. Khouri was born in Jordan in 1970, and in 1973 she moved to Chicago, United States with her parents. She studies in a Catholic High school. *The Herald's* 18-month investigation found that Majid Bagain, Khouri's father went back to Jordan after his separation with her mother Asma Bagain; they divorced in 1994, while she remained in Chicago, United State with her mother and brothers (Knox).

The Herald found members of her family, neighbours and acquaintances who remembered Norma from her 27 years in Chicago. Her 64-year-old mother keeps dozens of photos of the daughter who disappeared in 2000 and has not spoken to her since. (Knox). During the same year Norma entered Jordan for one week to obtain identity papers. Later she moved to Australia, where she lives in a secret location in Queensland. As far as is known, John, Zoe and Christopher live with her. That is the time Khouri began to write her *Forbidden Love*. It was published in 2003, in Australia.

She spent much of time of this year retelling the story and honour crime of her best friend Dalia. First suspicions arose when readers from Jordan posted on a website that what was written in the book was inaccurate, and unrepresentative of real life in Jordan.

2.1.1. Khouri's Forbidden Lies

In a book, written by Rana Hussein where she revealed the main lies that the writer claimed to be existing in Jordan, she said that she visited the street in *Jabal Hussein* where the story claims that Dalia and Norma lived and run a hairdressing salon, and in the same place in which Dalia's Honour killing took place. No one heard of the salon nor of the two women, and for over twenty years, there had been no murder for the family honour (31).

Khouri mentioned the Hairdressing Unisex Salon that belonged to Norma and Dalia. Hussein said

The hairdresser's Union in Jordan, in charge of issuing operating licenses, informed us that they had never heard of such a hairdresser's, and that it was against the regulation to issue licenses to unisex hairdressers, so none existed in Jordan (Murder in the Name of Honour 34).

In Addition to that, a strict family would never allow the daughter to work in a unisex salon. What Khouri claimed about Christians having no right to build new churches and the government forbidding the sound of the church bell is not true (Hussein 32). The reality is that the bells of Christian churches in Jordan ring in every religious occasion, such as weddings, holidays and Sunday prayers. Hussein said:

In reality, all citizens abide by the civil laws that govern the country. When it comes to religious laws, these mostly govern family issues; Muslims abide by a certain set of laws while Christian abides by laws drafted by their own churches (34).

Forbidden Love also contained demographic, geographic and even historic flaws. Khouri stated: "Unlike the Jordan river, no longer strong enough to flow down to

Amman...” (2) .The river in Jordan does not pass through Amman and never did, it has always flowed through the Jordan Valley. On the same page, Khouri claimed that Jordan is bordered by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Kuwait. In fact, Jordan is bordered only by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria and Israel. If Khouri is really Jordanian, she must be aware of what is surrounding her native country the same way she knows her best friend Dalia.

2.2. Summary of the Story

Norma Khouri as a writer claimed in her book to be a Christian girl who was born in Jordan. This is the true fact about her. She lived there with her parents. Norma is the narrator character of her story. Dalia (a Muslim girl), being a heroine, is her best friend whom she met "in the Jebel Hussein district of Amman ... met at a neighbourhood park when we were three" (Khouri 05). They were more than sisters and shared dreams, hopes, and disappointments. Although they were from different religions, but they believed in their powerful relationship that no one would destroy their friendship. Norma and Dalia's main problem is that they did not own their own lives, every decision made by them had to be legalized by their parents (4). They hated the fact that their families, especially the fathers and brothers who were very strict, owned their lives, and had to put their imprint on each step the girls would love to make.

Norma and Dalia were lucky and had the opportunity to study. However they could convince their parents to open N&D's Unisex hairdressing Salon, instead of enrolling in college, where they met most of the time and where they kept their secrets, thoughts, and beliefs (5). N&D's Salon was the only place where Norma and Dalia acted freely. Mohammed is one of Dalia's brothers who accompanied the girls to the Salon every day because the woman in Arab societies is not allowed to go out alone. Khouri referred to Mohammed as a "watchdog", and their fathers' "hired informant." (15).

Norma often described her friend to be courageous, Dalia would be the first person to protest in the street... but Jordanian men would find a woman like Dalia as a menacing and argued that her ambitions led her to her end to be silenced before she

gets the chance to influence the others with her scandalous views (25). Michael is one of Dalia's clients, and a major in the royal army. They shared a secret and deep look, it was clear that Dalia liked him, and he shared the same emotions towards her. The problem is that he was Christian and there is no chance that a Muslim girl weds a Christian. She knew that very well, but she did not give in her feelings. In spite of Norma's attempts to awaken her friend and let her see the reality, she failed to convince her to forget about Michael.

Day after day, Dalia's emotions became stronger and the love between her and Michael was getting deeper. Norma, as any best friend would do, helped Dalia to meet him in secret of course since this relationship is illegal, but that did not help to stop it. Dalia and Michael intended to get married and finish their lives together; this was not possible in Jordan that is why they were planning to escape outside the country.

After dating several times, they could not be lucky each time and the last one Michael was with Dalia, her brother saw them and told his father. Dalia did not know but she felt there was something wrong as she said but something just doesn't feel right (135) while she had a phone call with Norma, it was the last time, that Norma hears her best friend's voice. The next morning, the father cleansed his name from the dishonourable relationship Dalia had with the Christian boy, he stabbed her twelve times with a knife till death (142).

The story of Khouri does not end here, Norma was still alive and promised her friend that her death would not be in vain as Michael helped Norma to travel, or rather escape to Greece where she wrote in an internet cafe the book entitled *Forbidden Love, Love and Betrayal in Modern Day Jordan*, which told her lifelong friendship with Dalia.

2.3. The Portrayal of the Arab Woman in *Forbidden Love*

In this story, there is a detailed description of the woman in Arab societies. The author created a set of women characters while telling the story. Dalia being the main character plays the main role along the story, as well as the narrator character Norma, shed the lights on their lifelong friendship in an Arab community in which she claimed

that they were discriminated by gender, because they were girls. If a woman wishes to live, she must obey (Khouri 70). Any woman must obey men relatives in her family, father, brother or husband.

2.3.1. Husband's Treatment to his Wife

Nasar, another brother of Dalia, is married to Diana who had a dental degree but was never allowed to work neither before marriage nor after. Diana is portrayed as a less lucky woman than Dalia and Norma because they could break the routine in the house and create their own husband business that kept them together; the hairdressing Salon helped them feel somehow independent. The author added that one time Diana complained, her husband broke her nose and sent her back to her family, who said he was well within his rights and that she deserves what she got for trying to defy him. Diana's family sent her back to beg her husband's forgiveness (42).

The role of this female character, although briefly mentioned, played an important role to reveal the fact that there are still women who are shut up and not allowed to complain about anything. Norma said: "Like most Jordanian women, Dalia and I were not permitted to argue with the men in our families. Even if we were right, the simple fact that we were female made us wrong in the eyes of society." (21). Thus, this one factor that leads to discrimination.

2.3.2. Mothers' Tasks

Dalia's and Norma's mothers were not much mentioned, represented as housewives and mothers fulfilling their duties towards their families including house works, serving the husband, raising children and often teach their daughters to prepare them to be successful wives and mothers once she married. Khouri said: "Our mothers, like all mothers of daughters, did their job by training us to live in an unsympathetic, protected, male-dominated world (19).

This limits women's lives and generates their status in the Arab world. If there are women who devoted their lives for their families and daughters, others chose to another ways. That is, not all Arab world women had the same lifestyle and one destiny drawn by men.

2.3.3. Dalia's State as a Girl

Norma and Dalia hoped for a better future starting by the opening of N&D Unisex Salon. They worked under conditions; the girls were accompanied by Mohammed, Dalia's brother to keep his eyes on them all the time. Thus, the girls were not allowed to leave the house alone or go alone anywhere without the companionship of a man from the family, the case here in the story that the companionship of the brother was not a protection to the girl but to the honour of the family. Norma pointed out to Mohammed as a "watch dog" (8).

Khouri as writer defending women's right in Jordan and Muslim communities through her book; she used the wrong way in which she caused collateral damages towards the Arab and Muslim world. There are true cases as Dalia's one concerning the woman's discrimination in this world. However, Khouri exaggerated when she said that life in Dalia's home was basically like life in all Muslim homes in Amman, regardless of class, money, or neighbourhood. Anyone would disagree with this, because it is out of logic that in a vast majority of Muslims, every family lives like the other. She also added that Dalia wasn't permitted to eat at the same table with, or at the same time as the men in her household," (11), she added. While such family life style, although it could exist for few individuals, is not the case for all Arab and Muslim families. These claims do not reflect Arab societies.

The protagonist lived under the same conditions, or rather social norms that are defined as "rules and standards that are understood by members of a group and that guide and/or constrain social behaviour without the force of laws." (Trost 152). Although she never accepted these social norms, yet she was too clever to defy or complain directly because she knew it is not possible to change the rules of society this way and that she would only cause harm to herself. Each time Norma and Dalia wanted to move a step forward had to think of a way to benefit their families. Like the case when they wanted to get rid of Mohammed's presence in the Salon, they indirectly convinced him to get interested going to go to gym.

Conversations, negotiations and understanding between the members of any family are very important and necessary. This gap was not filled in Dalia's home,

which is why she maintained her thoughts for herself and her friend. The fact that she is not convinced, she then does not accept the rules of her society. For this case, a Professor said that we need not deconstruct legal and social norms in order to criticize the injustices of law or suggest how law and society might be improved (Balkin¹³). A woman in the Arab world must not break the rules of society, the consequences are very harmful. The story's knot exceeds Arab girls' passions and dreams. They were fine till Dalia met and loved a Christian man, Michael.

2.4 Breaking the Code in a Forbidden Love

Dalia and Michael's first meeting was in the Salon where they shared looks, smile and short conversations. These gestures developed to emotions, they both knew it was not right to go on, but it was uncontrolled. The day Dalia informed Norma, of course she was shocked and felt it was her duty to advise and awaken her friend this relationship must not even begin and that Dalia has to stay away from Michael especially that he is Christian. Dalia confessed to Norma: "...I feel like I have known him all my life." (18). Gradually, feeling developed to a relationship, Dalia and Michael exchanged letters through his sister Jihan who used to come to the Salon and became friend with Dalia and Norma.

2.4.1 Causes of Rebelling Against Societal Norms through Dalia

There is reason behind Dalia's character, she is not convinced that what she is doing might be wrong in which incorrectly perceived norms have a strong effect on behaviour, because it is the perception of the norm that influences behaviour (Paluck 12). The fact that she continues doing the opposite of what others do makes her rebellious, believe that she is right but her family and society just needs more time acquire a new way of thinking. Rebellion causes the young person to depend self-definition and personal conduct on doing the opposite of what other people want (Pickhardt). Seeking self dependency is one of the factors of rebelling, Dalia enjoyed

¹³ Jack M. Balkin is the Knight Professor of Constitutional Law and the First Amendment at Yale Law School, USA.

the time she spent with Michael feeling freedom. Though she was not locked out in the house, but she did have much space because she was often accompanied.

2.4.2 Consequences of Women's Defying of Arab Society

It is the nature of any human being to seek freedom and happiness. Living in a modern world under “ancient costumes”, does not sound an easy life. Dalia and Norma as many other women lived a traditional life, father and brothers' obedience was a must, such a rule made life unfair to them. There is a series of studies which examined the ways people who are on the short side of social inequalities react to such inequalities. They were conducted in patriarchal cultures, where there are clearly defined roles of dominance for males and subordination for females (Killen 14). Dalia's different behavior—that of having a forbidden relationship with a Christian man—was a reaction to the inequality of her society. Fear kept her silent and not because she was satisfied, yet, this fear did not prevent her from breaking social norms, and for a female that put her in trouble. This character believed in love and in Michael. For them and all who helped those to get interacted thought that this relationship is right, although it was extremely forbidden in their society. They met only few times and in public places but away from any place where any member of the family or an acquaintance might be, they avoided to be seen.

Norma said that if you learn nothing else growing up in Jordan, you learn two things very early: the first that Muslims and Christians must never intermarry... (30, 31) This culture is more religious than social because it is confirmed by Islamic laws.

2.4.3 Dalia's Murder for Honour

The secret love and relationship could not be hidden for long and Dalia's brother saw her and told his father. With no preceding awareness, her father killed her to clean his name from the shameful behaviour of Dalia. By contrast, Dalia, murdered in shame by her father, was buried without ceremony in an unmarked grave and like most other men who kill for honour, Dalia's father spent no time behind bars. The man she loved also avoided punishment, but he has dedicated himself to helping abused women.

Female chastity (and the appearance of chastity) is the bedrock of the culture's code of honour. Thousands of women in Muslim nations are believed to die at the hands of relatives each year for perceived breaches of honour (Mydans). The number of these killings, in a strange way seems to be a celebration of life; even the threat of murder cannot smother attraction and tenderness. Yet murder rates in general, and specifically for the murder of women by male family members and intimates, are far higher in the United States than in Jordan (Abunimah).

At the age of 26, Dalia became a victim, both of the power of forbidden love and the determination of her culture to crush it. As with other unmarried women, it was the job of her brothers to monitor her movements like detectives.

The final chapters of Khouri's book accelerate with grief and passion. Dalia was stabbed 12 times in the chest, Khouri writes, by her father; he waited before calling the ambulance to make sure that she could not be saved (142). There is no honour in killing, and the first chapter of this dissertation contains Islamic scholars' opinion toward the act of honour killing. Islam forbids any man to kill and that there are measures would be taken for this matter.

Jordan as a Muslim country follows Islamic rules and according to this Dalia was wrong by loving and meeting a Christian; and maybe if Dalia was persuaded that what she believed in was wrong and that this relationship is morally forbidden, in the Holy book, she might have a chance to rethink her decisions. But this did not happen and she was not given even a chance to defend herself, Norma said that autopsy results proved that Dalia was still a virgin (157).

In the matter of honour, the father did his duty to get back his honour by killing his daughter who ashamed him, he can walk down the neighbourhood and the street proud of what he has done. Taking Islamic measures, the biggest mistake is not done by Dalia, and her father had no right to kill her and there are many other ways solving such problems. Boyd K. Packer¹⁴ has given this advice that parents can first consider the most painful part of the problem, he said: "if you want to reclaim your son or

¹⁴ President Packer served as president of the New England Mission. He is the author of a number of books and other published works.

daughter, why don't you leave off trying to alter your child just for a little while and concentrate on yourself. The changes must begin with you." (Packer). This proves that even parents make mistakes especially when they care more about people to avoid their negative talks which affect their honour.

2.5 Reflexion of the Story on Individuals and Society's Life

This factious story put its impact on people, Khouri used her tragic story to get people's readership. Eastern people did not like the message she transmitted to the world about Jordan in which she generalized the claims that she gave through her novel, especially that all women are in danger of being killed by relative men, and they wish to be freed from life as prisoners.

25.1. Eastern Reaction on the Novel

Norma Khouri's serious accusations to men both in Jordan and most Arab and Muslim countries, namely that they are killers and that they mistreat the women were not fair. While these cases exist, it is not the case for every Muslim and Arab man behaving as a monster. Through This story, she had people thinking that Jordan is not a safe place to live in, a very strict male dominating society. In trying to help women in Arab societies, she caused damage more than doing well. Many women in Jordan or other Arab countries are well treated by the fathers, brothers or husbands. There are men and women fighting wrong attitudes such as honour killings, and women's transgression. The Jordanian journalist Rana Hussein reacted against the whole book as well as the author, she described the book to be horrible where Khouri is trying to save Jordanian women, while no one is doing any effort in Jordan to stop honour killings (31). Like Hussein, many other voices from Arab press denied her claims and said that she insisted on generalizing men's description. She points to the well-worn stereotypes that infect Western media discourse about the issues to which she has devoted her career. There are such problems in Jordan and elsewhere, and the East refuse to be misjudged through a literary hoax, and violence does not come from Jordan, Arab and Muslim country, but it is worldwide issue.

2.5.2 The Western Reaction

In the purpose of saving Arab women, victims of honour killings and gender discrimination; or a purpose of benefit, Khouri as a writer affected the Arab world and Muslim societies, she caused a great damage on Jordan's image in the west as it had its impact on the regarding applicable aspects of certain Muslim countries in the 21st century.

Khouri is merely an arm of a larger body of western interference in Jordanian society. The biggest effect of the book could only be felt in Jordan where men of this country felt insulted and accused to be murderers, or they can be at any time. Even if the book contains many lies and holds half-truth, the exaggeration of men's description ruined their image in the west; this book is not the truth about life in Jordan.

Before knowing about the book, Hussein received a flow of messages from first a woman names Lauren J from Australia in which she expressed her disgust and horror for what is happening in Jordan and it is going to be a merciless, evil killer of its own people. Other women Tanya thought that women in Jordan are treated like dirt, she said that all the men of that country are chauvinist and self-centered animals with no feeling (30).

Those aggressive emails are mere example of what the book made of the other parts of the world thinks of Jordan. It is a pity that the understanding of Jordan or the whole Arab world and Muslims comes from a book full of lies.

Conclusion

The dispute presented in this work is that the main core of Norma Khouri's novel, namely honor killing does unfortunately exist in the Arab states as well as many other Eastern countries; however it is not excessive and writers such as Khouri have exploited these circumstances to gain a readership. The profitable benefits accrued due to such adventure cannot be overlooked. It is not representative to a real lifestyle in Jordan. Readers should not take any book in consideration. In this case, the book that has been studied is not a trustful reference of its specific culture and religion.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Advancing women's rights in the Arab world is an important goal. The act of violence against the woman is back to cultural aspects in which men justify their act from religion. The idea that male is superior than a female exists in most Arab countries, but this is not the case for all Arab and Muslim men. This chapter provided Islamic scholars' opinion concerning the case of females. Islam gave the woman her rights and value, and the relationship between human beings lays on respecting each other.

The recent history of Arab women and their participation in public life has witnessed fundamental changes in recently. The potential role of women has undergone major developments in varying degrees in different parts of the Arab world. However, in the developing Arab world, Chapter One studied the both Arab culture and the law of Islam. In spite the fact that most of Arabs are Muslims; thus they practice Laws of Islam, but the result of this research showed some cultural acts that are not accepted in their religion. The prevailing cultural practices, justified by a conservative religious understanding, have led to significantly low women's economic involvement. Nevertheless, the increasing modernist or reformist trend in Islamic thinking, with the openness by innovation in communications channels such as the internet and satellite broadcasting, is bringing new potential to increase women participation in work and other aspects of life.

The religious understanding given by some scholars, in the Arab world, could be understood as an unconscious attempt to provide a religious justification for various cultural norms and practices. Unlike religion, culture support in some cases violence against female gender that is practiced by male. Still in the First Chapter; giving a clear issue that is practiced in the Arab world and Muslim societies, killing for honour. But the fact is that the act of honour killing of women is forbidden in Islam, showing that it is a result of any woman dishonouring her family.

The women as a novelist succeeded in changing her state in the Arab world. Literature written by women helped improving a new understanding of female's experiences.

The study of the Second Chapter focused on a novel written by a Jordanian Norma Khouri, its major problem is forbidden love between a Muslim girl and a Christian boy. Putting the theory into practice, conflicts of women exist in the Arab world. It is revealed in Khouri's story what women have to live with in Arab societies all their lives, including men's domination and gender discrimination.

The half-truth in this matter was revealed in Chapter Two in which people who have stereotypes about the Arab world were conceived. The media did its duty towards the damage caused by claims done by Khouri. It is never too late for change, but it is important to do it the right way in order not to cause damage.

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