QUEER MODERNITIES
AND
DIASPORIC ART OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates Middle Eastern diasporic artists in North America who are creating political art about queer identity. This doctoral project explores colonial contact zones to discuss queer identity in relation to politically motivated art being produced by the Middle Eastern diaspora and provides nuance and contributes to the growing scholarship on Middle Eastern contemporary art and cultural studies. I consider whether social scientists, cultural theorists, and historians can reach a narrative of Western and non-Western Modernity that works beyond sexual oppression (Middle East) versus sexual acceptance (North America), and instead examines a negotiation of diasporic sexuality. Arguing instead that diasporic subjects create an alternative coming-out narrative and identity script to inscribed Western models, the aim is to see the ways in which local instances of homosociality cite pre-Modern sexuality scripts within contemporary Middle Eastern art and its diaspora, and reject Western queer identity narratives that become exclusionary in non-Western contexts. By incorporating different sociological strategies in the analysis of contemporary art, this research strives to make self-identification categories less dichotomous and more expansive. This doctoral thesis examines how the artworks of Arab artists in the diaspora illustrate diasporic queer identities that are different from the global-to-local homocolonialism of Western gay identity, and provides examples of how local networks of identity are transmitted through visual language and how alternative sexuality scripts are written within transnational contexts.

Examining the artworks of diasporic contemporary artists Jamil Hellu, Ebrin Bagheri, and 2fik (Toufique), I explore the concept of multiple Modernisms and their relationship to displacement, trauma, and Arab sexualities/masculinities within a postcolonial and anti-imperialist framework. Jamil Hellu uses photography, video, performance, and mixed-media art installations to create contrasting metaphors about the politics of cultural identities and the fluidity of sexuality.

Ebrin Bagheri's ink and paper drawings evoke histories of pre-modern, same-sex desires in Iranian culture. 2Fik uses his own diasporic identity as a subject in his work to explore the dichotomies of his Canadian-Moroccan culture and his lived experience as a queer Arab.

Global art histories and transnational queer theory are pillars of my theoretical framework, and a postcolonial approach is instrumental in locating contemporary notions of sexual discourse in the Middle East. Such a postcolonial framework illuminates the necessary cause-and-effect relationship that historic sexuality discourses have had on contemporary understandings of sexuality, and how this history affects those currently living in the diaspora. I explore Middle Eastern homosexuality and focus on issues of Modernity, multiple Modernisms, and the West's claim to Modernity. Histories of multiple Modernisms are evidence of modernity as a period of industrialized and economic growth taking place outside the Global North, and this concept is a critical approach to queer theory and art history in its capacity to decenter European humanist thought that universalized Western progress as the only mode of cultural advancement. This discussion will reframe Arab homosexualities in terms of desire and alternative masculinities rather than through Western notions of visibility and coming out, as these narratives are not conducive to understanding how queer Arabs living in the West experience their sexuality.

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AUTO-THEORY:
A QUEER FEMINIST PRACTICE

Auto-theory has emerged as a term to describe the practices of engaging with theory, life, and art from the perspective of one's lived experiences; an emergent term, it is very much in the zeitgeist of contemporary feminist and queer feminist cultural production today. While the term "autotheory" circulates specifically in relation to third-wave and fourth-wave feminist texts, such as American writer Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* and American filmmaker and art writer Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick*, theorizing from the first person is well established within the genealogies of feminist practice.[1]

For the purpose of this thesis, I feel it important to be forthcoming with my own subject position and my connection to the research. Raised as a Coptic Orthodox Christian, I unfortunately always knew that my sexuality would never be reconciled with my cultural background and with my religious upbringing. Born in Toronto from parents who immigrated to Canada from Egypt, I identify as a first-generation Egyptian-Canadian. While I tried hiding my sexuality from my family and the community for a number of years, it became clear that the articulation of both my Arabness and my sexuality was non-normative and non-conforming. In the summer of 2013, I was outed by social media (Twitter), the one place I felt that I had the liberty to be open and follow queer organizations and human rights campaigns from around the world. This is where my father found out my association with queerness and confirmed what had been unspoken and ignored for many years. I was thrown out and disowned by my family unit and abandoned by my cultural community, losing most of the friends I grew up with. The common theme that reoccurred was that I was

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[1] Fournier, Lauren. 2018. "Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice." *A/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 33 (3): 641-42.

disgracing the family, and that my parents had immigrated to Canada for a better life for their children, one they did not see in queer identity.

I would regularly wake up to priests in my home waiting to pray for me and explain the damnation of the gays; I was chased around the house with holy water on more than one occasion, and violent family interventions outlining each passage of the Bible that condemns homosexuality became common events I encountered when visiting my family. After the worst fears of my parents were confirmed and I was pushed out of the closet, a cycle of emotional abuse began to be more prevalent and defined our future relationship.

I completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. As an artist, I always produced work that was autobiographical and about the homosexual experience in the Middle East. I did not know it at the time, but this flourished into my Master's degree in Art History where I also looked at how political art is being used by the Middle Eastern diaspora in North America by artists (like myself) to cope with issues of sexuality and trauma. My Ph.D. in Art History and Visual Culture has become another part of my healing process; like all of the schooling I have done thus far, it helps me not only research and understand my situation better, but also contributes to the scholarship and fills in the gaps where my experience is not accounted for. This becomes an incredibly powerful tool for me to know that I am not alone in my experience, and to actively educate and voice my story in ways that are beneficial to myself and others.

Because of my own subject position, I see the importance of art's dialogical potential to open, foster and make accessible the knowledge surrounding marginalized subjects. Coming to terms with my own subject position, a queer diasporic person of colour, was a conflicting task, caught between a stringent cultural practice and being socialized in a largely Eurocentric environment. The aim of my work is not only to advance research on global history by introducing

new methods for the intersectional study of sexuality and visual culture, but I also strive to introduce an interdisciplinary theorization to Middle Eastern contemporary art with diaspora theory in order to help better understand the human rights issues surrounding sexual identity and cultural production.

Stuart Hall is joined by many scholars who believe in the production of identity as an always-changing process and never-ending performance. Theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, José Esteban Muñoz and others have developed ways of articulating the changing production of one's identity and self-identification. From Butler's performativity to Muñoz's disidentification, all of these theorists seek to deconstruct how dominant ideology negotiates minority culture and shapes the identities of who Gayatri Spivak calls the "subaltern."[2]

Utilizing my own subaltern voice, this dissertation is informed by my experiences and my research provides a means of consolidating, integrating, and more rigorously conceiving the ways in which queer diasporic bodies are understood. By informing this scholarship through my own subject position, it seeks to increase our understanding of queer diasporic experiences by expanding our knowledge of visual art production and the lens through which we analyze the experiences of queer subjects of colour.

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[2] "Subaltern" refers to the social group that is socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure. Largely informed by Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak has been instrumental in writing about the voice and resistance of the subaltern. For more, please see: Gayatri Chakravorty, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). I also acknowledge my privilege in having the opportunity and platform to develop these ideas, and my voice is informed by this subject position.

INTRODUCTION

QUEERING LOCALLY AND DEIMPERIALIZING VISUAL CULTURE

> Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact… we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.[3] - Stuart Hall

The past three decades have seen a new wave of Western scholars interested in representations of sexuality in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Generally, authors on Middle Eastern sexualities contend that the West created a discourse around sexuality that the Middle East[4] never had, leading to imperialist ideologies in the name of sexual tolerance, or, homocolonialism.[5] This is seen in the work of political theorist Joseph Massad, who coined the term the "Gay International," which seeks to export Western models of homosexuality into places where it had not previously existed.[6] What

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[3] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London, UK.: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), 222.

[4] I define the Middle East loosely as the geopolitical designation western Asia and northeast Africa that includes the nations on the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. Even though some of these regions, like Iran and Turkey, are not technically a part of the Middle East, my emphasis on historiography makes it integral to include regions that were once connected by empire, culture, and language.

[5] Momin Rahman defines homocolonialism as "the deployment of LGBTIQ rights and visibility to stigmatize non-Western cultures and conversely reassert the supremacy of the Western nations and civilization" (Rahman, 2014, p. 7). Specifically, Rahman characterizes "Western exceptionalism as the primary political idea that is triangulated through the process of 'homocolonialism' that institutes the opposition of Muslim cultures and sexuality politics by deploying LGBTIQ rights and visibility to punish non-Western cultures, and conversely reassert the supremacy of the 'home' Western nations and civilization" (Rahman, 2014, p. 118).

[6] Joseph Massad defines the *Gay International* as the missionary universalization of Western gay rights with an "orientalist impulse, borrowed from predominant representations of the Arab and Muslim worlds in the United States and Europe, [that] continues to guide all branches of the human rights community" (Massad, 2002, p. 362).

results is the erasure of local forms of sexual identity scripts. As a push against colonial forces and imperialism, homosexuality in the Middle East was historically made into an illegal identity category—one that, many argue,[7] did not exist prior to increased contact with Western explorers and travelers. The travelogue which consists of books and manuscripts written by travelers from Europe to the Ottoman Middle East provide instances of external vantage points that compare intimate sexual scripts between the West and the Other. As an apparatus from which Orientalism spread, these travelogues used homosociality in the Middle East as a sign of perverted morality and "stood for the Orient's passivity, laziness, cowardice, and submission."[8] It is important to understand how the emergence of the Gay International coincided with that of Western gay sexuality studies. These issues are all at the forefront in the study of Islamicate sexualities.[9]

Diasporic artists provide a rich platform to investigate the relationship of both colonial trauma and displacement within Middle Eastern communities in North America, and how the conception of homeland complicates a transnational sexual identity.[10] There is an incompatibility

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[7] See: El-Rouayheb, 2005; Ze'evi, 2006; Massad, 2002; Najmabadi, 2005; Gartlan, 2013; Boone, 2015; Babayan, 2008; Rowson, 2002; Habib 2010.

[8] Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. P. 150. For a partial description of this travel literature, see: Findley, 1998, p. 15.

[9] In 1974, Marshall G.S. Hodgson published *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* and coined the term *Islamicate* as a way of opening up the borders posed by modern scholarship. Hodgson identifies the issue in using the term Islam and Islamic in unspecific ways, outlining that when one speaks of "Islamic literature or art", one is speaking less about Islam as a faith. To make this distinction, *Islamicate* is used to refer not directly to the religion of Islam itself, but to the social and cultural complexities historically associated with Islam, Muslims, and inclusive of non-Muslims living within the same region. This reading of the Islamicate can foster new meanings to not only "Islamic art," but include art from other regions of the world that share colonial histories and are linked in various ways.

[10] I use transnationalism in my research in a way that is conscious of tension inherent within the term *trans-national*. This tension exists on a methodological level wherein the nation state is the primary foil in which to situate cultural paradigms within the global. In an effort to locate transnationalism within a paradigm that stressed complex connections and slippages between the local and the global, I use *transnational* in my study as synonymous to *trans-local* and *trans-regional.* For more on the study of transnationalism, see: Freitag and Oppen, 2010.

between how diasporic subjects are socialized to become queer subjects in the West and the conflicting, often contradictory, values and understandings of their own sexual desires from a cultural perspective. I will problematize this lens from a critical race perspective, illustrating that the process of colonization and the immense struggle Islamicate sexual discourses faced in the age of modernization still reverberates and affects multi-generational subjects in the diaspora. Studying the cultural production of the queer diaspora is fruitful in investigating the ways in which we can complicate the narrative that characterizes Middle Eastern cultures as sexually oppressive and intolerant, and Western cultures as sexually liberated and accepting. Instead, we ought to examine a negotiation of diasporic sexuality by incorporating different sociological strategies to help self-identification categories be less dichotomous. To do so, in this dissertation I study the existing literature on Middle Eastern diasporic communities, and bring queer identity within theoretical discussions around diaspora as a framework of analysis.

This dissertation investigates Middle Eastern diasporic artists in North America who are creating political work engaging with queer identity.[11] I use the contrapuntal[12] study of

[11] According to Gregor Jansen and Robert Klanten, political art has had a significant place in art history ever since the French Revolution and romanticism. The political emphasis of the Age of Enlightenment extended to the aesthetic sphere, and from the beginning of postmodernism in the 1960s, art's political aspect has challenged the basic regulation of all areas of social life. Building on this, Bruno Latour conceptualized "the political" in terms of artistic representational strategies, while Jansen and Klanten define "political art" as being related to Aristotle's *res republic.* Within this definition, political art is relevant to the wider public; it is always "context art" that relates to a certain set of circumstances, and it is a result of artistic research into public affairs. See: Klanten, Robert, and Pedro Alonzo. *Art and Agenda Political Art and Activism*. Berlin: Gestalten, 2012.

[12] In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said introduced a contrapuntal mode of analysis that takes into account intertwined histories and perspectives. Specifically, contrapuntal analysis is used in interpreting colonial texts to consider the perspectives of both the colonizer and the colonized. This approach is not only helpful but also necessary in making important connections within colonial and imperial narratives. Reading contrapuntally is interpreting different perspectives simultaneously and seeing how the text interacts with itself and with historical contexts. It is reading with "awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said, 51). Joseph Boone

contemporary art in relation to historical archives in order to better explore contact zones[13] as a way of discussing queer identity. Queer identity is studied in relation to contemporary art being produced by the Middle Eastern diaspora and my research nuances and contributes to the growing scholarship on postcolonial queer theory, Middle Eastern contemporary art and diaspora studies.[14] Examining the contemporary artworks of artists Jamil Hellu, Ebrin Bagheri, and 2fik (Toufique) in relation to historical photographic archives of colonial encounter in the Middle East, I explore the concept of multiple modernisms and their relationship to displacement, trauma, and Arab sexualities/masculinities within a postcolonial and anti-imperialist framework. Born into the Syrian diaspora, San Francisco artist Jamil Hellu illustrates the friction between Arab ethnicity and American gay identity through his art practice and considers the conflicts that emerge at the intersection of Middle Eastern heritage and queerness. Ebrin Bagheri is an Iranian-Canadian artist whose ink and paper drawings evoke histories of pre-modern same-sex desires in Iranian culture, complicating ideals of Persian gender performativity within the diaspora. Montreal-based

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demonstrates this type of research in *The Homoerotics of Orientalism,* where he uses contrapuntal readings between modern and contemporary, and Oriental and Occidental archives and texts to imagine the interpretive possibilities that exist between the lines on the micro level of narrative in order to make visible the important role that a homo-Orientalist discourse has played in constructing the West's history of sexuality (Boone, xxiv).

[13] Mary Louise Pratte coined the evocative term "contact zone" to designate cross-cultural exchanges in those liminal spaces where self and other (colonizer and colonized) meet "in terms of copresence, interlocking understandings and practices" that reshape the subjectivities and desires of colonizer and colonized alike. Pratt, Mary L. "Arts of the Contact Zone." Profession. (1991): 33-40.

[14] Diaspora studies has been a growing field over the past two decades. The *Diaspora Journal*'s inaugural issue in 1991 arguably marked the start of institutionalized Diaspora studies, as it is where William Safran wrote his seminal text in an attempt to define diaspora consciousness. In this text, Safran concluded that the main features of the diaspora include: "a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship." (See: William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies.* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83-99.)

Moroccan artist, 2Fik, is a multidisciplinary artist who uses his own diasporic identity as a subject in his work to explore the dichotomies of his Moroccan-Canadian culture and his lived experience as a queer Arab. The close study and comparative analysis of these artists add crucial discourse to transcultural art history and allow diasporic Middle Eastern contemporary art to foster a more nuanced canon highlighting the geographical relevance of the Middle East in the art production of the diaspora in Canada and the United States.[15] My research emphasizes themes of transnationalism and cultural exchange, and the political artwork that is associated with diasporic communities, paying particular attention to the ways in which transnationalism intersects with culturally specific histories of same-sex desire and sexual identification.[16] I examine the cultural production of these artists in order to explore non-Western ways of being queer that are informed by diaspora consciousness, a sociological and psychological component to diaspora studies.[17] Each chapter of this dissertation contributes in different ways to a better understanding of diaspora consciousness and the impact it has on both art production and queer diasporic subjectivity. There is an incompatibility between how diasporic subjects are socialized to become queer subjects in the West and the conflicting, often contradictory, values and understandings of their own sexual desires from a cultural perspective. Ultimately, I argue that colonialism did not fully extinguish the local gender

[15] Unpacking the rigid guidelines William Safran created in an attempt to define the diaspora, James Clifford encourages a multi-local definition of diasporic identity, stressing that transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland. (See: James Clifford "Diasporas," in *CUAN Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302-338.)

[16] Rather than *transnationalism* meaning all forms of contemporary migration, by questioning the distinctness of geographic areas within a comparative framework (while still respecting historical and cultural specificities), the transnational in relation to world art studies enables new insights into the workings of gender and patriarchy across various borders, rather than only within the parameters of the state or nation.

[17] In this case, I use 'diasporic' as being a part of 'non-Western' identity in order to centre people of colour and the experiences of marginalized identities from a critical race perspective.

discourses and codes of same-sex desire that existed in the Middle East for centuries. Instead, my contention is that the pre-Modern sexual scripts and codes of desire do still exist today, and the study of diasporic homosexualities is a valuable link to connect a colonial moment to a diasporic present.

A goal of this line of inquiry into diaspora consciousness is to illustrate how the study of visual culture contributes to queer theory and transnationalism by illustrating the fact that pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts are not fully colonized and live on in multigenerational subjects of the diaspora. As will be clarified throughout this dissertation, the process of colonization and the immense struggle Islamicate sexual discourses faced in the age of modernization still reverberates and affects multi-generational subjects in the diaspora. The study of visual culture (both the archival records and the contemporary art of living artists) shows how hangovers of these sexual scripts continue to affect the consciousness of the diaspora and the ways in which they are socialized as queer citizens. The double bind that the queer diasporic subject often faces can be linked to these aftereffects and tensions, and the study of visual art and culture helps illustrate the specific ways in which these sexual scripts are both manifested and negotiated by non-Western subjects in the West.

Through the chapters of this dissertation I will outline the changes to local gender norms imposed by European travelers, and the diaspora has a privileged position in my study because it is vital to note how recently some of these changes are. For instance, changes to the Arabic language including different sexual-linguistic codes happened as late as the 1950s, directly affecting generations of people who are still living first-hand effects of these changes.[18] This act of

[18] The Arabic word for sex, *jins*, appeared sometime in the early twentieth century carrying with it not only its new meanings of biological sex and national origin but also its old meanings of type and kind and ethnolinguistic origin, among others. The word in the sense of type and kind has existed in Arabic since time immemorial and is derived from the Greek genus. As late as 1870, its

imperialism was achieved by removing local understandings of homosocial desire—something that existed as a non-issue, something that was not seen as an identity and did not need a name or categorization—and replacing them with specific Arabic words created by Europeans that reflected Western sexual practices. This implicates the diaspora in insidious ways, for the former generations in the mid-twentieth century were socialized with these new disavowals of un-modern homosociality, and the demonization of Western homosexuality.[19] The next generation as well as those within the diaspora are then left with a homosocial history that is still steeped within their own cultural traditions but now with the contradictory disavowal of homosexual subjectivity. In order to challenge the concept of stable or fixed identities, postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha argues that cultural hybridity results from various forms of colonization and leads to cultural collisions and interchanges. In the attempt to assert colonial power and to create civilized subjects, "the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different—a mutation, a hybrid."[20] This hybrid subject, or the contemporary queer diaspora, contradicts both the attempt to fix and control indigenous cultures and the illusion of cultural authenticity or purity. Here, the notion of the in-between is relevant, for the diasporic (in this case, also the queer diasporic) is then

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connotation of sex had not yet come into usage. An unspecific word for sexuality, *jinsiyyah* — which also means nationality and citizenship —was coined in the 1950s by translators of the works of Freud. See: Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): 372.

[19] More recently Muta' al-Safadi, translator of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, has introduced the more specific term, *jinsaniyyah.* Important here is the legacy this linguistic coloniality has on the current Middle Eastern discourse of sexuality. European expressions of sexual deviance were adopted in Arabic in the mid-1950s, translating it literally as *al-shudhudh al-jinsi*; this became a coinage now commonly used in the media and in polite company to refer to the Western concept of homosexuality. See: See Muta' al-Safadi, trans., Iradat al-ma'rifah, al-juz 'al-awwal min tarikh al-jinsaniyya [The Will to Know, Volume 1: The History of Sexuality], by Michel Foucault (Beirut: Markaz al-Inma' al-Qawmi, 1990). Abridged in Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): 372.

[20] Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 2 edition. London ; New York: Routledge, 2004. p. 111.

left with opposing views of Western and non-Western sexual practices, a tense historical framing of Arab-sexual discourses, all the while being measured by Western narratives of modernity, progress and enlightened (Euro-American) sexual identity.

What does it mean to queer locally? As the case studies within this dissertation will illustrate, kinship affiliation and embodiment become reimagined as contemporary diasporic artists like Hellu, 2Fik and Bagheri insist on remembering and reinventing historical ways of being. Such re-imagining is an integral relationship to the colonial archive as it provides a way of using the past in order to imagine a different present. This is part of what it means to "queer locally." *Queering locally* incorporates temporal and geographic flexibility, and the flux and flow of historical moments across multiple geographies allows for colonial archives to speak to one another in productive and meaningful ways. By developing the framework of *queering locally*, this intervention allows for the tracing of same-sex desire and gender fluidity within Egypt and North Africa in order to assess beauty standards in Persia and gender roles within the Ottoman Empire, all through the purviews of contemporary Syrian, Iranian and Moroccan art. To "queer locally" does not imply micro studies of specific locales or limited geographic studies of only one place. In fact, quite the opposite is true. While such micro studies are relevant and necessary, an important facet of *queering locally* is the local-to-local connection that is created through joint analysis. This local-to-local methodological approach relates to an inter-Arab referencing system that will be elaborated upon further in this introduction, and each chapter of this dissertation does this local-to-local work in theorizing different Islamicate regions in relation to one another. Therefore, one queers locally by broadening their geographic scope in order to avoid the colonial pitfalls of area studies and to better account for transnational connections between different geographic spheres.

IS "GAY IDENTITY" UNIVERSAL?

Current literature engaging with Middle Eastern homosexuality is focused on issues of modernity, multiple modernities, and the West's claim to modernity.[21] Modernity as a time period signals social, political, and historic conditions at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Numerous scholars now question this imperial structure of power and examine how modernity can be used to colonize social and cultural practices in the name of Western advancement. Theorists such as Walter Mignolo, Irene Silverblatt, and Sonia Saldivar-Hull are but a few who question this new imperial structure of power and examine how modernity is used to colonize social and cultural practices in the name of Western advancement.[22] They argue that modernity was formed by European philosophers, academics and politicians, and that modernity involves the colonization of time and space in order to create a border in relation to a self-determining Other and its own European identity. In this way, Europeans colonized the world and built on the ideas of Western civilization and modernity as the endpoints of historical time, with Europe as the centre of the

[21] Not to be confused with Modernism, which points to the cultural trends that respond to the conditions of Modernity in a myriad of ways, such as modern art.

[22] It should be noted that in 1991 Bruno Latour argued in his book *We Have Never Been Modern* that we fundamentally misunderstand the condition in which we live. The age of modernity which is characterized by careful distinctions between nature and society, human and thing, fact and value, is in reality defined by an overarching hybridity, a defiance of clear delineation, an undermining of the essence of modernization. See: Mignolo, Walter D. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2011; Mignolo, Walter. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. 2017; Silverblatt, Irene Marsha. *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005; Saldívar-Hull, Sonia. *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

world.[23] Mignolo also goes so far as to say that *coloniality*[24] is constitutive of modernity, and "there is no modernity without coloniality."[25]

To illustrate the complexities of becoming a queer subject for the diasporic individual and the ways in which these experiences intersect with queer discourses in the Middle East, it is useful to return to Joseph Massad's theories which outline how the Western gay agenda has imposed a universalist, identitarian epistemology onto same-sex desire in the Arab world.[26] Through homocolonialism, incitement to discourse, and what he terms the Gay International, Massad locates a Western exceptionalism that seeks to export Western models of homosexuality into places where it did not previously exist, effectively erasing local forms of sexual identity scripts. This creates a standardized *homosexuality* in places where same-sex desires have a more complex relationship with identity, nationalism, and social politics.[27] While Massad's work has been heavily critiqued— by many including Valerie Traub and Momin Rahman, both concerned about the risk of the West 'owning' gay identity, and the implications of queer Arab subjects having no agency to identify themselves— this dissertation charts how homocolonialism and its connection with Modernity is undoubtedly a valuable framework for the study of the queer diaspora.[28] This historic record of

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[23] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[24] This is a term that Mignolo uses in his writing, and signals modernity's elaborate façade of "civilizing" as its necessary foundation in the terror-logic of imperial rule. See Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, p. X.

[25] Ibid., 3.

[26] The evidence suggests that a stable homosexual identity did not exist in pre-modern Arab-Islamic civilizations, and instead same-sex desire was simply a non-categorized facet of everyday life that was legally condemned but otherwise tolerated.

[27] For example, Dror Ze'evi's study *Producing Desire* maps out the progress of Western sexuality colonizing the local traditions of homosocial desire in the Ottoman Middle East.

[28] An example of why these historical colonial moments matter would be language, and the terminology that the Middle Eastern diaspora inherited and uses within contemporary queer identification. Joseph Massad outlines the following: "The Arabic word for sex, jins, appeared sometime in the early twentieth century carrying with it not only its new meanings of biological sex and national origin but also its old meanings of type and kind and ethnolinguistic origin, among

desire is instrumental in locating contemporary notions of sexual discourse in the Middle East and the necessary cause-and-effect relationship historic sexuality discourses have on contemporary understandings of sexuality, and how this history affects those currently living in the diaspora.

The problematic lies in the imposition of a seemingly universal 'gay' identity that is inherently Western and, according to Massad, inherently linked to colonialism and colonizing discourses. To Massad this means that because most non-Western civilizations, including Muslim Arab civilizations, have not subscribed historically to these binary categories of gender and sexuality, their imposition is producing harmful governing effects. Thus, Massad is emphasizing that the term 'homosexual' is a genealogy of sexuality that is decidedly Euro-American. This incitement to discourse, I argue, also exists in different ways for diasporic subjects due to the fact that the categories and binaries that they are forced to navigate, fit into, and circumvent are strikingly similar.

It is difficult to avoid the rhetoric of human rights when discussing a topic as divisive as homosexuality and same-sex desire in the Middle East. To illustrate why this is a contentious term, I turn to the two-volume anthology, *Islam and Homosexuality,* edited by Samar Habib. Habib uses the concept of frame of human rights in order to address Massad's argument about the Gay International and homocolonial discourses of exporting Western homosexualities to the Middle East. She denies Massad's protest against the view that there is an authentic form of homosexual identity indigenous to the Arab World. Habib rejects Massad's assertion that coming out and

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others. The word in the sense of type and kind has existed in Arabic since time immemorial and is derived from the Greek genus. As late as 1870, its connotation of sex had not yet come into usage. An unspecific word for sexuality, jinsiyyah —which also means nationality and citizenship —was coined in the 1950s by translators of the works of Freud." (See: Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): 372.)

visibility strategies are Western imports that are colonial impositions, labeling this line of thought as oppressive to Arab individuals who do in fact identify as gay and still live in the Middle East. Shifting away from Massad's "incitement to discourse" theory, Habib focuses on a human rights discourse in an attempt to universalize human security and a need to rid social oppression that is a "universally shared physiology."[29] This universally-shared physiology is predicated on the assumption that everyone shares the same need for basic human rights and freedoms. She asserts that "this was precisely how the Islamic states reacted to the Declaration [of Independence] which was seen as a culturally imperialist attempt to enforce one set of Rights…"[30] This means that narrowly-focused human rights agendas that privilege Western epistemologies are insidiously a part of an imperial incitement to discourse. In Habib's attempt to undermine Massad's denial of an indigenous homosexuality in the Arab world, I worry that she is re-packaging the incitement to discourse within a new, human rights framework.

Here, Habib is making, at its root, the same argument of colonial discourse that Massad makes. What Massad calls the homocolonial Gay International, Habib argues is the exportation of human rights in the name of colonialism. I posit that the question then becomes whether this exportation of human rights can happen in a way that allows for hybridity and the productive translation of these Western models. Where Habib truly differs from Massad is in her argument of cultural specificity and respect of self-identification. Specifically, she argues that:

> The critiques of culturally insensitive approaches to sexual practices in the Arab world have overlooked their own insensitivity to the very real struggles of homosexual people in the Arab world (regardless of whether such a term is universally identified with, these

[29] Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations Across Temporal Geographies of Desire* (Cambridge, Mass: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008), xxiii.
[30] *Ibid*, xxii.

> individuals are in the least aware of their inherent difference and exclusion from the socially sanctified sexual currencies of marriage and children).[31]

In this vein of thought, the lived experience of homosexual-identifying subjects in the Middle East is more of a priority than the ways in which they came to label themselves. Habib sees risks in demarcating all homosexual identities in the Middle East as colonial legacies of Western sexual discourses and rejects Massad's theoretical premise by refusing his argument that "your sexual preference or identification is not really your own, it is a Western construct, [and that] you do not really exist."[32]

Other scholars have made similar human rights arguments, such as Brian Whitaker in his book *Unspeakable Love, Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*. While outlining key issues in Middle Eastern sexuality studies through interviews and first-hand accounts, Whitaker takes a similar human rights stance that dichotomizes sexuality discourses into Western categories of identification, and that of the Other. This othering of the sexual discourses that do not resemble that of Western homosexuality is one of the pitfalls this universalist human rights methodology creates. In this way, further research is integral to breaking up the hegemony of human rights discourses that are based on universal terms, while simultaneously speaking to local ways of expressing queer desire in the Middle East that is articulated by the diaspora in North America.

It is important to contextualize arguments of decolonization as it pertains to homosexual tolerance and liberation in the Middle East. The arguments thus far presented take issue with the historical upset of Middle Eastern sexualities by an intolerant Western colonialism. This imperialist pressure impacted the local sexual discourses that were more fluid and not identity-based, forcing

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[31] Samar Habib "Introduction: Islam and Homosexuality," In *Islam and Homosexuality.* Vol. 1. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010): xvii.
[32] *Ibid*, xviii.

a Western binary gender identity model of heteronormativity onto the so-called Other in the Middle East. At the time of this colonial impact, homosexuality was also illegal in the global North, and homosexuality being outlawed and prohibited in the Middle East was a measure taken to replicate the formula of Western modernity. This is precisely the role that modernity and modernism has within my project, for the parameters of contemporary gender identity and desire are heavily influenced by historical discourses of sexual liberation. In fact, homosexuality was criminalized and illegal in the West until very recently,[33] so in efforts to emulate modern civilization, most countries in the Middle East followed suit and made homosexuality into an illegal identity, when just before the turn of the century it was not even seen as an identity at all in Islamicate contexts. After nations in the global north started decriminalizing homosexuality, the goalposts of modernity moved and homosexual liberation became inextricably tied to being a modern nation.[34] Homosexuality and gay liberation are thus used as a newly changed endpoint of Western modernity, excluding the Middle East from ever reaching progress as defined by the global North. The hostility that queer people feel in the Middle East today is tied to this colonial history and is

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[33] While North America and Europe have held major claims to championing gay liberation, the decriminalization of homosexuality still pertains to very recent history. For example, in the United States, sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex became legal in 2003, pursuant to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas*. In Canada, same-sex sexual activity between consenting adults was decriminalized in 1969 as a result of legislation introduced in 1967. Until 1971, homosexuality was punishable in Austria and until 2002 there were still minimum age limits for homosexual relationships in the Austrian penal code (different from heterosexual relationships). (For more on gay liberation, see: Gilreath, Shannon. *The End of Straight Supremacy*. Cambridge University Press Textbooks, 2011.)

[34] As Jasbir Puar notes, sexual exceptionalism occurs through stagings of U.S nationalism, for instance, that work in tandem with a sexual othering. This sexual othering exceptionalizes the identities of U.S citizens often times in contrast to Orientalist constructions of perverse 'Muslim sexuality' (Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages,* 2007, p. 4). As a critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses, homonationalism attends to how such discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to advance civilizational discourses in some contexts, and limit the progression of the 'backwards' Other. (See: Dryden, OmiSoore H., and Suzanne Lenon. *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*. 2016.)

an after-effect of Western imperialism changing local sexual discourses. While homosexuality is currently restricted and criminalized in Middle Eastern societies but is relatively protected in certain Western cultures, contemporary discourses of sexual liberation need to be attentive to these histories of imperial violence at the risk of replicating the same coloniality that led to gay criminalization in the first place. The only way to correct the historical colonialism that caused irreparable damage for sexual discourses in the Middle East is a human rights advocacy that does not centre on protecting people's sexuality today in a monolithic version of queerness that is manufactured in and exported from the global North. Echoing Massad's claims, this suggests that human rights discourses that seek to replicate Western queer models of identity will only be a reoccurring act of imperial control over sexual discourses in the Middle East.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF THE QUEER DIASPORA

The texts that examine same-sex desire in relation to transnational and diasporic experiences often rely on visual culture as a central theme of their arguments. Often located outside the discipline of art history, these theorists hinge their arguments on films, representation in magazines, and images of popular culture to help support their claims and provide sociological evidence for their arguments. This need for queer theorists and critical race theorists to use visual production as case studies is itself evidence of the strong connectedness that lies between sexual desire, diasporic subjectivity, and modes of visual and cultural expression. Such limited work within the academy has been done surrounding this entanglement of transnationalism and queer theory so that visual culture provides theorists with another language to articulate the complexities of this triangulation of identity.[35]

[35] For instance, in her seminal book *Impossible Desires*, queer theorist Gayatri Gopinath examines film and literary texts, what she calls a public culture, to dissect the ways in which discourses of

Situating this queer theory and visual art analysis within the literature of diaspora studies, I find useful frameworks for the conceptual interrogation of terms like *nationalism*, *diaspora*, and *belonging*. In her book *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics and Activism,* critical race theorist Nadine Naber analyzes the varied concepts of Arabness within middle-class Arab American families and within Arab and Muslim anti-imperialist social movements. Naber interrogates the dichotomies that ensnare Arab communities as they clamor for a sense of safety and belonging in the United States. When addressing nationalism in the context of the Middle Eastern diaspora in North America, I use Naber's framework which argues that "conventional nationalisms rely on a patrilinear heteronormative reproductive logic that maintains community boundaries through the ideal of heterosexual marriage and reproduction."[36] The artwork produced by diasporic subjects entangled by these dichotomies are immensely important in helping the viewer better understand how the artist navigates and belongs to various community identifications. In Naber's view on articulating Arabness in the United States, the diaspora has been shaped by an assemblage of different visions of how Arabs survive in North America.[37] This means that oftentimes the racism and cultural differences Arab families experience in the West can lead to an intensification of nationalism and a reification of some sort of 'authentic' cultural heritage. For diasporic subjects,

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sexuality are inseparable from histories of colonialism, nationalism, racism and migration. In examining cultural texts that are produced by the South Asian diaspora, Gopinath extends the power of this cultural production as even influencing the homeland. Here, cultural texts going back and forth between homeland and diaspora then contribute to and create a shaping of both sets of cultures, falsifying the notion of diaspora only being oriented towards and dependent on homeland. (Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2007.)

[36] Naber. *Arab and Arab American Feminisms Gender, Violence, and Belonging*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011. p. 234

[37] Naber, Nadine. *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*. New York: New York University Press, 2012. See also: Abdulhadi, Rabab, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber. *Arab and Arab American Feminisms Gender, Violence, and Belonging*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011.

this means that differences and dichotomies are heightened, and notions of what it means to be Arab in North America are radically different than being Arab in the Middle East. This often is related to the ways in which nationalism, nationhood and essentialist versions of Arabness become stuck-in-time and oriented towards past memories for families of migration who have settled in a new land. While nations in the Middle East are fundamentally changing and developing over time, the diasporic experience of nationhood could mean holding onto an unchanged version of what national identity looks like and an unmoving conception of what it means to be Arab. Articulations of Arabness are then grounded in Arab traditions and sensibilities about family, selfhood, and ways of being in the world, but are also hybrid and historically contingent.[38]

If ideas of Arab national identity remain static, stuck in time and unmoving in the diaspora, how does this affect conceptions of gender and sexuality for those living outside the Middle East? Importantly, Naber states that for the Middle Eastern diaspora in the United States, gender and sexuality are among the most powerful symbols to consolidate an imagined difference between Arabs and Americans. In understanding the power of gender and sexuality in forming citizens and shaping their articulations of nation-ness, queer theory and transnational theory can then never be discussed as exclusionary from one another. Important is the analysis of the artwork the diaspora produces, the cultural signs and visual material they create that help them work through their articulations of Arabness in North America, and their belonging to gendered cultural practices and traditions. Just as the nation relies on gender and sexuality to form its citizens, shape their belonging and govern their participation in a national identity, so too does identification or disidentification to a nation rely on visual culture as a tool, method, and language to form queer subjects.

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[38] To help situate this discussion in terms of nationalism and diaspora in the post 9-11 context, see: Jamal, Amaney A., and Nadine Christine Naber. *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2008.

As Benedict Anderson's seminal text *Imagined Communities* has argued, nation, nationality and nationalism have all proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze. He argues that *nationality*, *nation-ness*, and *nationalism* are cultural artifacts that require interrogation, especially their coming into being and the ways their meanings have changed over time.[39] Extending Anderson's argument, what would happen to our interrogations when postcolonial queer subjects who have traditionally been excluded or written in the margins of nationalism are re-contextualized within the historic events that help create nationalisms? As Anderson identifies nation-ness and nationalism as being imagined, limited, and sovereign,[40] it is his idea of the nation being imagined as a community that helps inform issues of representation and belonging both in the field of visual culture more broadly, and issues of representation within visual arts. Cultural studies theorists from the 1980s and 1990s, such as Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, provide a concept of diaspora that moves away from its traditional orientation towards homeland, exile, or return, and instead lives within a diasporic subjectivity that exists through, not despite, cultural difference. My research is indebted to the theories of hybridity, like those of Homi Bhabha, as being a concept of identity and embrace of diaspora for its potential to displace nationalist projects, and rigid hierarchies of relation between nation and migration.[41]

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[39] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Paw Prints, 2016.

[40] Anderson defines the nation as an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. The nation is *imagined* because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, yet in their minds they are all connected. The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest nation has finite boundaries, beyond which are other nations. The nation is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept of nation was born at a time when Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of religious ruling, and nationalism became an emblem of freedom (even freedom under a deity).

[41] Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 2 edition. London ; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Anthropologist Ramy Aly speaks to this point directly in his book *Becoming Arab in London,* through an ethnographic exploration of gender, race and class practices among the Arab diaspora in the United Kingdom. Aly traces behaviour in cultural spaces (such as shisha cafés, Arab clubs, and culturally traditional restaurants) as ways of performing 'Arabness.' Aly uncovers narratives of living in the diaspora and the codes of sociability that make/create British-Arab men and women. In examining the aesthetic trends of Arab youth living in London, Aly notes that

> fashions and aesthetic orientation in the Arab world and the Arab diaspora seem to flow in opposite directions. While middle-class Arab lifestyle magazines in the Middle East abound with images of Arabs in the latest Western fashions and interiors as testament to their inclusion in (a European) modernity, Arabs in London draw on folkloric Arab past to make the same kind of self-validating visual statements about themselves within the context of multicultural London.[42]

Aly's central argument that there is theoretical proximity in the process of being 'raced' and 'gendered' is hinged on the analysis of visual culture as an *expression* of the diasporas' subjectification. In examining the aesthetic practices of the queer diaspora in North America, I find it useful to think about this contradictory flow of cultural authenticity and interrogate the ways in which these ideas are manifested by artists and depicted in visual art.

Within the same body of literature, sociologist Momin Rahman's *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity* critiques the erroneously assumed mutual exclusivity between queer and Middle Eastern and/or Asian cultures.[43] Rahman aims to illuminate the intersections and complexities of current binaries within Muslim communities and families, gay communities and culture, and wider Western political culture and discourses. Rahman argues instead that we must

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[42] Aly, Ramy M. K. *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity*. Pluto Press: London, 2015. p. 181

[43] Rahman, Momin. *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

accept that the Muslim experience of sexual diversity politics is significantly different from the Western one and that this reality undermines any assumption that the processes of Muslim modernization would inevitably lead to the same outcomes around sexuality as those experienced in the West. In other words, Middle Eastern homosexuality will never look the same as Western homosexuality. He posits that the queer Muslim is intersectional and challenges the monolithic, monocultural versions of queer Western identity politics and the positioning of queer politics. Here, the very existence of queer diasporic Muslims destabilizes Western queer discourse. It is this assertion of the Muslim queer subject lying outside of normative Western queer politics that points to issues of genuine difference and incompatibility. I contend that these ideas are steeped in issues of colonialism and imperialism, and the hangovers of pre-colonized sexual scripts that make the Islamicate queer subject an outlier. In these performances and failures, belongings and exclusions, recognitions and disidentifications, this postcolonial queer subject articulates nation-ness in complex ways and the visual culture they produce informs this process.

The study of transnationalism contributes greatly to our understanding of diasporic visual culture, particularly in conjunction with queer theory. In this triangulation, we can assess the complexity of homeland relations, how one belongs to a nation state, how national identity is expected to be performed, and the repercussions of failing to perform nationalism correctly. These concerns show the importance of better illustrating the ways in which the postcolonial queer subject articulates nation-ness in complex ways, and how the visual culture they produce informs this process. All of these cultural and social texts come together in the examination of community, and different ways the diaspora forms this sense of community and complex articulations of Arabness through visual art production.

Building on critiques of the Eurocentric writing of history, this research explores Middle Eastern homosexuality and focuses on contact zones to explore issues of Modernity, multiple

Modernisms, and the West's claim to Modernity. I consider Arab homosexualities in terms of desire and alternative masculinities rather than Western notions of visibility and coming out; these narratives are not necessarily conducive to understanding how queer Arabs living in the West experience their sexuality. Discussing modernity from a critical transnational and diasporic perspective is vital to dismantle "historically constructed (and presently sustained) asymmetrical global power structures [to work beyond] the false binaries of Islam/modernity, and Islam/West."[44]

The analysis of visual artworks by Jamil Hellu in Chapter Three, *An Alternative History of Sexuality: Diaspora Consciousness and the Queer Diasporic Lens*, Ebrin Bagheri in Chapter Four, *Queering Archives of Photography: Linking a Colonial History to a Diasporic Present,* and 2Fik in Chapter Five, *Coming Out à l'Oriental: Diasporic Art and Colonial Wounds,* investigate the codification of Middle Eastern masculinity, femininity and gender norms through a visual language and destabilize homo-colonial discourses of Western Modernity in a discussion rooted in sociological ideas of gender, nationalism, and sexuality, and the triangulation of identity and oppression that could arise at their intersection.[45] These diasporic artists provide a rich platform to investigate the relationship between colonial trauma, racism, and displacement within the diasporic community in North America and how the conception of homeland complicates a transnational sexual identity. I investigate whether we can reach a narrative of Western and non-Western Modernity that functions beyond sexual oppression (Middle East) versus sexual acceptance (North

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[44] Saffari, Siavash, Roxana Akhbari, Kara Abdolmaleki, and Evelyn Hamdon. *Unsettling Colonial Modernity in Islamic Contexts*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: UK. 2017.

[45] The terms 'sociology' and 'sociological' are used in the broadest sense within my research. With sociology being a social science that studies society and human behavior, the study of art history with a focus on the human impacts of gender, sexuality and, in turn, artistic production, will contribute to a refining of the theoretical understanding of social processes. With my research focusing on the visual and cultural turns from Modernity to contemporary moments, this art historical project has a crossover with social research.

America), and instead examines a negotiation of diasporic sexuality by incorporating different sociological strategies to help self-identification categories be less dichotomous.

ISLAMICATE METHODOLOGY*:* FRAMING COLONIALISM AND DECOLONIALITY

It is important to lay the foundation of our understanding of colonialism, coloniality, decolonization, and imperialism. My theories and framework of colonial modernity are shaped by literary theorist Walter Mignolo, and his important extrapolations on the complex matrix of power that has been created and controlled by Western powers during the Renaissance, colonially positioning Europe as the centre of the world. In his latest study *On Decoloniality,* Mignolo emphasizes the difficulty of defining terms like colonialism, for there are few sources elucidating the meaning of the word.[46] Turning to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, colonialism is defined as a system of domination which involves the subjugation of one people to another, and imperialism is defined similarly as the political and economic control over a dependent territory.[47]

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[46] Mignolo, Walter D., and Catherine E. Walsh. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. p. 116.

[47] According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:* "Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. One of the difficulties in defining colonialism is that it is hard to distinguish it from imperialism. Frequently the two concepts are treated as synonyms. Like colonialism, imperialism also involves political and economic control over a dependent territory. The etymology of the two terms, however, provides some clues about how they differ. The term colony comes from the Latin word *colonus*, meaning farmer. This root reminds us that the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin. Imperialism, on the other hand, comes from the Latin term *imperium*, meaning to command. Thus, the term imperialism draws attention to the way that one country exercises power over another, whether through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control." See: *Kohn, Margaret and Reddy, Kavita, "Colonialism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),* *https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=colonialism*

Mignolo, however, finds issue with the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's* writer defining *imperialism* as being almost exactly the same as the etymological dictionary definition of *colonialism*. Helpfully, Mignolo suggests that we think *decolonially* instead, and conceive of colonialism as the complement to imperialism. With this, Mignolo asserts that there is no imperialism without colonialism and that colonialism is constitutive of imperialism.[48] This exercise in decolonial thinking, and what I would call an anti-colonial writing of history, lays bare the workings of Eurocentrism within art historical analysis and theories of diaspora and queerness. As a way of thinking *decolonially*, I use the terms *colonialism* and *imperialism* as being synonymous and constitutive of one another, and do not signal a historic moment of colonialism per se.[49] With this said, the Middle East has had a long and vexed relationship with imperialism and being colonized by various countries at various times in history.[50] With the North American focus of this

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[48] Mignolo, Walter D., and Catherine E. Walsh. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. p. 116.

[49] Historians date the beginning of British imperialism in the Middle East to 1798, the year Napoleon invaded Egypt. Concerned that France would block British access to the eastern Mediterranean and thereby threaten critical trade routes to India, the British navy collaborated with Ottoman authorities to evict French troops from Egypt. From this episode until decolonization in the mid-twentieth century, British policies in the region reflected the interplay of Great Power rivalries and the balancing of strategic and economic interests. ("British Colonialism, Middle East." Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450. *Encyclopedia.com.* (April 14, 2019). https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/british-colonialism-middle-east)

[50] Heavily colonized countries in North Africa include: Egypt, which was most recently a British colony as of 1882 and a British protectorate in 1914; the last British troops departed from the Suez Canal Zone in 1956. Sudan from 1899 onward was under British control as part of an Egyptian-Sudanese colony, independent only after 1956. Tunisia was a French colony from 1881, and regained independence in 1956. The French conquest of Algeria began in 1830, and Algerians won the war of independence from France in 1963. Morocco was a French protectorate imposed in 1912, becoming independent in 1956. Libya was an Italian colony from 1911 and when Italy lost in World War II, Libya ceased being under Italian rule. Colonized countries from the Fertile Crescent that were initially a part of the Ottoman Empire before the first World War include Syria, which was colonized by France in 1918 and became independent in 1946. Iraq was occupied by Britain in World War I and became nominally independent after 1932. Jordan was a British Mandate territory after 1918 and achieved independence in 1946. Palestine was a British Mandate territory after 1918 and endures ongoing colonial occupation from Israel starting from 1948-1967.

dissertation, I centre the understanding of Canada and the United States in a settler-colonial context, and I keep the critiques of scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang in mind as I wish to avoid the ways in which the "language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences."[51] Foregrounding assertions that *decolonization* is not a metaphor, colonialism is a very real dimension of human history in the Middle East that has impacted the workings of local ways of being through its colonial legacy. I refer to *colonialism* in my research not in the abstract, and not as a singular historical event either for each history of colonialism in different regions will have locally specific histories and contexts. However, in order to produce a more macro-level study of homocolonialism's impact on historic visual culture, contemporary art, and the contemporary Arab diaspora, focusing on specific nation-states does not provide a full picture of the ways in which gender and sexuality changed during periods of imperialism in the Middle East. This begs the question: How does one approach the history of colonialism and actively situate knowledge without looking at a specific nation-state unit? To explore this query, I use the term *colonialism* as a way of signaling the colonial matrix of power that is entwined with imperialism and imperial ways of being that centered European tradition as normative, modern, and superior to cultures and traditions in the Middle East.[52]

Lebanon was a French Mandate territory after 1918 and achieved independence in 1943. For more regarding histories of the Cold War and the Middle East, see the writing of historian Dr. Lisa Reynolds Wolfe.

[51] Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1–40. p. 2.

[52] For scholarly texts on colonialism in the Middle East, see: Juan R. I. Cole and Deniz Kandiyoti. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 34, No. 2, Special Issue: Nationalism and the Colonial Legacy in the Middle East and Central Asia (May, 2002), p. 189-203.

Diaspora and transnational identity have posed many issues when it comes to imagining geography within global contemporary art practice.[53] This discussion is urgent as it accounts for the lived conditions of globalization and migration, and points to the disciplinary limits of art history. These limits posed by area studies make it difficult to adequately consider the right questions and to generate answers that help explain the realities of a networked and globalized world. However, in order for diaspora to be adequately addressed within art history, queer theory and museum studies, the very limits of knowledge production need to be reimagined. In imagining the issues posed by geographic borders, this research grapples with the disciplinary limits of art history that were inherited by area studies, suggesting that diasporic artists and their cultural production illustrate the incompatibility of colonial definitions of borders, nation-states, and identities. [54] It is when geographies and borders are reimagined that the migration and movement of people can be developed productively and fully within art historical frameworks, and in relation to the gendered and sexual identities embodied by diasporic subjectivity.

As an intellectual shift away from colonial ideologies that define and limit the borders of nationalisms, in this dissertation I use the term *Islamicate* as a methodology of global art histories. I explain in Chapter Two, *Decolonial Methodologies: The Islamicate as Framework*, that the term

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[53] I use transnationalism in my research in a way that is conscious of tension inherent within the term *trans-national*. This tension exists on a methodological level wherein the nation state is the primary foil in which to situate cultural paradigms within the global. In an effort to locate transnationalism within a paradigm that stressed complex connections and slippages between the local and the global, I use *transnational* in my study as being synonymous with *trans-local* and *trans-regional.* For more on the study of transnationalism, see: Ulrike Freitag and Achim v. Oppen (eds). *Translocality- The Study of Globalising Phenomena from a Southern Perspective.* Leiden: Brill, 2010.

[54] Within art history, this follows the recent trend of World Art Studies. As Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme argue, through its combined global and multidisciplinary approach, world art studies is creating a new framework in the study of art. Within the mapping of world art studies, postcolonial studies can be seen as an approach, which is particularly concerned with the impact of colonialism and its aftermath on art and culture. See: Wilfried van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans (eds), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008.

"Islamicate," as defined by Marshal Hodgson, refers not directly to the religion of Islam itself, but to the social and cultural complexities historically associated with Islam, including non-Muslims living within the same regions. While the limitations of the terms *Middle East*, *Arab*, and *Islamic* will become apparent in Chapter Two, I use *Islamicate* as a conceptual movement away from area studies, and for its power to displace nineteenth century universalizing European ideas that distinguished, demarcated, and made distinctions between the world's cultures. [55] Through an interdisciplinary queer theory lens I bring regions of the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia together in this study that would be left outside of academic paradigms regarding the "Middle East" as a stable geographically-contained location, and illustrate the ways in which diaspora and nation-state identities hinder the very ways in which complex cultural identification is articulated and understood. Only by keeping imperialism at the forefront of the study of sexualities can we situate how pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts have resisted complete colonization and continue to exist in the diaspora.

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[55] According to scholars Bert Hoffman and Andreas Mehler, area studies is the multidisciplinary social research focusing on specific geographic regions or culturally defined areas. Area studies as it exists today can be seen as having its origins in the colonial expansion of European powers during the 18th century and the accompanying academic efforts to better understand the languages, cultures, and social organizations of colonized peoples. In that sense, area studies emerged as a "child of empire," often driven by commercial and political interests or the perceived civilizing mission of the colonial powers. The 19th century saw the establishment of colonial studies in European universities. In the United States, interdisciplinary centres for area studies first emerged after World War I, and they received a strong impulse after World War II, corresponding to the rise of the United States as a global power. A better understanding of societies in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America was seen as urgent in the context of the Cold War rivalry between competing superpowers looking for local clients and supporters, particularly in the developing world. Arguably, a similar security-driven incentive to promote the study of foreign cultures was again seen after the attacks of September 11, 2001. (Andreas Mehler and Bert Hoffmann. "Area studies." *Encyclopedia Britannica.* February 04, 2015. https://www.britannica.com/topic/area-studies. Access Date: April 10, 2019.

DECOLONIZING VS. DEIMPERIALIZING: THE CANON OF ARAB ART

This project investigates what decolonizing the study and writing of art history can look like. Indeed, how can anticolonial research exist as a central query of thought, rather than on the periphery engaging with dominant modes of representation and discourse? And understanding that knowledge production is one of the major sites in which imperialism operates and exercises its power, how can we decolonize the structural limits that currently condition knowledge production? To help unpack these problematics, I turn to Kuan-Hsing Chen's book, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. I argue that the methods of inquiry developed by Chen inform the study of Arab art within a broader scope of postcolonial and anticolonial art production. As Chen describes, decolonization is the attempt of the previously colonized to reflectively work out a historical relation with the former colonizer, involving the process of self-critique, self-rediscovery, and identity formation.[56] This decolonization of art history has been the primary focus for the majority of scholars of Arab art (e.g. Nada Shabout; Saleem Al-Baholy; Kamal Boullata; Iftikhar Dadi; Lilian Karnouk; Omar Kholeif; and Saeb Eigner), and their important contributions give visibility to artistic creation, movements, and techniques that originated from or existed in the Middle East and Islamicate regions. While canon-building and providing an overview of art from the Middle East that is defined by movements and linear history is not within the purview of my research, the histories that these scholars centre in relation to larger art historical narratives has been instrumental in how I relate diasporic art to art from the MENASA region (Middle East, North Africa, South Asia). As literary scholars Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih argue, "more often than not, minority subjects identify themselves in opposition to a dominant discourse rather than vis-à-vis

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[56] Chen, Kuan-Hsing. *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

each other and other minority groups. We study the centre and the margin but rarely examine the relationships among different margins."[57] When the relationships among different margins are ignored, there is a risk of making invisible the complex networks of cultural thriving that exist external to colonial metropoles. In other words, what is at stake when we study the centre and the margin, but rarely study the relationships between different margins, is the upholding of centre-periphery power dynamics that favour Western narratives.

Deconstructing the Western canon of art acknowledges the possibility of creating more expanded notions of what constitutes "important" art while accepting responsibility for the privileged subject position of their histories and that of their art. Canons of art are actively established and reinforced through the questions or themes historians choose to focus on, the sites or artists they study, and the methods of enquiry they employ. While critics have defined the canon as expressions of universal standards of quality, the canon itself can function as a mechanism of oppression, a guardian of privilege, and a vehicle for exclusion through which structures of class, gender, and race are hidden. As art historian Anna Brzyski argues, "it is more than curious, therefore, that despite the extensive nature of the critiques of canonicity and their wide acceptance, mainstream art history continues to embrace canonical logic in its day to day operations, research, presentation of scholarship, pedagogy, and curatorial practice."[58] With this in mind, I wonder whether decolonization is enough to deconstruct the Western canon which has become universalized, or whether periphery, histories remain addendums to a master narrative.[59] While

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[57] Lionnet, Françoise, and Shumei Shih. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. p. 2.
[58] Brzyski, A. (2007). *Partisan Canons.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. p. 2.
[59] Periphery in this context refers to secondary histories that are generally associated with the global South. Periphery histories reference the unbalanced power dynamics within historical discourse, and the increased importance placed on primary histories that are located in the centre of this paradigm, enforcing Eurocentrism and a focus on the global North.

decolonization is mainly the active work carried out by the colonized, *deimperialization* is work that must be performed by the colonizer first.[60] This includes the evaluation of the colonizer's relationship with its former colonies. Deimperialization, I argue, is the current roadblock affecting postcolonial and anticolonial scholars of the study of art history. As reflected in Brzyski's critique of the ongoing centrality of the Western canon, I contend that this self-reflection of the colonizer's writing of history has not yet taken place, which is evidenced by the preservation of the art historical canon within the academy and within museums.[61]

For a burgeoning field of study like Arab art (broadly speaking), it is important to be critical of the fact that these secondary histories are forced to engage with the Western canon in order to prove their worth and their validity. Periphery histories (in this case Middle Eastern art histories) are constantly existing in relation to the dominant (and Western) canon in order to locate themselves within linear history, but the dominant canon unfortunately is not forced to engage with the periphery, thus reifying its position in the centre.[62] An example is the exclusion of artists from Islamicate regions within key art history textbooks used in the majority of undergraduate survey

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[60] Chen, Kuan-Hsing. *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

[61] See also: Iskin, R. E. (2017). *Re-envisioning the Contemporary Art Canon: Perspectives in a Global World*. London, England:
Routledge.

[62] This is reflected in the deep art historical research that is being produced about art from the Middle East and the general-knowledge textbooks being published highlighting the region. While too numerous to list here, such books include the following: Azzawi, Dia al. *Art in Iraq Today*. Milano: Skira, 2012; Mouasher, Majida, and Kumar Jamdagni. *Modern and Contemporary Arab Art from the Levant*. 2016; Watriss, Wendy, Karin Adrian von Roques, Samer Mohdad, Claude W. Sui, and Mona Khazindar. *View from Inside: Contemporary Arab Photography, Video and Mixed Media Art*. 2014; Rogers, Sarah A., and Eline van der Vlist. *Arab Art Histories: The Khalid Shoman Collection*. Amman, Jordan: The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2013; Muller, Nat, Lindsay Moore, T.J. Demos, and Suzanne Cotter. Contemporary Art in the Middle East. London: Black Dog, 2009; Amirsadeghi, Hossein, Salwa Mikdadi, and Nada M. Shabout. *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*. London: TransGlobe, 2012; Boullata, Kamal, and John Berger. *Palestinian Art 1850-2005*. London: Saqi, 2009.

classes. While some books like Gardner's *Art Through the Ages* has tried taking a more global approach to the study of art, wide-ranging gaps and exclusions continue to exist (for instance, the scholars of modern Arab art who are working with great rigor to include Arab histories within the dominant history of modern art movements.[63]) Cultural theorists Peggy Levitt and Markella Rutherford state the following in their study of the most recent general-knowledge art history publications:

> 306 modern artists were catalogued. Of these, 261 (85%) are Western and 45 (15%) are Non-Western. The Non-Western artists are from Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Disagreements among editors about the importance of individual Non-Western modern and contemporary artists remains high, with only 4 artists (9%) appearing in more than one textbook sampled for the period. In contrast, for Western artists, there is an even higher degree of editorial convergence, with 54% of artists included in this period appearing in more than one textbook. This means that Western modern artists are 7 times more likely than Non-Western modern artists to be recognized across multiple recent art history textbooks.[64]

Importantly, according to Levitt and Rutherford's data, world-famous New York-based Iranian artist Shirin Neshat appeared a total of three times in the published textbooks that comprise the art history pedagogical canon, and she was the only Islamicate visual artist to be included in these textbooks.[65] What becomes clear is that in order to create legibility to art histories that fall outside of the linear history of the Western canon, Arab art movements are often compared to the modern and contemporary art as accepted and understood in the West. This creates incompatibilities and forces the history of Arab art to somehow mirror Western art movements in order to be legible, and

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[63] Karnouk, Liliane. *Modern Egyptian Art 1910-2003*. Cairo: American Univ. in Cairo Press, 2005; Kholeif, Omar, and Candy Stobbs. *Imperfect Chronology: Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary: Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation*. 2016; Shabout, Nada M. *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007.

[64] From a public lecture at the 107th College Art Association in Los Angeles, February 2018. Presentation by Peggy Levitt titled "Move Over Mona Lisa: Just How Global Is Art History?"

[65] This data was presented in a public lecture at the 107th College Art Association congress in Los Angeles, February 2018. Presentation by Peggy Levitt titled "Move Over Mona Lisa: Just How Global Is Art History?"

to be recognizable within the academy and as art worth studying within the already defined parameters of "good art." While the writing of this alternative history is important and necessary, the canon here remains intact because of the compulsory association the Global South needs to have with the Global North. As feminist art historian Aruna D'Souza states,

> as art historians committed to a true reimagining of the field in which we work, we must be willing to attend to the ways in which art history is spoken differently. That is to say, we must be attendant to both the exportation of our discipline to other sites of art history as well as to the importation of methods emerging from the study of the non-Western or those areas marginalized by the discipline up to now to our analyses of Western art.[66]

What is lacking in the binary model of global vs. the local is an awareness and recognition of the creative interventions that networks of minoritized cultures produce within and across national boundaries, that is, the micropractices of transnationalism.[67] This is where the process of deimperialization is urgent within the study of art history in order to avoid an uncritical importation of minoritized culture. This deimperialization has the power to dismantle the absoluteness of the canon and open up alternatives for other histories to exist, engage with, and inform one another in a productive fashion. In this project I engage in such deimperialism to bring into dialogue the histories of same-sex desire in the Middle East with the study of diasporic art production, centering the processes of imperialism and how they have affected the ways in which gender and sexuality is depicted and actualized. This is a grand task, but one that must be taken up in order for critiques of colonialism to be at the forefront of the writing of history, and for postcolonial projects within art history to be spotlighted and engaged with productively.

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[66] D'Sousa, Aruna. "Introduction" in Casid, Jill H., and Aruna D'Souza. *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*. New Haven: Yale University Press (distributor), 2014. p. xviii.
[67] Lionnet, Françoise, and Shumei Shih. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. p. 7.

DEIMPERIALIZING THE STUDY OF ARAB ART

Deimperialization can happen in different ways. In *Asia as Method* Chen suggests using other cities and countries within Asia as reference points to one another, rather than the mandatory reference and comparison to the West. Changing the frame of reference from being Western theoretical propositions to be more locally relevant theoretical concerns can disassemble the Euro-American universalist contention that Stuart Hall calls "the West and the rest." This allows for the possibility of an inter-Arab referencing system in which Modern art from different regions in the Middle East would be compared to one another in a way that connects their shared histories of colonialism and imperialism, providing locally relevant contexts to better inform modern art production in the Middle East. Again, with the canon and history of Modern Arab Art being outside the purview of my own study, I use this inter-Arab method as a part of my decolonial methodology that informs my research and is theorized within my use of the *Islamicate*. I expand on this method in the dissertation's conclusion to develop my emerging theory, *queering locally,* and I use a local-local framework that links different Islamicate histories, regions, and diasporas within a south-south relationality. This south-south relationality is the very thing that makes the inter-Arab referencing system a worthwhile framework, for it expands the possibilities of understanding periphery histories in a way that does not centre Eurocentric understandings of art, geography, and sexuality. This inter-Arab method proves helpful in framing postcolonial tactics of representation with other nations' strategies of identity formation and independence. This way, Arab art takes on more powerful resonances that relate heavily to postcolonialism, national identity, and the construction of autonomous Arab subjectivity.

Just as modern Egyptian artists such as Mahmoud Mukhtar leading a neo-Pharaonism movement in the early 1900s, or similarly Ragheb Ayad and Muhammad Nagui being associated

with the Egyptian Awakening (also known as Egypt's Renaissance or *Nahdat Misr*),[68] so too did modern artists in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Sudan revert to their historical roots for artistic inspiration as a way of forging a new cultural identity in the periods after colonialism. As art historian Nada Shabout deftly outlines, art societies, salons, and educational institutions were established during colonial occupation to support a new artistic tradition that moved away from traditional Islamic art that was regarded as craft, and structurally worked to legitimize the culture and lessons of the new colonial powers. As early as 1851, various Société des Beaux-Arts were founded in Algiers, for instance, with membership restricted to artists of French origin. Museums were established to exhibit Orientalist art, and the École des Beaux-Arts was eventually opened by the French authorities to prepare students for admission to similar schools in Paris. Arab artists, however, were generally excluded from this institutionalized and hierarchical structure that worked as an apparatus of colonial rule.[69] Thus, when the first generation of modernist Algerian painters appeared on the scene between 1914 and 1928, they were mainly self-taught artists who had made the transition to easel painting and whose work exhibited a strong Orientalist influence in both style and content.[70] As other scholars have outlined, this process of decolonization is what led to the birth of Arab modern art, and leads to individual nations' self-discovery and returning to their roots, and self-fashioning of an artistic expression that is socially and locally relevant to the population.[71] This focus and re-writing of history is necessary as it introduces new movements to the art historical

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[68] Mukhtar subscribed to the *'Nahda'* ideal of an Egyptian cultural and national renaissance. The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922 occurred just as Egypt was granted a form of political independence and fed the pharaonist iconography that was important in the nationalist movement. For further reading, see *'Between the Palace and the Street: Mahmoud Mukhtar and the Fate of Egyptian Art Today*' by Sam Bardaouil (Huffington Post, 29 March 2011).

[69] Nada Shabout, *Modern Arab Art*, p. 18.

[70] For recent scholarship, see: Lenssen, Anneka, Sarah A. Rogers, and Nada M. Shabout. *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents*. 2018; and Bardaouil, Sam, and Till Fellrath. *Art Et Liberté: Rupture, War, and Surrealism in Egypt (1938-1948)*. 2016.

[71] Saeb Eigner (*Art of the Middle East,* 2010) and Nada Shabout (*Modern Arab Art,* 2007).

canon, and it challenges previously accepted historical narratives. In this way, the aesthetic comparison of Modern art from Syria to that of New York or Paris creates a reductively linear narrative that proves unproductive. This forced linear narrative and point of comparison becomes a stumbling block that unravels the history of modern Arab art to being derivative, lacking, and years behind that of Western modern art. What has prevented the admission of the integral role played by minority cultures during colonial rule is the politics of recognition, and the oftentimes reductive adherence to a binary North/South, dominant/resistant model of culture.[72] Accordingly, Euro-American theory is simply unhelpful in our attempts to understand these conditions and practices born out of colonization and cultural subjugation. There is something wrong, and arguably violent, with the academy's frame of reference.[73] Developing Chen's idea of *Asia as method* for these purposes would require an open-ended imagination in localizing certain practices in relation to diasporic subjectivity. Throughout this dissertation I implement decolonial methods like the *Islamicate*, *queering locally*, and *horizontal art histories* as a way of developing locally relevant ways of being, creating, and seeing within a transnational and global context.

MODERNIZING ARABS: MODERN ART, MODERNITY, AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Ultimately, at a time when Modern art in the Middle East was defined by a period of self-discovery, patriotism and nationalism following colonial encounters and liberation, a Western sexuality script became normalized. During this period of ascribing to Modernity in all facets of society, the exacting terms of Victorian homosexuality and queerness, the fixity of gender binaries, and the

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[72] Lionnet, Françoise, and Shumei Shih. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. p. 8.
[73] Chen, Kuan-Hsing. *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. p. 226.

rigid codes governing masculinity and femininity became engrained within modern Middle Eastern society. As scholars have demonstrated the import of these sexual codes through colonialism, I would like to stress that these codes were normalized in the early twentieth century in the same temporal period of Modernity. These new Victorian gender and sexual norms were a direct aftermath of imperialism and took place during a vital cultural moment of heritage formation and a re-discovery of Arab identity. The new identities— both sexual and national— forged during this period are a part of the Arab enlightenment *(Nahda)*, a beginning of Arab modernity *(Hadatha)*, and created the nucleus for the postcolonial Modern art that quickly followed. In this way, Modernity in the Middle East and the sexual identities that ensued cannot be understood as a universal narrative of progress and innovation, and instead needs to be understood as a Western ideological project imposed by colonialism that resulted in drastic changes in sexual identity, cultural production, and the very nationalism that forged a nation as modern.

Just as the modern artists in Egypt, Syria Iraq, and Lebanon, among others, were faced with the impossible task of forging a new identity after their countries achieved independence, contemporary Arab artists working in the diaspora too are demystifying the identities associated with homosocial and same-sex histories in the Middle East. While I am not arguing for conflating the modern and the contemporary decolonization as being the same, nor seeking to ignore the different aesthetic practices of both periods, I contend that linking the postcolonial and anti-imperial aspects of Modern Arab art (a field currently being discovered, written about, and driving its way into the academy) to the political work of contemporary Arab artists in the diaspora has the potential to keep social histories and identity formation at the core of anti-canonical art production. In uncovering these histories and links, there emerges a larger network of cultural organization that the totalizing Western canon cannot choose to ignore. *This process, I argue, will be a step in de-*

imperializing the Western art historical canon, and will bring histories of Western imperialism and colonialism into forced dialogue with postcolonial critiques and decolonizing practices.

Methodologically speaking, Arabs have been left out of the discourses of both art and the history of sexuality in very similar ways. Linking the studies of visual cultures to that of sexuality studies opens up new possibilities within postcolonial theory. Visual analyses of Arab artists and those focusing on issues of sexuality and same-sex desire illuminate the ways in which local instances of homosociality cite traditional sexuality scripts within contemporary Middle Eastern art and its diaspora, while rejecting the Western queer identity narrative that becomes exclusionary in non-Western contexts. These visual forms provide significant examples of how local networks of identity are transmitted through visual language and how alternative sexuality scripts are written. In this way, linking the problematic of contemporary Arab art and aesthetics to a broader history of politics and representation will help create discourse on art from the Middle East more broadly, and I contend, more productively.

While the scope of this project does not include re-working the very foundation of Arab art, its aesthetics, and its history, I am interested in the ways in which these histories affect the understanding of contemporary art from and relating to the Middle East. Racial biases within visual culture, as outlined in Chapter One, *Trauma and the Single Narrative: Reading Arab Art and Photography*, is not only problematic solely due to the poor contemporary representations of the Middle East in the media, but is multifariously informed by the ways in which these images are positioned within a wider history. Both narratives of the Middle East being associated with a singular narrative of war/trauma, or Arab art historically being unmodern and deficient has baggage in the very value that is associated with Middle Eastern history and Arab subjects today. This historic dismissal of value and worth plays a role in informing the inherent associations of Arab art and conflict, and with images that posit Arabs as being perpetually unable to reach modernity,

productivity, and peace. As will be made clear in Chapter One, the narrative of war and trauma in relation to the Middle East is problematic because this relationship affects the ways in which all visual art from or about the region is understood. Notwithstanding the problematics of creating a spectacle of trauma in the Middle East that is only seen from a distance in the comfort zone, the legacy of trauma imagery from the conflict zone informs the ways in which Arab artists exist within wider visual culture today.

HORIZONTAL ART HISTORIES/HORIZONTAL QUEER THEORIES

A global-to-local method of analyzing gay and/or queer culture in the Middle East presupposes that "good" values from the global North, like gay pride, trickle down and become adopted by the global South. This vertical line of thinking presupposes a hierarchy of values and an order of principles that further creates centre-periphery binaries. Art historian Piotr Piotrowski theorizes this vertical paradigm, and he reasons that "the center provides canons, hierarchy of values, and stylistic norms – it is the role of the periphery to adopt them in a process of reception."[74] While Piotrowski speaks of art historical models relating to dominance and canons, I contend that studying queer theory under Piotrowski's lens of dismantling the vertical discourses that create and order centre-peripheries can allow us to more aptly bring into perspective the histories of sexualities left in the margins. In sketching the basic principles of what a horizontal art history looks like, Piotrowski states the following:

> A horizontal art history should begin with the deconstruction of vertical art history, that is, the history of Western art. A critical analysis should reveal the speaking subject: who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom? This is not to cancel Western art history, but to

[74] Piotrowski, Piotr. "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, Vol 1. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. Berlin: Germany, 2009. p. 51.

> call this type of narrative by its proper name, precisely as a "Western" narrative. In other words, I aim to separate two concepts which have usually been merged: the concept of Western modern art and the concept of universal art. Western art history can thus be relativized and placed next to other art historical narratives – in accordance with the horizontal paradigm. The consequence of such a move will be a reversal of the traditional view of the relationship between the art history of the margins and that of [Western] art history.[75]

In this vein of thought, horizontal queer theories would function in a similar fashion. A horizontal queer theory should deconstruct the supposed authenticity and assumed stability of Western gay identity. In my interdisciplinary study of art history, queer theory, and critical race theory, asking these same questions (who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom) reveals the power dynamics at play in the history of sexuality while simultaneously interrogating racial and gender discourses within the history of representation. Removing universality from Western theories and tenets seems to be the primary goal of Piotrowski, and other scholars have also sought to provincialize Europe in the same way.[76] The value of such horizontal methods within this dissertation is its interdisciplinarity and potential to dismantle multiple sites of authenticity that relativizes Western theory simultaneously in multiple disciplines. I inform these ideas with scholarship on the creolization of theory, a way of producing knowledge that encourages us to see historical, social, political, and cultural issues as forming part of a creolized system of knowledge.[77] I employ

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[75] Piotrowski, Piotr. "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, Vol 1. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. Berlin: Germany, 2009. p. 54.

[76] My use of the term "provincialize" in this sense borrows from Dipesh Chakravarty's influential monograph *Provincializing Europe*. (Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). For more specific reading on art historians engaging in this line of study, see: Iftikhar Dadi, Ming Tiampo, Anna Brzyski, Hans Belting, Pheng Cheah, Sonal Khullar, Walter Mignolo, John Onians, Reiko Tomii, Wilfred Van Damme, and Kitty Zijlmans.

[77] Shih and Lionnet define creolization as a theoretical and analytical rubric that describes the development of a reciprocal, relational, and intersectional critical approach attentive to the legacies of colonialism. Lionnet, Françoise, and Shu-mei Shih. *The Creolization of Theory*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2011.

horizontal methods to queer theory while focusing on diasporic Middle Eastern artists in North America by deconstructing the universality of what it means to be both diasporic and queer, and use horizontal methods to art history where I decentre the traditional Western narrative. This methodology plays a role in relativizing canonical understandings of art production and instead places queer diasporic art production in relation to the wider discipline of art history. Even though I do not research Middle Eastern artists still living in the Middle East within the scope of this study, I localize knowledge without looking at local discourses in the Middle East or specific nation-state units by historically locating the ways in which queer diasporic subjectivity is tied to being racialized subjects in North America. Therefore, this research is less concerned with micro-discourses in specific locales, and instead I investigate how diasporic artists explore the "local" in their artistic expressions by articulating aspects of their Islamicate cultural heritage in North America. This deep attention to historical ways of being plays a corollary relationship to the ways in which I explore queer diasporic imaginaries within North America and bring to the fore local understandings of queer subjectivities from uncovering histories of sexuality in the Middle East.

SHIFTING METHODS: QUEERING ART HISTORY TO UNCOVER COLONIALISM AND EMPIRE

The methodology I propose is important for the discipline because of the strategic, and I contend necessary, linking of the history of sexuality to that of art. This much-needed intervention will advance the study of colonialism and give it a seat at the table of art historical discourses, and clarify the manifestation and effects Western modernity had on the gender and sexual norms of the greater Ottoman Empire, and today's Middle East and central Eurasia. The "queering" of art history to bring dialogue between visual culture studies and gay studies is not a new concept, and has been

theorized by art historians such as Amelia Jones, Richard Meyer, and Jennifer Doyle.[78] Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer's edited volume *Art and Queer Culture*, one of the few comprehensive surveys dedicated to the rich visual legacy of art's relationship to queer culture, is a notable example. In a noble effort to anthologize queer artists from around the world, Lord and Meyer attempted to destabilize the art historical canon by informing it with queer artists left outside the walls of representation. What is unfortunately not destabilized are the assumptions made about sexuality itself, and the expectation that homosexualities and same-sex desires look the same everywhere in the world. This assumption re-creates a Euro-Americanization of queerness as the centre and forces queer artists of colour from the global South to be, once again, restricted to the periphery. Queer artists of colour located outside of normative conceptions of queer subjectivity become whitewashed, or Europeanized, into a gay history that is not culturally specific and ignores the complexities of queer relationalities that exist outside the Western paradigm.

It is here that I find value in changing our basic assumptions and research questions to focus on the history of colonialism in regards to the Middle Eastern diaspora, and how they become queer subjects. I find it necessary to study a history of art that includes a history of sexuality within its disciplinary strictures and avoid only studying the history of art *or* the history of sexuality as though visual culture were not related to the depiction, creation and formation of sexual ways of being. Creating interdisciplinary research that contributes to each respective field has the potential of uncovering colonial histories that were made invisible by the Eurocentric hangovers within each discipline, bypassing epistemologies that once left the colonial matrix of power and imperialism as irrelevant to the construction of dominant canons.

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[78] Please see: Lord, Catherine, and Richard Meyer. *Art & Queer Culture*. London: Phaidon, 2013; and Jones, Amelia, and Erin Silver. *Otherwise: Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*. Manchester University Press, 2016.

To help rectify the issues posed in this introduction, I have suggested that changing the starting point of our research—to be a history of visual cultures' engagement with colonialism and imperial domination in the Middle East rather than a singular history of art—will be a productive methodological shift. In doing so, anti-colonial art production will shift to the core of the discussion, but the history of art then *must* contend with wider disciplinary concerns, including histories of gender and sexuality. This decentering of Western knowledges in an interdisciplinary fashion will help Arab art histories grow as a discipline, while removing them from their silo of the academy. The history of colonialism in visual culture helps to bridge the necessary gaps between the history of representation and the impacts this has had on local populations. As scholars such as Ali Behdadi and Luke Gartlan are re-writing the history of photography to show how the Middle East has been part of the development of the photographic medium since its conception—rather than being a solely British or French phenomenon later taken up by the rest of the world—so too does the representation of gender and sexual discourses require close re-evaluations. As photography was developing in the Middle East at the turn of the century, both by local practitioners and by orientalist travelers, the women photographed in haram-settings and the young boys dressed in flowers and nearly nude must be theorized as being a part of, and contributing to, the history of photography, rather than solely being a part of the history of sexuality or vice versa. This is one of the disciplinary failings of the academy, the canons it upholds, and the structures it maintains. In separating the history of sexuality from the history of art, and in this case photography, the application of photography as a tool used to colonize local sexual scripts in the Middle East is ignored, obscuring its role in being part of the Europeanizing mission of Western modernity. The necessary linking of the history of sexuality to the history of art is an urgent intervention that will help the study of colonialism be apparent in the inner working of art historical

writing, and the manifestation and effects Western modernity has had on the gender and sexual norms of Arab peoples. Here, I contend that changing our basic assumptions and research questions to focus on the histories of colonial encounters rather than the history of art from a strictly aesthetic sense or solely the history of sexuality will contribute to both fields while uncovering histories that were made invisible.

Recent studies linking the study of Arab sexualities and visual culture show that there is a need for this juncture; however, there is still much to be explored. Literary scholar Joseph Boone's study *Homoerotics of Orientalism*, for instance, maps out a history of homoerotic orientalism—in literature, poetry, visual arts, travel journals—that includes contemporary hangovers of orientalism. The study is noteworthy for its art historical focus, linking the history of representation contrapuntally in relation to sexual narratives in literary, legal and religious texts. Boone locates the fissures in Orientalist representation, including positive depictions of the Orient within European artworks, homoerotic Occidentalism present within Middle Eastern artworks, and various instances of sexual diversity in both sets of works. Likewise, Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan's edited collection *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, explores similar themes. Luke Gartlan's chapter in particular, *Dandies on the Pyramid*, explores the medium's relationship to masculinity and examines the significance of outdoor photographs and photography itself as being productive and expressive of male bonding within the traveler-artist circle. He argues for the centrality of same-sex intimacy in the travels of Orientalist artists and photographers, and Gartlan insists that the photographic sessions facilitated the performance of homosocial desire for Europeans traveling to the Middle East. On an individual level, these two studies linking queer studies, postcolonial theory and the study of visual culture offer a revisionist approach to Eurocentric writings of art history, and the creation of the photographic medium. The contributions that studying histories of visual culture of sexuality will have on postcolonial theory

and vice versa is seen in the fissures and ruptures created in the normative historiography of both the history of art and the history of sexuality.

SCOPE, PARAMETERS, AND LIMITS OF RESEARCH

The study of how homocolonialism exists within and functions through visual culture is necessary. I contend that visual culture is a primary vehicle for homocolonial discourses (be it through historical homo-orientalist paintings, homoerotic archival photography, or more recent propagandistic and racist visual imagery), and the connection between homocolonialism, orientalism, and the imperialist production of visual culture is necessary. This includes how homocolonial and homoerotic orientalist discourses are embedded within the history of photography and other orientalist artforms, and not simply a fringe narrative of the field. The history of photography is so closely related to the Middle East and the representation of Arab people—Luke Gartland, Ali Behdad, Joseph Boone, Christopher Pinny and other scholars outline how the region was the principle training grounds for early photography—that an intersectional study of European encounters in the Middle East must take place between the history of visual culture, the study of empire, and the history of sexuality.

Current literature on Middle Eastern homosexuality is largely historic in scope and focuses on the study of pre-Modern sexual desire based on European travel journals, Arab-Islamic literature and poetry, and archival visual material. These historic records are important even for contemporary scholars of sexuality as they map a shift in sexual discourses in the Middle East, discourses that are closely related to colonialism and increased contact with the West. Early fifteenth to nineteenth century pre-Modern archival records from the Middle East are the centre of interpretation for most contemporary scholars on the subject in order to piece together different

sexual scripts within a given geographic and temporal period. Using such archival records, authors locate the production of Arab sexual discourse by illustrating both the official gender norms condoned by the state (such as those governed by medical, legal and religious writing), and the unofficial, often radically different ways sexual desire was manifested and understood in society (through visual arts in addition to literature and poetry).[79] Methodologically, my project focuses on visual analyses of contemporary artwork and finds their resonances with the archival studies of eighteenth and nineteenth century pre-Modern Arab same-sex desire. Extensive archival research already exists, and my research will use these studies as a base to inform my analyses.

The parameters of my study are not geographically-based; rather, contemporary artists were chosen based on the artworks they produced and their wider artistic practice. In using terminology like *Islamicate* as a way of encompassing broader geographic regions in the Middle East, I do not delimit my project to the study of only Islamic art, Arab artists, or the common conflation of the two. Instead, my project encompasses artists who produce visual art pertaining to gender and sexual identity, and their artworks are the site of analysis. Diasporic artists living in North America were selected not based on location of origin, but based on their artwork contributing to a better understanding of homoerotic visual culture in the Middle East. From there, the historic archival studies of gender and sexuality done by other scholars informs the patterns, similarities, and histories of colonialism and the resemblances of contact zones in different regions. This means that while 2Fik, for instance, is a Moroccan artist, the project will not lay claim to studying Morocco or Maghrebi visual art. Rather, 2Fik's artwork will speak to the wider history of art production in the Middle Eastern diaspora with the analysis of gender and sexuality being at the forefront. This

[79] Including El-Rouayheb, 2005; Ze'evi, 2006; Massad, 2002; Najmabadi, 2005; Gartlan, 2013; Boone, 2015; Babayan, 2008; Rowson, 2002; Habib, 2010.

project not only advances research by introducing new dimensions to issues of visual representation through homocolonial discourses, but this research also introduces an interdisciplinary theorization to diasporic Middle Eastern contemporary art that will help to better understand the human rights issues surrounding sexual identity and resistance art production.

The examination of contemporary artists alongside these historic studies contributes to the growing literature on gender discourse and pre-modern Islamicate sexual desire. These historic archives are necessary starting points for they help investigate the modernist production of heterosexuality through the screen of gender, and its reconceptualization of the gender norms prior to increased contact with Europe in the sixteenth century. Using these archival materials, I will contribute to the mapping of homoerotic figures in pre-modern Persia, much of the Ottoman Empire, and other Islamicate regions by linking their histories to colonialism and sites of European encounter. This historic record of desire is instrumental in locating contemporary notions of sexual discourse in the Middle East and the causal relationship historic sexuality discourses have on contemporary understandings of sexuality, and how this history affects those currently living in the diaspora.

THESIS STRUCTURE: HISTORIES OF ART, SEXUALITY, AND COLONIALISM

To develop these concerns, this research is informed by methods of global art histories, notions of 'worlding', and the praxis of postcolonial theories. This dissertation will chart this journey in five main chapters. Chapter One, *Trauma and the Single Narrative: Reading Arab Art and Photography*, investigates the major methodological issues faced in the making of Arab art and photography and their relationship to understanding the ways in which conflict is photographed. I investigate the intersection of Middle Eastern art histories and their relationship to colonialism as

a way of discussing new challenges in the study of contemporary art and photography. Focusing on the ubiquitous single narrative of war and trauma that is associated with the Middle East, I explore racial issues that hinder the full reading of Middle Eastern photography. Using Middle Eastern contemporary art as the focus of my analysis, I analyze the ways in which viewers of Arab photography are conditioned to expect certain narratives or visual imagery. This in turn affects the making of art itself as Arab artists are conditioned to produce photography that is aesthetically similar to pervasive trauma and war photography in order to be viable in the international art market. In examining such pressing methodological concerns about the process of both producing and interpreting Arab photography, I aim to investigate the relationship between abundant trauma photographs of popular culture and their impact on the production of photographic art in the Middle East. This chapter nuances Middle Eastern photography research and postcolonial studies by exploring the place of race and colonialism in terms of the recording and writing of art histories. Bridging links between the technology of media saturation plaguing the Middle East and the photography being produced by Arab artists, this analysis provides reflection and new perspectives on methodological approaches that are attentive to both the process of creating Middle Eastern art and the process of interpreting photography in transnational contexts.

Ultimately, Chapter One outlines the dangers of the single narrative, the history of focusing on the racialized artist's biography within art history, and how this ultimately leads to what I call the *single-narrative biography*, a lens of analysis which limits and reduces the full understanding of art produced by artists of colour. I contend that before we read queer images, we need to understand the dimensions and the ways in which viewers read trauma. Queer analysis disrupts the single-narrative biography in interesting ways, for it opens up new ways of being, imagines Arab futurity in powerful dialogues with queer futurity, and complicates the ways in which trauma is

represented.[80] Queer identities are often left outside of this single-narrative biography which reinforces the binaries of queer identity being rejected in the Middle East, and is a marker of modernity and progress that is associated with Western artists. While queer identity is increasingly becoming part of the single-narrative biography for racialized artists, we must bring visibility to the ways in which historical analysis can limit the reading of full, nuanced lives and the multiplicities of experiences within Arab art production.

Chapter Two, *Decolonial Methodologies: The Islamicate as Framework,* is about the methodologies used within my research, and provides language and frameworks in order to theorize the complex ways in which geography influences the study of Islamic art. This chapter investigates transnationalism within global narratives of 'worlding' and finds praxis for this method of inquiry within art historical research and museum exhibitions. While studies of globalization and diaspora have challenged the authority of nation-state identities and rigid cultural categorization, art histories are still written through centre-periphery models that maintain Euro-American exceptionalism. How can we engage with intercultural and transnational encounters and write productive global art histories in order to dismantle the centre-periphery binary that maintains such colonial structures? Globalizing and decentring histories can be more integrative and incorporate meaningfully the histories of multiple locales in order to examine how they converse and engage

[80] Futurity is defined as being the concept of subjugated citizens dreaming the possibilities of a future that is different from their present. This idea of dreaming of a better future holds power in its capacity to voice current social injustices and current oppressive conditions, but also in the liberation of imagining what futures look like outside of the repressive present condition. Influenced by José Esteban Muñoz's book *Cruising Utopia,* I borrow from the concept that the political LGBTQI agenda has been stifled by a narrow-minded focus on the present, which can be short-sighted and assimilationist. Muñoz contends that queerness is instead a futurity bound phenomenon, a "not yet here" that critically engages pragmatic presentism. Powerfully, Muñoz argues that the present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations (p. 27). See: Muñoz, José E. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

with each other in terms of their own relationships to power and representation. I wish to examine these issues by introducing what I contend is a useful art historical framework, the *Islamicate,* as a case study to reassess seemingly fixed nation-state borders and to reconsider the mobility of art history. I use the notion of the Islamicate to critique epistemologies of knowledge production and dissemination within museums; it is meant to be one instance where 'worlding' art history can be put into praxis, and methodologies of global art histories can be theorized in a more practical application of exhibition making and art historical research. This chapter in particular provides an important methodology that is used throughout the dissertation as it explains in depth the ways in which terms such as Islamic, Middle Eastern, and Arab are used within this research, as well as the reasons why it is important to re-imagine geographic borders when conducting such interdisciplinary and postcolonial research.

Culminating in a visual analysis of Syrian-American artist Jamil Hellu, Chapter Three, *An Alternative History of Sexuality: Diaspora Consciousness and the Queer Diasporic Lens* acts as a literature review that provides historical context to colonial discourses within the history of sexuality in the Middle East. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* created a pitfall for scholars of Middle Eastern sexual discourses, and seeks alternative methodologies of postcolonial and antiracist research in gender studies. These issues involve Foucault's relegation of pre-modern Islamicate homosociality and same-sex desire as being a distant historical phenomenon, the minimization of colonial power within the analysis of pre-modern sexual discourses, and the reductive distinction made between sexual identities (West) and sexual acts (East), all of which work to flatten entire complex networks of desire and homosocial cultural attitudes. What is needed, I contend, is an alternative history of sexuality, one with a more complex understanding of colonial discourses and their influences and impact on gender, sexuality, and all cultural and legal texts governing Islamicate bodies. Importantly, the analysis within this

chapter is meant to challenge the Eurocentrism of dominant queer theory and gay scholarship by focusing on alternative sexual discourses that are not reducible to hegemonic Euro-American notions of gay identity.

Chapter Four, *Queering Archives of Photography: Linking a Colonial History to a Diasporic Present*, historicizes same-sex desire in the Middle East, across North Africa, and the regions formerly a part of the Ottoman Empire to better investigate Middle Eastern contemporary art and its relationship to gender colonial discourses that had an impact on same-sex desire. I begin by historicizing European and colonial encounters in the Middle East at the turn of the nineteenth century, illustrating the effect Victorian sensibilities had on pre-modern homosociality and same-sex desire in the Middle East. This history of changing sexual discourse is later illustrated through European colonial photographs in the Middle East that depict homoeroticism, primarily focusing on European travelers who photographed local young men. I analyze the aesthetics of these photographic archives in relation to contemporary drawings by Iranian artist Ebrin Bagheri as a way of investigating the modernist production of heterosexuality and the erasure of local gender norms. In analyzing the art of a queer diasporic subject, I focus on the ways in which Bagheri's contemporary drawings bring together traces of pre-modern same-sex desire in order to elucidate that the colonial hangovers of the colonized local sexual scripts are still alive, and deeply embedded within diaspora consciousness. My analysis of historic colonial encounters in relation to contemporary diasporic art becomes another logic used to challenge area studies scholarship, which remains too nation-centric, and simultaneously it challenges the homogeneity of "global gay identity" by addressing how colonial encounters have been transformed and negotiated in local sites.

As a way of exploring themes of historical and colonial Modernity in more detail, Chapter Five, *Coming Out à l'Oriental: Diasporic Art and Colonial Wounds*, analyzes the work of

Moroccan artist 2Fik (Toufique). Using performance and photography as his primary modes of art production, 2Fik invents multifaceted characters that transform and translate different aspects of his cultural and sexual identity, performing each character in complex narratives within his photography. His performance art becomes an integral and inseparable part of his photography, for these characters provide a level of depth in investigating the process of cultural transformation, which allow him to navigate geographic borders, geopolitics, and decolonial aesthetics. In this chapter, I analyze 2Fik's performative photography in order to illustrate the complexities of Islamicate sexualities within the diaspora. I use the visual art of 2Fik as a case study to investigate the historical links that contemporary queer diasporic identities have to modernity and Western imperialism. To do so, I begin by outlining different epistemologies of coming out as a way of showcasing the particularities of transnational queer identity, and in this case, *coming out à l'oriental*. Next, I turn to modern art to question the ways in which pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts colonized by modernity might still exist within diasporic subjects today. Then, I analyze the fictional characters that 2Fik has created within his artistic practice as a way of establishing tensions between different dichotomies within his own diasporic identity: East and West, traditional versus modern subjectivity, and transnationalism versus hybridity. Throughout this discussion I draw links between settler colonialism and its intersection with the queer diaspora. Issues of Modernity and progress in Canada (as well as the Euro-American context) are intrinsically tied to queer rights, liberal tolerance, and how they uphold whiteness and naturalize settler colonialism. This discussion illustrates the various ways contemporary art can be used to queer kinship models as well as the ways in which queer identity can nuance theories of transnationalism and diaspora, especially the different ways sexuality is performed in transnational contexts. I contend that queer contemporary Arab artists can be seen as a necessary link that bridge art history and modernity to contemporary queer identity.

I conclude this project by creating praxis, links, and connections between critical race theory, gender analysis, and diaspora theory with museum studies and the writing of art history. While theories of diaspora consciousness will be explored within each chapter, I will conclude by focusing on the conscious and subconscious ways that the diaspora holds historical ways of being within their own queer subjectivity. Through these chapters I aim to address the following concerns: by reimagining geography, what does decolonizing the study and writing of art history look like? What does it mean to conduct research on the global contemporary with special attention to spatial problems on a large scale? How can macro studies of global art histories and world art studies be productively theorized alongside micro studies of specific locales? Where does the study of diaspora fit within world art studies? How might methods of entangled geographies—that is, locales connected historically by empire, imperialism and colonialism—speak productively to themes of transnational connections and diaspora? Ultimately, how can geography be theorized and examined within contemporary art both regionally and globally while avoiding the rigid nation-state epistemologies of area studies? In such a way, global history is used as an analytic device, writing a history that traces specific interactions and patterns of exchange, centering periphery geographies and no longer theorizing them only in the limited purview of the nation-state. I contend that gender and sexuality is a necessary component to understanding the ways in which race and culture are visualized and depicted within art. Locating sexuality discourses at the centre of our debates on visual culture creates a paradigm shift in which methodologies traditional to visual art and art history become displaced, and histories of colonialism and imperialism can more productively be brought to the fore.

The overall goal of my work is to examine how the artworks of the aforementioned artists exemplify networks of communication that are different from the global-to-local homocolonial

imposition of gay identity that is the focus of most contemporary literature on the topic. Arguing instead that Middle Eastern diasporic subjects create an alternative coming-out narrative and identity script to the inscribed Western models, the aim is to see the ways in which local instances of homosociality cite pre-modern sexuality scripts within contemporary Middle Eastern art and its diaspora and reject the Western queer identity narrative that becomes exclusionary in non-Western contexts. There is an incompatibility with how diasporic subjects are socialized to become queer subjects in the West and the conflicting, often contradictory, values and understandings of their own sexual desires from a cultural perspective. These selected artists provide significant examples of how local networks of identity are transmitted through visual language and how alternative sexuality scripts can be written.

CHAPTER ONE

TRAUMA AND THE SINGLE NARRATIVE: READING ARAB ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

In this chapter, I outline the dangers of the single narrative, the tradition of focusing on the artist's biography within art history, and how this ultimately leads to what I call the *single-narrative biography*, a lens of analysis which limits and reduces the full understanding of art produced by artists of colour. A critique of the *single-narrative biography* is done by exploring documentary photography, its aesthetics, and its impact on Arab photography more broadly. I investigate the major methodological issues faced in the making of Arab art and photography, and their relationship to understanding the ways in which conflict is photographed. Focusing on the ubiquitous single narrative of war and trauma that is associated with the Middle East, I investigate racial issues that hinder the full reading of Middle Eastern art and photography. Throughout this chapter, I will explore the single narrative using Middle Eastern contemporary art as the focus of my analysis; I analyze the ways in which viewers of Arab photography are conditioned to expect certain narratives or visual imagery. This association between conflict and the Middle East affects the making of art itself, as Arab artists are conditioned to produce photography that is aesthetically similar to pervasive trauma and war photography in order to be viable in the international art market. In examining such pressing methodological concerns about the process of both producing and interpreting Arab photography, I aim to investigate the relationship between abundant trauma photographs of popular culture and their impact on the production of contemporary art in the Middle East.

What does trauma and the ways audiences interpret images have to do with queer desire in the Middle East, and how does this effect the interpretation of queer imagery? I contend that before we read queer images, we need to shift our understanding of the dimensions and the ways in which viewers read trauma. Queer analysis disrupts the single-narrative biography in interesting ways, for it opens up new manners of being, imagines Arab futurity in powerful dialogues with queer futurity, and complicates how trauma is represented. Queer identities are often left outside of this single-narrative biography which reinforces the binaries of queer identity being rejected in the Middle East, and is a marker of modernity and progress that is associated with Western artists. While queer identity is increasingly becoming a facet of the single-narrative biography for artists of colour, it is important to make visible the ways in which historical analysis can limit the reading of full, nuanced lives and the multiplicities of experiences within Arab art production.

In order to answer these difficult questions, this chapter begins by historicizing photography in the Middle East and foregrounds the rocky power dynamics associated with the medium since its creation. I will examine what it means to "picture the Middle East", and discuss how the ubiquity of trauma imagery influences the aesthetics of photography itself. From here, I will turn to issues of methodology and examine the ways in which art history is written, and show how this too impacts both the art production, but also the types of imagery that are even allowed to be pictured and photographed. Lastly, I will discuss the Arab subject and their artistic aesthetics as a way of opening up the discussion on how documentary photography impacts the aesthetics of contemporary photography. This is relevant not only to Arab artists, but also affects the global consumption of imagery and how the West consumes photographic trauma. Today, it is accepted as truth that photographers can photograph whatever they choose, and to a large extent, it is accurate. However, the ways artists produce photography and the ways they *choose* to document a reality are all a part of a wider system of historical value and conditioned ways of seeing the world.

Before locating the queerness of an image, I must lay the foundations and understand how viewers interpret visual imagery from and about the Middle East. What does it mean to document the world in which we live? Why do we document, for whom is this documentation, and how are audiences meant to interpret documentary photography? Since photography easily circulates in a groundless and seemingly context-free environment, what representational strategies have been developed by artists to make sense of political strife and conflict? Ultimately, how is trauma pictured and how do audiences and viewers of photography interpret cultural difference? These questions are relevant when examining Wafaa Bilal's 2010 artwork, *3rdi* (Figure 1). In this work, the Iraqi artist surgically inserted a camera into the back of his head, where it remained for one year. Capturing one image per minute of his daily life, all of the photographs were live-streamed to a global audience on its own website (still accessible today), acting as a sort of photographic archive. This documentation, archiving, and sharing of Bilal's personal life can be linked to the power of photography as a medium and its use as a meaningful tool for Arab artists. Photography's link to politics might be clear from the artwork's description, but the use of photography instead of another artistic medium is best illustrated in relation to Bilal's personal history. Born in Iraq in 1966, Bilal has experienced trauma that is undeniably marked by imperial wars within his homeland. In 2005 American forces killed his brother Haji in Iraq, and his father subsequently died from the resulting grief of losing his son. Bilal spent time in refugee camps in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia before relocating to the United States where he currently lives. In an interview with art historian Anthony Downey, Bilal expresses a sense of regret that he was unable to record those journeys through all of their chaos and uncertainty. Bilal recounts:

> during my journey from Iraq to Saudi Arabia, on to Kuwait and then the U.S., I left many people and places behind. The images I have of this journey are inevitably ephemeral, held as they are in my own memory. Many times while I was in transit and chaos the images failed to fully register, I did not have the time to absorb them. Now, in hindsight, I wish I could have recorded these images so that I could look back on them, to have them serve as

> a reminder and record of all the places I was forced to leave behind and may never see again.[81]

In this artwork, Bilal not only documents his life, but he captures images that he himself does not see (Figure 2). With the camera implanted in the back of his head, he not only has little control over the image itself, but he is picturing a fleeting reality that is always in the past, and continuously behind him. This photographic documentation and the lack of privacy that ensues cannot be removed from notions of surveillance, and these images being publicly broadcasted on the internet speaks to the racialization of the brown body, and in this case the refugee body, as always being watched. It is through the medium's pervasiveness, accessibility, and circulation that the line is blurred between being watched and being on display, a powerful utilization of photography to speak to the entanglement a racialized subject might feel. In analyzing the mass media visual culture of trauma and conflict that pervades the Middle East, how then can artists produce images in relation to culture that is not solely interpreted through trauma? According to Bilal, it was when his brother was killed at a U.S. checkpoint in Iraq that he decided to use his art as a way of confronting those in the comfort zone with the realities of life in a conflict zone.[82] Now, with Bilal working in New York, what does it mean to interpret an artwork like *3rdi* in relation to documentary photography as a way to understand the political use of new media in the Middle East?

Audiences and viewers of Middle Eastern art are forced into negotiating the images of popular culture, the news, and the overall pervasiveness of photography depicting the Middle East negatively, in order to decipher how they attribute meaning to an artwork. It is through this process of visualization that I aim to disassemble Euro-American universalist art history—or "the West

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[81] Bilal, Wafaa. http://wafaabilal.com/thirdi/ (Accessed May 2018).
[82] Bilal, Wafaa. http://wafaabilal.com/shoot-an-iraqi/ (Accessed May 2018).

and the rest"—and I hope to speak to the ways in which conflicts are pictured and imaged. Bridging links between the technology of media saturation plaguing the Middle East and the photography being produced by Arab artists, this analysis provides reflection and new perspectives on methodological approaches that are attentive to both the process of creating Middle Eastern contemporary art and the process of interpreting photography in transnational contexts.

HISTORICIZING EXCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION

The history of art, the canon, and the methodologies of history writing shape how viewers interpret and assign value to an artwork. So too does the history of photography shape Arab artists' use of the medium. It is important to conceptualize the history of photography in relation to the Middle East to obtain a greater understanding of the context in which contemporary artists are using photography in their practice. How has the history of photography in the Middle East shaped the current use of the medium by Arab artists? Does the impact that photographic technologies had in the Middle East resonate with the way contemporary Arab artists use photography today? With photography and new media being prevalent and widespread in North Africa and the Middle East, can the current moment of art production be traced to historical exclusion from the history of photography? One must question the intersection of Middle Eastern art histories and their relationship to imperialism as a way of discussing new challenges within the study of contemporary art and photography.

The history of photography is traditionally understood as emerging in two competing forms in 1839: in France, Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre invented the daguerreotype and, in England, Henry Fox Talbot invented the calotype negatives. Since the invention of the medium, Arabs have

never had control over their photographic representation, at least not within dominant art history.[83] The study of photography in the Middle East is not traditionally focused on local indigenous photographers in the region, but rather historiographies of European photographers travelling to the Middle East on imperialist adventures during a period of colonial expansion.[84] Photography was something travelers brought from Europe, and these travelers held the power of both producing an image and producing a narrative.

As historian Ali Behdad argues, a crucial link between the history of photography and Europe's knowledge about the Middle East has existed since the invention of photography.[85] In fact, both France and England published photography manuals about the value of using photography in the Middle East due to the abundant sunshine in the region, which was needed for early photography techniques that required longer exposure times.[86] In subsequent decades, many European photographers, with the support of various governmental institutions, traveled to the

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[83] Historians of photography have generally assigned only marginal importance to the Middle East in the works of the many European photographers in the nineteenth century, and even less importance to the various traditions of indigenous photography that emerged in the region soon after the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839 (Behad & Gartlan, 2013, p. 1).

[84] Notable European photographers that dominate the history of Middle Eastern photography include: Le Gray, Du Camp, Salzmann, Tancrède Dumas, Francis Frith, Felice Beato, Emile Béchard, Hippolyte Arnoux, and Alexandre Leroux, as well as Maison Bonfils, Maison Lehnert & Landrock, Maison Garrigues, Photoglob Zurich, and Underwood and Underwood.

[85] Behdad, Ali, and Luke Gartlan, eds. *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*. 1 edition. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013.

[86] After Louis-Jacques-Mandé-Daguerre introduced his invention to the Chambre des députés in France, politician, mathematician and physicist Dominique François Arago commented upon "the extraordinary advantages that could have been derived from so exact and rapid a means of reproduction during the expedition to Egypt," and recommended that the Institut d'Egypte be equipped immediately with the new visual technology (Arago, D.F.. Report of the commission of the chamber of deputies. In A. Trachtenberg [ed.], *Classic essays on photography.* New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island. p. 17). This intrinsic link between photography and the Middle East is also seen in Daguerre's British counterpart, William Henry Fox Talbot, who in 1846 published a pamphlet titled "The Talbotype Applied to Hieroglyphics", which was distributed among archeologists and Orientalists (Perez, N.N. *Focus east: early photography in the near east 1839-1885.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988, p. 15).

Middle East to amass portfolios of Egyptian antiquity, sites of the holy lands, and the exotic Other, making the region one of the principal training grounds for the early practice of photography. [87] The dominant historical canon understands photography as a Western import into Eastern lands, and photography was a tool for Europeans to photograph and capture the Other within an image. Tellingly, all these European photographers and photography studios still define the imagery and historical narrative of photography in the Middle East.

In his detailed study of Middle Eastern portrait photography, *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860–1910*, Stephen Sheehi outlines how Middle Eastern photography is *really* different but, in effect, only re-inscribes the binaries of the dominant historical narrative of Middle Eastern photography.[88] Rather than asking how Arab photography is different than Western photography and enforce a binary that is neither productive nor accurate, I look at the function of photography and the power of being photographed. Important here is the use of photography to create narrative, and in the historical instance above, the narrative was an Orientalist one, to be disseminated across Europe. The challenge becomes how we can analyze the image while not burdening the interpretation and reading of the image by a Western exceptionalism that created the very aesthetic rules that govern what an Arab looks like within the photographic frame. It is vital to learn how to read images by keeping Orientalism's asymmetries of power at the forefront of the discussion and assess the Western exceptionalism that produced the aesthetics of photography in the Middle East as being a part of the subject matter itself.[89]

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[87] Behdad, Ali, and Luke Gartlan, eds. *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*. 1 edition. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013. p. 1

[88] Sheehi, Stephen (2016). *The arab imago: a social history of portrait photography, 1860-1910.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. (p. xxi).

[89] I use Jasbir Puar's conception of U.S exceptionalism, in that "exceptionalism gestures to narratives of excellence, excellent nationalism, a process whereby a national population comes to believe in its own superiority and its own singularity." (Puar, Jasbir K. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke Univ Pr, 2007. p. 5.)

The clear divide between the abundance of European photographers in the Middle East, and the absence of the study of local photographers practicing photography in the Middle East, only enforces and makes possible the universalizing tropes of Orientalism, and now, pervasive trauma photography in the Middle East. According to Ariella Azoulay, the photograph has always been a "product of encounter—even a violent one—between a photographer, and a photographed subject, and a camera, an encounter whose involuntary traces in the photograph transform the latter into a document that is not the creation of an individual and can never belong to any one person or narrative exclusively."[90] Therefore, the history of photography illustrates the ways in which Arabs have historically been photographed, and is in keeping with the current trend in visual culture to depict the Middle East in troubling ways. In other words, within such media imagery, Arabs themselves are not in control of their own representation within the frame of the photograph. The authority of photography, and the power dynamics associated with who is photographed versus who takes the picture, is a part of a Western exceptionalism that maintains a Eurocentric master-narrative that disenfranchises Arabs from proprietorship of the universalizing power of photography.

PICTURING THE MIDDLE EAST

In terms of contemporary photography, art from the Middle East has undergone a global shift and is actively becoming a major part of the international art market and art historical narrative.[91] Yet,

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[90] Azoulay, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books, 2012. p. 13.

[91] Some milestones contributing to this shift include the launching of major art fairs like Art Dubai in 2007, the establishment of *Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art* in Doha in 2010, Arab pavilions at the Venice Biennale, and the announcement that major Western museums, such as the Louvre and the Guggenheim are planned to open on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi. Notable patrons in the

even with the establishment of art institutions and strong university programs to enhance art education in the Middle East, the director of Art Dubai, Myrna Ayad, points to the skepticism and hesitation of the broader art world to take Middle Eastern art seriously:

> As an arts writer, I've heard the uninformed allegations countless times: the Middle Eastern art scene is a bubble; its art arena is five minutes old; there is no institutional interest or acquisition. And the worst: 'It is art inspired by conflict' -- a sweeping statement that seeks to equate one aspect of the region, i.e. politics, to its art. For me, that last one had always been the zinger, laced with parochialism. As were headlines or exhibitions that used the terms 'veil', 'unveiled', 'women artists from the Middle East', and other sensationalist synonyms.[92] [93]

The narrow-mindedness Ayad speaks of, which equates and reduces an entire region to conflict, is the issue at hand. Arab artists are at an impasse when they consider their practice, participation in the international art market, and the writing of art history. Like other artists working outside of the West, Arab artists are forced to represent their cultural heritage within their artwork and visually describe their nationality and political surroundings. The problem, therefore, is not the artists' representation of their cultural, religious or national identity, but the essentialized readings, interpretations, and sometimes representations of these artworks. The West expects this of Arab artists, both implicitly and explicitly through art exhibitions and the study of art: implicitly in the

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Middle East have contributed to more institutional attention being given to art from the region, and a strong focus has been given to re-writing dominant art historical narratives that traditionally exclude Arab art. Such patronage has led to the founding of art institutions, including the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts established in 1979; the Sultan Gallery in Kuwait established in 1969; the establishing of Al Mansouria Foundation in 1988 to support Arab and Saudi artists; the Dar Al Fan in Beirut in 1967; the Green Art Gallery in Dubai in 1995; and two years ago the Atassi Foundation in Syria was founded to support Syrian modern and contemporary art.

[92] Ayad, Myrna. "Why There Is More to Middle Eastern Art than Women and War." *CNN*. (Accessed March 20, 2017.) http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/15/arts/dubai-art-week-op-ed/index.html.

[93] As mentioned within the introduction, Shirin Neshat was the only Arab artist to have been included within encyclopedic editions of art history textbooks, and her work famously foregrounds the veil.

curation of Middle Eastern art exhibitions in the West revolving around singular and reductive narratives, and explicitly in the exclusion of Arab artists from the dominant canon of art history.

The single narrative—that is, the essentialist focus on one aspect of a region that comes to define all ideas associated with a culture—is a major hurdle for Arab artists to overcome, as the compulsory association with war and trauma creates an impossible cycle of art production and art consumption that traps art of the Middle East and hinders complex readings of visual art. As theorist Susan Sontag argues in *Regarding the Pain of Others,* the moment of death is the most celebrated and reproduced war photograph.[94] Visual media on Arab subjects has been curated in the news to be a singular story of trauma, war and conflict, and the news has strongly influenced the visual imagery that is associated with the region (Figure 3). With photography being a medium that holds an assumed truth (a truth that Sontag critiques), I argue that the sheer association of "Arab" and "art" or "photography" instills a compulsory association with images of war-torn cities reduced to rubble, riots in the streets as citizens overthrow dictatorships, and the ruthless policing of Arab women in religious clothing. Is it coincidental that these general examples likely garner *specific* images of Syrian children running around the rubble of decimated towns, scenes of Iraqi citizens toppling the statue of Saddam Hossein, and images of the Taliban riding in the back of trucks, riffles in-hand, policing the streets of Afghanistan? These inherent associations with trauma, representation, and the expectation of suffering haunt and plague Arab and Middle-Eastern artists producing contemporary art.

Indeed, there are suspicions and skepticism regarding visual images' capacity to adequately and ethically redeem traumatic events without violating the integrity of victims and survivors. However, there are also discussions on the different effects of visualized depictions of suffering.

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[94] Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. 1st edition. New York: Picador, 2004.

For example, Ann Kaplan discusses different ways of representing traumas. She distinguishes different (though blended into one another) kinds of representations that generate different emotional responses to images of catastrophe. These differing kinds of representations include images that make the spectator over-aroused, such as disturbing images of atrocities; the images that generate "empty empathy" which lacks any context, knowledge, or perspective of the victim; and the images that allows "ethical witnessing," which involves a stance that may transform how the viewer understands the structure of injustice and perhaps make them feel obligated to take responsibility for preventing future occurrences.[95] Because of these distinctions, I believe it is counterproductive to evaluate the artworks that represent trauma as being the same as media imagery depicting violence; instead, the economies of visual representation, orientalism, and cultural essentialism should be the target of analysis here. The relationships that these different depictions of trauma have with one another and the ways in which they operate within a larger system of cultural production is what I argue affects the very reading and understanding of art itself, and it is this relationship between trauma, cultural representation, and visual art production that requires further probing.

While Ariella Azoulay's views on photography differ from that of Sontag's, Azoulay's writing of the phantom picture helps to understand how and why these images are reproduced and remembered. To Azoulay, a phantom picture is one that does not really exist, but is a mental picture that has been planted and created by external sources, such as through stories or visual depictions. Photographs, unlike phantom pictures, have no single, individual author, and allow for viewers to negotiate and determine how they attribute meaning to a photograph. It is the moment when a viewer gives meaning to a photograph that I argue is always tainted by the phantom image. To

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[95] Kaplan, E.A., 2008. "Global trauma and public feelings: Viewing images of catastrophe," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 11(1), p. 3–24.

illustrate what a phantom image looks like, Azoulay recalls memories of her childhood that have been planted by her mother, and how she accepts these memories and images as truth. For Azoulay, an Israeli living in occupied territories at the time, these memories and planted pictures include scenes of threat that the author asserts are often associated with a particular place. Examining the ways in which trauma and racism are both normalized through the screen of memory, she recalls images of Arab markets in Palestine and places like the stairwell in her childhood home as being sites of danger. Reflecting on the process of how these memories were planted, Azoulay states:

> My mother wouldn't allow me to go to the beach on Fridays. That's the day the Arabs go. 'They go with their clothes on,' she muttered. Ever since, I've carried around in my head an image of Arabs half-submerged in the middle of the sea, struggling to get up, with the weight of their wet clothes pulling them down. While I remember this image as if it were a photograph I actually saw, I know it was planted in my brain, courtesy of my mother's tongue as she tried to embody her warnings.[96]

Azoulay argues that each one of us carries with them an album of these planted pictures, and I assert that this contributes to viewers' understanding and reception of images from and of the Middle East. Here, the images planted from memory, by stories and by visual media, are a part of what plagues Arab artists. These planted images lead to the expectation of trauma, the aesthetic of photojournalism, and the medium of street photography when viewing artworks by Arab artists. These expectations can be subliminal and unintentional, but are a part of this album of planted memories that everyone carries. Media images and visual narratives that become normalized and accepted as truth inform these associations. The viewer makes this subconscious connection when experiencing artworks by Arab artists or photographs with Arab content, mediating how the artwork is understood and received.

The differentiation between the image and the photograph is where Azoulay disagrees with

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[96] Azoulay, Ariella. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books, 2012. p. 10.

Sontag. What Azoulay distinguishes as a phantom image (and being different from a photograph) is what Sontag amalgamates together as the unrelenting visual imagery that bombards the viewer on a daily basis. In *Regarding the Pain of Others,* Sontag claims that a photograph's meaning is based on the viewer's interpretation, and falsely represents truth because images are first filtered through image-takers. Sontag explains that a picture's meaning is derived through a synthesis of artifice, context and experience.[97] Importantly, the viewer's prior experience and the context of the viewing all contribute to the meaning of a photograph. Azoulay argues that the phantom image leads to the creation of the image itself, even if this phantom image is not really a photograph. But for Sontag, the issues lie within the ruse of picturing truth and the camera's falsehood as representing objective reality. Therefore, the media saturation portraying trauma in the Middle East is a purposeful representation strategy that shapes our conception of truth and meaning. For the Arab artist, it is important to understand the impact of these phantom images and how they condition the reception of the artwork by the viewer, while simultaneously conditioning the way Arab artists are expected to produce art.

WHY PHOTOGRAPHY?

The artistic use of contemporary photography, a medium that many Arab artists increasingly choose, must be examined within this same paradigm of power and representation. The history of the medium itself and its common use in wider visual culture, to a certain degree, shapes the artwork Middle Eastern artists are producing. Art historian Salwa Mikdadi argues that new media

[97] Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. 1 edition. New York: Picador, 2004.

and video art is more transportable than other mediums, and its portability has benefited artists living with restrictions.[98] This includes artists who have limited mobility between countries, as well as artists who must pass checkpoints within national walls. The choice of photography and digital media installations have likewise proven to be suitable mediums for the political and social nature of Arab art, as illustrated through Wafaa Bilal's artwork *3rdi* at the start of this chapter. Therefore, with photography and digital media being suitable both practically and conceptually for works by Arab artists, how the West consumes and interprets Arab art needs to be better connected to the transnational potential of visual media. The phantom images that condition the Western audience's expectations and assumptions, and the subconscious associations of war and trauma, should be read in conjunction with the medium itself and how the medium of photography is used in the making of Arab contemporary art. Whether or not the singular narrative and the association of war and trauma is mostly affecting Arab artists working with photography, rather than painting or sculpture, would speak to the medium itself and its use in the broader circulation of images within visual culture. The problematics of representation must be examined in more detail, for there is a clear relationship between photography and new media being a practical and suitable trend in the making of Arab contemporary art, the consumption of these war images in the news and media outlets, and the reception of Arab art in the West. These causalities and dynamics of power and representation are therefore closely related to the function and use of photography as a medium and as an artistic tool of creation. In this way, the work of Middle Eastern artists is informed by—but never reducible to—a history of representation that has presented Middle Eastern contexts in troubling ways and continues to do so.

As the edited volume *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North*

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[98] Mikdadi, Salwa, and Nada M. Shabout. "Introduction." In *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, p. 8–14. London: TransGlobe Publishing Ltd, 2011. p. 10.

Africa and the Middle East elucidates, these issues are not local or pertain only to the Middle East. Art historian Anthony Downey argues that "this is an international rather than provincial concern, inasmuch as there remains the ever-present interpretive danger that visual culture from the region is legitimized through the media-friendly symbolism of conflict."[99] This speaks to the tactic of the media to bombard viewers with images of conflict in the Middle East, and the curated visual material that becomes circulated is therefore rooted in orientalist ambitions of determining the Middle East as only worthy of attention in relation to lack of modernity, non-progressiveness and extremism. When contemporary artists are using photography and new media to respond to political events, one must dissect the language that the artist uses in relation to the language of wider visual culture, and interrogate the relationship between the two. That is to say, the rhetoric of conflict and the spectacle of trauma need to be discussed in relation to an aesthetic ambition that seeks to explore "the often inconsistent relationship of the subject to history."[100]

Artist Larissa Sansour uses photography both purposefully and politically. In her oeuvre, Sansour produces videos and photographs fusing pop-culture aesthetics with issues surrounding Palestinian identity and Israeli occupation. In response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and unsuccessful attempts at peace, she addresses displacement by creating fictional spaces for Palestinians to settle. Sansour explains that her choice of medium is important, and it is her tool in depicting Palestinian consciousness and the experience of displacement through tropes such as humor and science fiction.[101] Also important to her practice, and most relevant to this analysis, is her use of high budget film and expensive high-production photographs to create science fiction

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[99] Downey, Anthony. *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practice in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014. p. 17.
[100] Downey, Anthony. *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practice in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014. p. 17.
[101] Sansour, Larissa. Public Lecture at OCAD University, Toronto Canada. September 2016.

motifs. She produces these narratives and costly visuals consciously because, as she indicates, there is an expectation that as a Palestinian artist she would be producing low-budget documentary photographs that resemble amateur war photography. In this instance, the baggage of representation has a powerful control over the narratives that are being told, and how they are permitted to be told.

These practical issues of visualizing, picturing and documenting are central to the ways in which aesthetics are theorized. Part of the baggage of representation outlined thus far relates to the writing and recording of Arab art histories. Art historian Nada Shabout argues that the Middle East lacks formal art criticism, and instead relies on Western models for the writing of art history that do not start with the work of art. Rather than provide an analysis of the visual elements first, the critic starts with the artist's biography. If an Arab artist's identity is the only way to attribute meaning to their artwork, we cannot escape the lack of objective criticism for Arab artists. [102]

The use of the artists' biography started with the Italian Renaissance and 16th century Italian painter, writer, and historian Giorgio Vasari. Commonly thought of as the first art historian, Vasari's book, *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, is considered the ideological foundation of art historical writing. Vasari focuses on the artist as genius, and contends that the biography of the artist is the most important aspect in understanding their work and art practice.[103] While the concept of "artist as genius" is heavily critiqued in modern scholarship as being masculinist and exclusionary,[104] it still haunts the writing of art history whenever the starting

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[102] Shabout, Nada M. "Contemporaneity Art in the Arab World." In *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*. London: TransGlobe Publishing Ltd, 2011. p. 46.
[103] Vasari, Giorgio, Vere G. C. De, and Philip J. Jacks. *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. New York: Modern Library, 2005.
[104] For feminist interventions within art history, please see: Nochlin, Linda. "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" *Aesthetics*. (1998): 314-323; Pollock, Griselda. "Women, Art and Ideology: Questions for Feminist Art Historians." *Woman's Art Journal*. (1983): 39-47; Parker,

point of analysis is the artist's biography. What started with Vasari anthologizing the lives of living artists during the Italian renaissance turned into a biographical approach to recording history that quickly cemented itself and developed into the primary mode of art writing. While initially affecting the ways in which Europeans wrote about other European art, this method of analysis became the primary vehicle for art historical writing in the West, and most importantly, about art outside the West. For non-Western artists, I contend the focus of the artist's biography slowly shifts the discussion from "artist as genius" to one of "artist as different." The biographical information of the Arab artist is used as a marker of differentiation from a Western norm, and a difference that informs and which is reinforced by the analysis of the artwork itself.

THE ARAB SUBJECT AND THEIR AESTHETICS

The construction of Arab visual culture is a point of concern. Art critic Nat Muller reinforces that presenting the generic image of the Middle East as 'bad news' to Western audiences forces artists into a rocky power dynamic where they play into expected perceptions or representations.[105] When addressing international audiences, artists from the region are expected to somehow personify both the historic and the national—an impossible task seemingly reserved only for Arab artists and is not expected of Western artists. Muller insists that

> [i]f we want to lay out conditions of focusing on a contemporary practice, we have to look further and beyond the identitarian markers of ethnicity, politics and geography […] and let the art first and foremost speak for itself—or in other words, let the socio-political and

Rozsika, and Griselda Pollock. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

[105] Muller, Nat. "Contemporary Art in the Middle East." In *Contemporary Art in the Middle East*. London: Black Dog, 2009.

> historical undercurrents speak from the art, rather than the other way around.[106]

Scholar Dina Ramadan calls this entanglement of representation, authenticity and identity as the "objectification of the artist."[107] This occurs when non-Western artists are stripped of their individuality and are expected to act as a mouthpiece for "the collective"— Arab, Muslim, Other— as well as having to represent both "modernity" and "authenticity", while maintaining a balance in order to avoid accusation of imitating the West or being too folkloric. The question then remains: When evaluating the production of meaning in an artwork, can aesthetics be the starting point of analysis before considering the sphere of the historical and political?[108] The binary idea of aesthetics and politics is a modernist paradigm, and the debate which criticizes the separation of aesthetics and politics is not my argument. Binary thinking between politics and aesthetics is simply not helpful, and these logics should not be separated from one another. But even with the ideological linking of aesthetics and politics, the aesthetics of the artwork, particularly art produced by Arab subjects, are one of the last things to be evaluated. Aesthetics are given less importance than the biography of the artist, their national identity, and their geographic location. The politics and the aesthetics should always be in conversation with each other; however, the artwork of the Arab artist is overshadowed by the politics of their national identity. Indeed, Kaplan argues for

> the need for scholars in psychology and the media to learn more about the interactions among a traumatic image, its source, genre and placement, and psychological response in an era of global proliferation of images and related cultural emotions. Journalism, advertisements, television, movies, the internet, political and religious propaganda and other sorts of appeals enlist the power of images to move their audiences in ways prior to,

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[106] Muller, Nat. "Contemporary Art in the Middle East." In *Contemporary Art in the Middle East*. London: Black Dog, 2009. p. 17.

[107] Dina Ramadan, "The Aesthetics of the Modern: Art, Education, and Taste in Egypt 1903–1952," PhD dissertation (Columbia University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2013).

[108] It should be noted that I am not arguing for "art for art's sake," which was a concept criticized by scholars in the 1970s who proposed a social history of art. Quite the contrary: I believe that the social histories of art are so important that it is necessary to remove colonial and imperial epistemologies that are shaped by orientalism and racism.

> or under the radar of, cognition. Emotions produced in these ways may be called 'Public Feelings.'[109]

These "public feelings" are indeed related to aesthetics, as they account for the psychological response viewers have when witnessing Arab art and their relationship to the emotions produced when bombarded with trauma imagery that proliferates the media. This relationship between trauma, aesthetics and orientalism is one that needs to be returned to, revisited, and re-explored in as many ways as possible until Arab artists are no longer ghettoized within exhibitions, in the writing of art history, and within the international art market overall.

Because of this dilemma, art historian Saleem Al-Baholy argues for approaching aesthetic forms differently. He sees the necessity to stop understanding aesthetics in relation to the artist, but instead in relation to the world event or experience in which the artist is responding to. He calls this the de-subjectivizing of artistic creation and the displacing of the artist.[110] As a way of escaping the shadows of representation that follow Arab bodies and Arab artists, he argues that viewers should not pose questions of aesthetics to a single artist, nor even compare one artwork to another. Instead, viewers should pose the question of aesthetics in relation to the world—time, an event, an experience, a problem—and examine the ways in which aesthetics are performed by an artwork in relation to its political surroundings. This is an important argument for it seeks to rectify the issues previously outlined plaguing discourses of art and the Middle East.

Can reevaluating methods of formal analysis within art history be a solution? As a way of

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[109] Kaplan, Ann E., 2008. "Global trauma and public feelings: Viewing images of catastrophe," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 11(1), p. 4.

[110] Al-Bahloly, Saleem. "Art History Outside the History of Art." In *Arab Art Histories The Khalid Shoman Collection*, edited by Sarah A. rogers Eline Van Der Vlist, p. 255–65. Amman, Jordan: The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2014.

illustrating what de-subjectivizing the artist may look like, I turn to figure 4. In this photograph, a woman stands in an empty room that is void of furniture except for a seemingly uncomfortable plastic chair and a glass table supporting a single coffee cup that has spilled on its side. In the centre of the room, the subject waters a luscious green olive tree that is jutting out of the floor, cracking through the ground, and its vibrant greenery provides the only colour inside the home as it is reflected on the mirrored floor. The watering can in the subject's hands, however, seems to be sprouting roots rather than water, such that the figure is providing the roots of the olive tree in order for it to survive in a different environment. The large windows remain permanently shut, and display a view of a desert, the top of a brick wall and a watchtower that stands at the height of the window. In the distance, the viewer sees a crowded village scene that is bathed in sunlight, breaking the darkness and reflecting colour onto the roof of a recognizable building, the Dome of the Rock (or the great Mosque of Jerusalem.) With this one identifying feature, the aesthetics of the photograph, the composition of the scene and the subject matter itself begin to take shape. In understanding that the town bathed in sunlight is Jerusalem, the viewer understands that the scene takes place in Palestine. More specifically, the watchtower does not just become any panopticon or lookout and is instead connected to the apartheid walls of territories occupied by Israel. Being at the same height as the apartment windows, the watchtower which houses soldiers of the Israeli Defense Forces implies that the civilian is always under watch and, more importantly, always enclosed by its walls. The subject of this picture is nurturing the olive tree which, from its size, must be hundreds of years old, signaling a long historic relationship between Palestinian culture and the olive trees that grow on this land. An important symbol of Palestinian heritage and culture, the figure providing the roots of the olive tree in order for it to survive the trauma of migration poetically speaks to the forced relocation and migration that many Palestinians experience. The Palestinian woman nurturing her own heritage, the tremendous emotional trauma experienced by

being constantly watched and policed, and the isolation that results from being separated and partitioned within her own country— these are all features of the artwork that speak from the image itself, not elements that are deduced or assumed from the artist's national identity. This science fiction, highly edited (and therefore expensive production value) photograph was created by Palestinian artist Larissa Sansour and is a part of a photo series called *Nation Estate* from 2012. Through this visual analysis, Sansour's subject position did not inform our reading; rather, the true and lived experience of apartheid and colonial trauma as expressed by the artist was fully realized and, most importantly, not biased by imperial assumptions or expectations in relation to the artists' Arab identity.

To Al-Baholy, the study of aesthetics must take the artist out of the equation and let the socio-political and historical undercurrents speak *from* the art, rather than inform the art itself. This provides a way to enhance the description of the aesthetics of the artwork, giving a different relationship to art and politics, and the ways that art can give aesthetic forms through which political issues are articulated. Therefore, rather than use an artist's birthplace (Palestine, for instance) to dictate the assumed content of the work (mandatorily being about apartheid and war), the artwork itself speaks for the nuanced lived condition of the artist's experience. This is noteworthy as it alters the demand of the Arab artist of having to produce art about a singular narrative in order to be intelligible to the global art market and shifts the focus to the aesthetics and visual language of the artwork to open up the understandings of the political struggle the artwork is in relation to.

Again, Ann Kaplan's theory of *empty empathy* is useful in discussing problems of such images that represent disasters as spectacles, and the themes that are expected in exhibitions by Arab artists. Using Martin Hoffman's definition of empathy as "the involvement of psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with another's situation than

with his own situation,"[111] Kaplan identifies that empathy can have positive social aspects. However, "empty" empathy does not result in positive social behaviour, and this has to do with the current ways audiences view images of catastrophe in excess. Kaplan argues that viewing too many images in succession can diminish a viewer's emotional response, thus the empathy from the images dissipates and "each catastrophe image cancels out or interferes with the impact of the prior image."[112] Next is the risk of "fleeting" empathy, which Kaplan argues is caused by the "array of separate images of suffering without any context or background knowledge, focusing on the pain of individuals whom we see at a distance and who are strange to us cannot elicit more than a fleeting empathy. There is no socio-political context for actually putting ourselves in the situation of those suffering from catastrophe."[113]

Due to the different and varying ranges of empathy that viewers feel when witnessing Arab art, when the artist's single-narrative biography is the dominant starting point of analysis, the artist's identity informs the reading of the artwork, rather than having the aesthetics of the artwork itself inform the experience of the artist.[114] The reason why this Western method of writing history is problematic for Arab artists can be traced back to the beginning of this chapter—the inherent associations made by viewers of Arab art and the trauma imagery inherently associated with Arab photography. We are left in a catch-22, an endless cycle that produces the very Arab art it conditions. The artist's Arab-ness will always inform the art they produce and, in Sansour's case,

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[111] Hoffman, Martin. 2000. *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 30.
[112] Kaplan, E.A., 2008. "Global trauma and public feelings: Viewing images of catastrophe," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 11(1), p. 9.
[113] Kaplan, E.A., 2008. "Global trauma and public feelings: Viewing images of catastrophe," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 11(1), p. 9.
[114] Likewise, in the tradition of literature and art in China, Korea and also Japan, the identity of author, whether scholar or professional, was considered to be a determining factor in evaluating their art.

for example, the artist's Palestinian-ness will be the sole marker for viewers to interpret the work of art. This results in a cycle of singular narratives in which the viewer only comes to expect a certain artwork or narrative of the Arab artist. As illustrated by historian Sheyma Buali, viewers have become accustomed to the digitized, highly spectacular images of emotive events in the Middle East (Figure 5).[115] This singular narrative flattens the complex experiences of Arab artists to only being a dominant story of war, trauma, and conflict. This means that an Arab artist whose work does not reflect the photographs informed by these phantom images will be left outside of dominant expectations. These dominant expectations are important because they dictate the type of exhibitions that museums organize and they inform the types of artworks that are acquired within permanent collections.[116] Problematically, both the collection and exhibiting of homogenizing singular narratives are misconstrued as being art representative of the region, and the cycle thus continues. Viewers of such exhibitions subsequently expect to see a particular kind of art or representation that mirrors dominant visual culture in the Middle East, and the dominant aesthetics of what Arab art looks like gradually starts to cement itself within exhibitions, permanent collections, and within audience expectations. Slowly, the phantom image is reified, and another album of phantom images is made.

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[115] Buali, Sheyma. "Digital, Aesthetic, Ephemeral: A Brief Look at Image and Narrative." In Downey, Anthony. *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practice in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014. (p. 169-183)

[116] Such exhibitions are numerous and can be seen on macro levels within institutions, as well as on smaller levels impacting the general types of attention that is devoted to the region. Exhibitions in North America seem particularly keen to use such narratives, such as the 2016 *Aftermath: The Fallout of War—America and the Middle East*, organized by the Harn Museum of Art in Florida USA. Another instance of the singular story of trauma and war can be seen in the 2014 exhibition *War from Victims' Perspective* comprised of 60 black and white highly aestheticized photographs by Swiss photographer Jean Mohr in Boston, Massachusetts.

DOES RACE ALWAYS MATTER? HORIZONTAL ART HISTORIES AND THE PROBLEM-CENTERED APPROACH

The questions asked within this analysis pose specific challenges concerning theoretical approaches available when examining contemporary art production, and methodological questions about the writing of art history. We must consider the implications of an artist being conditioned to produce artwork that looks "Arab", is similar in aesthetic to trauma photography, or even if not aesthetically similar, is at least informed by war and conflict photography. What does this line of inquiry say about the agency of contemporary artists in the Middle East? In arguing that Eurocentric image production has conditioned the market for Arab art and the very ways in which art in the Middle East is made, is the artist's agency underestimated? Or can subversion happen at different levels that inform/speak to the art market and writing of art history? Thus far, I have illustrated the ways in which the aesthetics of an artwork, particularly art produced by Arab subjects, are one of the last things to be evaluated within art criticism. Aesthetics are given less importance than the single-narrative biography of the artist, their national identity, and most often their geographic location, creating bias in the very reading of their artwork.[117] I argue for taking the subject (artist) out of the visual analysis (or, at least from the beginning of a visual analysis) in order to de-emphasize their national identity as a way to understand aesthetics in relation to the

[117] Theorist Gayatri Gopinath conceives aesthetics and aesthetic practices following Jacques Rancière's formulation of "the aesthetics regime of art" as being that which intervenes in "the very distribution of the sensible that delimits the horizons of the sayable and determines the relationship between seeing, hearing, doing, making, and thinking." (See Gopinath, "Unruly Visions," p. 177n30). However, I find Alpesh Patel's usage of art historian Jill Bennett's definition of "practical aesthetics" to be better suited for evaluating imagery within the contexts of violence, trauma, and orientalism. Bennet writes that practical aesthetics is defined by an orientation to real-world experience and provides a means of inhabiting and moving through events. By 'aesthetics' Bennett is specifically invoking the more recent use of the term as a "general theory of sensori-emotional experience" which brings together art, psychology and the social rather than being concerned with judgement and highly fraught notions of beauty and taste. (See Patel, *Productive Failure*, p. 189; and Bennet, *Practical Aesthetics*, p. 36.)

world event or experience in which the artist is responding to, as opposed to in relation to the artist themselves.[118]

With this said, the identity of the artist is an important discussion in places such as North America, where racialized artists fight to be represented ethically. For example, in the 2017 Whitney Biennale, non-racialized artists producing work about race became a central concern.[119] Can the race and identity of the artist be the primary mode of visual analysis in some contexts, and not in others? Is there a way to negotiate between Arab artists being ghettoized and biased within art historical narratives, and other artists of colour producing art that is meant to be analyzed under the purview of racial identity? In the case of the Whitney Biennial, American artist Dana Schutz painted the work *Open Casket* (2016), a haunting portrait of the gruesomely disfigured corpse of Emmett Till, a black 14-year-old boy murdered by a Mississippi lynch mob in 1955 after a white woman falsely accused him of whistling at her. The fact that Schutz is a Caucasian artist who produced a painting showing Black suffering and African-American trauma is what led to the controversy. The white identity of the artist is integral to the politics of the situation, yet in the case of Arab artists it is their racial identity that makes the politics of their work disappear behind pre-conceived notions informed by orientalism. This discussion opens up, perhaps, a reconceptualization of aesthetics that is better informed by the power dynamics involved in the racialization of the artist, viewer, and cultural production.

The question then remains: when evaluating the production of meaning in an artwork, can

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[118] This does not mean that national identity in itself is something essentially negative, but rather the racism and orientalism that is associated with certain national identities. The concerns mentioned in this analysis are not against nationalism per se, but are against the racism associated with cultures located outside the global north.

[119] The Whitney Biennial is a biennale exhibition of contemporary American art on display at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, United States.

aesthetics be the starting point of analysis before considering the sphere of the historical and political? In order to look further and beyond the identitarian markers of ethnicity, politics and geography, can the socio-political and historical undercurrents speak from the art itself? If so, does this work in all contexts, or are some postcolonial contexts in need of the identitarian markers of ethnicity more than others (such as Indigenous artists in Canada, or Black and Latinx artists in the United States), and are the aesthetics of these artworks more productively read through such politics?[120]

To answer these important questions, we must identify that the differences between a North American/Arab comparison lie within the differences between vertical and horizontal art histories. Art historian Piotr Piotrowski defines vertical art histories as being when "the arts from other peripheral regions[…] are presented as fragments of the global or universal art history established in the West, which reveals[… a] West-centric approach to art history, and the dominance of the premises of modernist art geography in general."[121] He argues that this type of vertical narrative implies a hierarchy—often between East and West, modern and unmodern, good and bad—and that a universality becomes established based on the center rather than the periphery. Instead, Piotrowski argues for a horizontal art history:

> A horizontal art history should begin with the deconstruction of vertical art history, that is, the history of Western art. A critical analysis should reveal the speaking subject: who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom? This is not to cancel Western art history, but to call this type of narrative by its proper name, precisely as a "Western" narrative. In other words, I aim to separate two concepts which have usually been merged: the concept of Western modern art and the concept of universal art. Western art history can thus be relativized and placed next to other art historical narratives – in accordance with the horizontal paradigm. The consequence of such a move will be a reversal of the traditional

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[120] I am not contradicting my previous criticism on the artist's subjectivity, but I find that asking these questions is productive and helps to nuance the issues surrounding race and representation.
[121] Piotrowski, Piotr. "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies*, Vol 1. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. Berlin: Germany. 2009. p. 50.

> view of the relationship between the art history of the margins and that of [Western] art history.[122]

This approach to decenter Western art history locates the source of power within art production and history writing and asks these questions: who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom? A horizontal art history in this context would not be a one-to-one comparison of art produced by Arab artists and art produced by Black artists in North America, for this would replicate vertical art histories and increase the risk of reinforcing centre-periphery dynamics. Such a top-down approach will carry with it value judgments of Arab modernity and Western superiority, especially when art centres like New York become the epicentre of analysis. Instead, a horizontal art history in this scenario would be more conducive to evaluating the place of race and racialization within art analysis.

To illustrate what this horizontal approach to art history looks like, I turn to comparative historiography as a field of study. Methodologically speaking, it may not be a productive task to analyze the racism that Arabs experience as being the same as the racism that other people of colour experience in North America. I do not believe a one-to-one comparative approach would be helpful here. So too is it problematic to even think of racism or racial experience as being constant and stable, for even the racism Arabs experience in Canada will be different to that experienced in Europe, Asia or Africa for instance, and will fluctuate according to local and global events. How can an analytical approach to the study of visual art be developed both thoughtfully in the global connections involved, while simultaneously attentive to the local intricacies of specific histories? Historian Hannes Siegrist writes that "today, in the age of methodical pluralism and a certain degree of de-disciplining of science (or shifting and blurring of traditional disciplinary boundaries),

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[122] Piotrowski, Piotr. "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," in European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, Vol 1. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. Berlin: Germany. 2009. p. 54.

attention must be focused on problems which need to be detected, analyzed and resolved together."[123] He argues that the focus is being shifted from a 'method-centered' to a 'problem-centered' approach, and I find this problem-centered approach to be most useful within the study of Arab art and transnationalism. While the dilemma seems clear—that race is relevant and centered in some contexts and should be decentered in other contexts—it is the site of comparison that needs shifting. Rather than the comparative geographic and historical study between North America and the Middle East, the site of study should be different (and horizontal) racial quandaries within the history of art, and the art market. This would mean asking the aforementioned questions—who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom—laterally in a way that does not compare traumas, but rather evaluates their points of convergence and separation. In this way, "there is an urgent need for scientific methods and modes of interpretation which are able to detect, evaluate and represent the general and the particular, what connects and what separates."[124] When cultural transfer, interculturality, transnationalization, globalization and localization are evaluated horizontally within the context of the racialized North American artist or the Arab artist, the racial dimensions of their experiences and their impact within the history of art produces new methods of analysis. While I cannot conduct such an analysis within this study, this means that by firmly including and reflecting on the dimensions of difference and exchange, future research that is attentive to the social and cultural historical comparison will be productive in the interdisciplinary study of art, race, class, gender and culture.

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[123] Siegrist, Hannes. 2006. "Comparative History of Cultures and Societies. from cross-societal Analysis to the Study of Intercultural Interdependencies." *Comparative Education* 42 (3). p. 379.
[124] Siegrist, Hannes. 2006. "Comparative History of Cultures and Societies. from cross-societal Analysis to the Study of Intercultural Interdependencies." *Comparative Education* 42 (3). p. 380.

READING QUEER DIASPORIC IMAGES

As mentioned in the onset of this chapter, I contend that before we read queer images, we need to understand the dimensions and the ways in which viewers read trauma. When queer identity is intertwined with the single-narrative biography of Arab artists, the result is a clichéd expectation of queer failure, queer trauma, and Arab savagery. Queer identities are either left outside of this single-narrative biography, or they are central to it. Both cases reinforce the binaries of queer identity being rejected in the unmodern Middle East, contrasted with the freedom of sexual and artistic expression seen in Western artists. It is the inherent association with trauma and queerness that compounds the racial logics of the single-narrative biography to once again limit the reading of full, nuanced lives and the multiplicities of experiences within Arab art production. As the subsequent chapters of this dissertation will explore, the single-narrative biography can truly be dismantled productively when queer embodiment is visualized in complicated ways and in relation to other facets of subject formation. This means that trauma is never the driving force in reading the artworks within this dissertation, but rather that the assemblage of queer and racial diasporic identities are articulated through visual analysis. Colonial trauma, imperial violence and historical suffering are not an assumed truth based on the ethnic or national identity of the artist; instead these dimensions are developed out of a nuanced analysis that uses horizontal writing of both art history and queer theory as an exercise in relational comparison being its driving force. The problematics discussed within this chapter are necessary to inform both racialized and queer trauma in order to work beyond the single-narrative biography into a more thoughtful historical analysis. It is important to identify that reading queer trauma is linked to the single-narrative biography in the association queer Middle Eastern identity has to compulsory queer failure and orientalist ideas of savage unprogressiveness.

Likewise, these theories inform how we read diasporic images. While Middle Eastern suffering was the broad subject of this chapter, all artists and institutions analyzed were either diasporic or currently located in the West. Reading diasporic images is absolutely a component of this logic, and diasporic artists face the same issues with their artwork not in spite of the single-narrative biography but because of it. The refugee experience of artist Wafaa Bilal and the diasporic experience analyzed in the artwork of Larissa Sansour are absolutely tied to issues of an assumed singular Arab experience that limit the full reading of their nuanced artwork. Diasporic art in particular is interwoven with the racial dimensions of Arab art more broadly. This is due in part to the binary structure of progress and civilization that is rooted in orientalism and Western modernity: a centre-periphery or us-and-them binary which structurally disempowers the Middle East and is a barrier that the diaspora also faces in North America.

Ultimately, this chapter contends that the single-narrative biography is the real culprit of creating a clichéd identity and leading to reductive understandings of the art produced by people of colour. The problematics addressed here are that artworks by Arab artists are still read through the single-narrative biography, and that is the predominant lens from which Arab art histories are written. The situation for Arab artists is not necessarily different in North America than the Black, Latinx, and racialized artists they work alongside. The main issue is that the single-narrative biography that reduces the artwork of people of colour to being about only a select handful of themes is what cripples the full reading of postcolonial art. There are particularities that the Arab artist faces in a post-9/11 context, so essentialism has manifested itself in a very visible way affecting the reading of Arab art. Because of this, it is important to separate the artist from the expectation of certain modes of artistic production based on cultural heritage and personal identity. The critique of the artist "biography" may not be the real issue here, for biography is central to identity and identity is central to these concerns; the culprit is the *single-narrative biography* when

it creates only limited expressions of complicated experiences.

This reconceptualization of not just the historical narratives being told, but the focus of why certain narratives are told, is a way of escaping these shadows of representation that follow Arab bodies and contemporary Arab artists. While such a project is historic in nature, re-working the very foundation of Arab art, its aesthetics, and its history both within the Middle East and in dominant art history will be productive in informing the ways in which contemporary Arab art is understood. The baggage of representation as outlined in this analysis does not start its problematic solely with the poor depiction of the Middle East in the media, but is multifariously informed by the ways in which these images are positioned within a wider history. Both narratives of the Middle East being associated with "bad news", or Arab art as being unmodern and deficient, have baggage in the very value that is associated with Middle Eastern history and Arab subjects. This historic dismissal of value and worth, as reflected in Myrna Ayad's quote at the start of this analysis, plays a role in informing the inherent associations between Arab art and conflict, and with images that posit Arabs as being perpetually unable to reach modernity, productivity, and peace.

This chapter has analyzed dilemmas in interpreting and understanding the visual art produced in the Middle East and by the Arab diaspora. But what if the issues are more systemic than the artworks produced and the ways in which audiences interpret them? What if the very structures that exhibit, analyze and theorize artworks by people of colour are not fully accounting for the complex realities of a networked and globalized world? In the next chapter, I will take a more macro approach to this discussion and analyze notions of "worlding" and how methodologies within global art histories can evolve to include complex racial dimensions of nationalism, colonialism, and nation-states. As I will introduce the *Islamicate,* the primary method used within my dissertation, it is important to build on the ideas of horizontal art history mentioned here in order to disassemble centre-periphery epistemologies that define the canon. Later, in Chapter

Three, *Decolonizing the History of Sexuality*, these horizontal approaches to art history will be coupled with horizontal queer theory, creating a praxis. As a whole, these first three chapters lay the foundation for the entire framework of my dissertation project, and foreground various postcolonial and antiracist methods and strategies for analyzing the art production of the queer Middle Eastern diaspora.

CHAPTER TWO

DECOLONIAL METHODS: THE ISLAMICATE AS FRAMEWORK

Current theorizations of modern art reveal the dominance of colonial and imperial epistemological structures within art history: the exclusion of multiple sites of modernity and the entrenchment of binaries that relegate non-Western aesthetic languages as offshoots to dominant Western art movements. While studies of globalization and diaspora have challenged the authority of nation-state identities and rigid cultural categorization, art histories are still written through centre-periphery models that maintain Euro-American exceptionalism. How, then, can global art histories productively be written in a way that dismantles the centre-periphery binary that maintains such colonial structures?[125] Art history as a discipline is currently undergoing a radical transformation that accounts for transnational connections in the global art world and challenges Eurocentric historiographies currently in place.[126] As art historian Ming Tiampo argues,

> [a]rticulating a World Art History is one of the most urgent issues facing art historians today, in both the academy and the museum. However, most attempts face a double bind: ambitious global narratives lack specificity and historical rigor, while precise micro-

[125] The groundwork for this chapter was inspired by a collaborative project with Victoria Nolte and a panel we chaired for the College Art Association. At the 106th CAA annual conference, which took place in Los Angeles in 2018, we prepared a panel focusing on diaspora and global art history. Working through these complex issues of globalization with scholars of world art, global art studies, and diasporic art stimulated the way I theorize global narratives and diaspora studies in my own work.

[126] Scholars such as Terry Smith, Paul Wood, Elaine O'Brien, Anna Brzyski, James Elkins, and Ming Tiampo, amongst others, aim to complicate the narratives of global art histories and determine a historical narrative that does not "other" non-Western art as periphery and derivative of the European canon.

> histories neglect range and the conceptual importance of rethinking larger art historical narratives.[127]

For any such global narrative to take place, art historians and critics are first faced with unpacking and identifying the baggage associated with the Western canon, and the pitfalls associated with the entire system of cultural appraisal. The canon, defined as a body of works traditionally considered to be the most significant and, therefore, the most worthy of study, has been lately theorized as a mechanism of oppression, a guardian of privilege, and a vehicle for exclusion.[128] As art historian Anna Brzyski states in the introduction of the edited book *Partisan Canons*, art history has been structurally committed to the idea of tradition.[129] Brzyski and fellow contributors question where canons are formed, by whom, and how they are maintained, illuminating that until recently, such questions had largely been ignored and accepted as unproblematic. Within art history, this attention to global systems works side by side with the development of "world art studies."[130] As Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme argue, it is through a combined global and multidisciplinary approach that world art studies are creating a new framework in the study of art. Art historian John Onians first introduced the concept of world art studies in 1996. He suggested that this new field of study be not only global in orientation, but also multidisciplinary in approach.[131] Within the

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[127] Tiampo, Ming. "Transversal Articulations: Decolonial Modernism and the Slade School of Fine Art," in Okwui Enwezor and Atreyee Gupta eds. *Postwar – A Global Art History, ca. 1945-1965*. Durham: Duke University Press, Forthcoming.

[128] Brzyski, Anna, Robert Jensen, James Elkins, James Cutting, and Paul Duro (eds.) *Partisan Canons*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 1.

[129] *Ibid*., p. 5.

[130] Within art history, this follows the recent trend of World Art Studies. As Kitty Zijlmans & Wilfried van Damme argue, through its combined global and multidisciplinary approach, world art studies is creating a new framework in the study of art. Within the mapping of world art studies, postcolonial studies can be seen as an approach that is particularly concerned with the impact of colonialism and its aftermath on art and culture. Wilfried van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans (eds), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008.

[131] John Onians, "World Art Studies and the Need for a New Natural History of Art", in: *The Art Bulletin* 78:2 (1996), p. 206-209.

mapping of world art studies, postcolonial theory can be a useful approach, which is particularly concerned with the impact of colonialism and its aftermath on art and culture.[132]

To problematize and advance the ways in which art historical narratives risk flattening colonial histories, this chapter is informed by the approaches of comparative transnationalisms, notions of "worlding",[133] and the limits of current art historical models. I aim to address the following concerns: What does decolonizing the study and writing of art history look like? How can anti-colonial research be spotlighted, rather than existing as peripheral engagements with dominant (and Eurocentric) modes of representation and discourse? Understanding that knowledge production is one of the major sites in which imperialism operates and exercises its power, how can we decolonize the structural limits that currently condition knowledge production? I argue that to globalize art history is not simply to mention or pay lip service to other locales within the history of art. Globalizing and decentring histories need to be more integrative, and incorporate fully the

[132] As I situate my research within the broader disciplinary literature, I do not ignore that this discussion has already been taking place among Islamic art scholars. The limits of the term 'Islamic art' and the questioning of its effectiveness as an artistic category or cultural signifier has been debated within the field. Instead, my research is aligned with scholarship on global art histories and studies on colonial/multiple modernities. I do this purposefully as I find it important to have these methodological debates with the wider discipline and not only between scholars of Islamic art. I position myself with these theories in order to shift the discussion to instead focus on colonial borders, nation-state identities, and the maintenance of colonial boundaries. This is a way of bringing critical race theory into productive dialogue with art history as a discipline, and advancing questions and theorization of Islamic art to account for wider methodological concerns, and not only be confined within the study of Arab, Islamic, or Middle Eastern art.

[133] Dr. Ming Tiampo first introduced me to this term in a public lecture, where she presented a paper exploring new ways of implementing and developing world art histories. The concept of "worlding" is also inspired by the work of Heidegger, Pheng Cheah's work on world literature and cosmopolitanism, and Sonal Khullar's research on worldly affiliations within Indian artistic practices. See: Pheng Cheah, *What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016; Sonal Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations: Artistic Practice, National Identity, and Modernism in India, 1930–1990*, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015.

histories of multiple locales in order to examine how they speak to one another and engage with each other in terms of their own relationships to power and representation.

I introduce the *Islamicate* as a method of global art histories, which I contend is a useful museological and art historical framework to critique epistemologies of knowledge production and dissemination within museums. As a case study and potential methodology, the Islamicate brings together global narratives and world art studies and is meant to be one instance where world art history as a theoretical and disciplinary shift can be put into praxis, and global studies of art history can then be theorized in its application within both the academy and the museum. The concept of the Islamicate is a primary method used throughout this dissertation and provides a complex framework for linking various areas around North Africa, the Middle East, parts of Asia, and notably the diaspora—areas that would otherwise be excluded from traditional ideas of what territories constitute the Middle East. Overall, the Islamicate is a core concept within this chapter and within my dissertation, but it is only one of many possible answers to some of the larger methodological problems facing global art histories. This is a case study rooted in practice, and it has immediate practical implications for the museum and for the academy.[134]

THE ISLAMICATE: SHIFTING REPRESENTATION

[134] The goal is not to replace one grand-narrative with another, nor is it to introduce a stable definition or guideline for what constitutes the *Islamicate.* I do not believe in neatly demarcating the parameters of what constitutes and does not constitute Islamic art, or what cultures and nation-state identities should be a part of the Islamicate. Such guidelines, I feel, foreclose the very possibilities that a framework like the Islamicate can offer, and these restrictions can lead to reproducing the very disciplinary limitations I aim to combat. Instead, I wish to open up the linguistic and methodological frameworks within art history in order to offer an alternative approach to discuss art histories within a global turn. It is more important that this framework allow for the incorporation of diasporic identities that do not fit neatly in nation-state identities, and complicate the borders that define these identities.

In 1974, historian Marshall G.S. Hodgson published *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, and coined the term 'Islamicate' as a way of opening up the borders posed by modern scholarship, which is also found in current museum structures, both institutionally and thematically within exhibitions. First, Hodgson identifies the issue in using the term 'Islam' and 'Islamic' in unspecific ways. He argues that it has become common in modern scholarship to use the terms 'Islam' and 'Islamic' too casually, signifying both the religion itself and the overall society and culture historically associated with the religion. Hodgson stresses that "one can speak of 'Islamic literature', of 'Islamic art', of 'Islamic philosophy', even of 'Islamic despotism', but in such a sequence one is speaking less and less of something that expresses Islam as a faith."[135]

Underlying museum structures are colonial epistemologies of knowledge that are predicated on suppressive colonial borders and Eurocentric imperial connections to culture, and this leads to museum departments being structured around geo-political borders. Exhibition themes that result from such structures often lead to overarching representation of the 'Arab Islamic World.'[136] For this reason, I turn to Hodgson's terminology of the *Islamicate* as a way of reimagining the parameters in which art from these areas of the world is theorized, organized, and exhibited. Hodgson states the following:

> For this, I have used the adjective 'Islamicate'. I thus restrict the term 'Islam' to the *religion* of the Muslims, not using that term for the far more general phenomena, the society of Islamdom and its Islamicate cultural traditions […] The adjective 'Islamic', correspondingly, must be restricted to 'of or pertaining to' Islam *in the proper, the religious, sense*, and of this it will be harder to persuade some. When I speak of 'Islamic literature' I am referring only to more or less 'religious' literature, not to secular wine songs, just as when one speaks of Christian literature one does not refer to all the literature produced in Christendom. When I speak of 'Islamic art' I imply some sort of distinction between the

[135] Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, p. 57.
[136] Instances of these generalities can be seen in exhibitions like the permanent collection display *Arts of the Islamic World* at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC.

> architecture of mosques on the one hand, and the miniatures illustrating a medical handbook on the other – even though there is admittedly no sharp boundary between.[137]

I propose a reading into the Islamicate that can foster new meanings to not only 'Islamic art' but art from other regions of the world that share colonial histories and are linked intermittently in various ways.[138] The 'Islamicate' therefore refers not directly to the religion of Islam itself, but to the social and cultural complexities historically associated with Islam, Muslims, and is inclusive of non-Muslims living within the same region.[139] This means that the Islamicate is not confined to describing the art of Islamic culture, Islamic people, or even Islam itself. It is necessarily inclusive of a number of populations who are not Muslim and the many layers of cultural and historical contributions over the centuries, particularly from Christians and Jews.

I assert that the Islamicate as a framework can serve as a way of criticizing and restructuring the current museum model that focuses on nation-state identities, and it provides a useful example of how world art studies can be implemented institutionally. In productively dissolving the borders that hold rich cultural histories between rigidly defined temporal boundaries, we can create interesting dialogues in exhibitions that could be supported structurally at the museums' level of organization, and their organization of culture. These semantics are not trivial, and as critical race theorist Rinaldo Walcott argues, "the politics of naming, in a very specific way, is central to the

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[137] Marshall Hodgson, op. cit. (note 12), p. 58-59 (emphasis in original).
[138] It should be noted that since 1974 the term 'Islamicate' is widely used within other disciplines such as history, philosophy and cultural theory. However, museums and art history have not adopted this language and method of cultural organization as readily, resulting in the issues outlined in this chapter. The 'Islamicate' may prove more useful for future research and this is reflected in new titles adopting this more flexible language, such as Sussan Babaie and Melanie Gibson edited volume, *The Mercantile Effect: Art and Exchange in the Islamicate World During the 17th and 18th Centuries* (2019).
[139] *Ibid*., p. 59.

governmentality of heritage as it frames exactly how one officially belongs to the nation."[140] This methodology provides a way to further our understandings of colonial histories, and the ways in which nation-states can be re-imagined and re-contextualized in post-colonial ways. Therefore, as a case study, the Islamicate acts as a common thread that can help pose instances of clarification, mediation, and sometimes complication.[141] In thinking of the Islamicate as a curatorial and museological tool, one needs to ask: how would current exhibitions on the Middle East change if they were Islamicate in intention? What different narratives could be told if the Islamicate was the central mode or organization? How would thematic exhibitions then change if the Islamicate was institutionalized within museum departments and official mandates?

Curator of the Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates and president of the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF), Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi, has experienced similar struggles analogue to the politics of naming while curating art from the Middle East. In an interview with *The Globe and Mail*, Al-Qasimi says that

> [a] lot of [Western] institutions visit and scout and do research and find interesting work […] But there's this problem with packaging artists into one geographical definition… Is it Middle East to what? Or is it Middle East, not Africa? Or if you are Middle East, are you including other countries like Turkey and Iran? Or if you're looking Arab-wide, then you have to include North Africa because that's also Arab. Then Sudan is also Arab.[142]

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[140] Rinaldo Walcott, 'Caribbean Pop Culture in Canada: Or, the Impossibility of Belonging to the Nation', in: *Small Axe* 5:1 (2001), p. 128.

[141] I would like to note that the curatorial program at the Aga Khan Museum of Islamic Art in Toronto, Canada is starting to move in this direction. With their permanent collection of historic Islamic art spanning the Muslim presence in Spain, Turkey, and Hindustan (the North and West of the Indian subcontinent), Islamic history is being reconceived and retold in ways that illustrate colonial borders and encounters productively. While the word 'Islamicate' does not appear anywhere in the galleries of the permanent collection, the value of re-conceptualizing the ways histories and cultures are organized and grouped in museums, and the narrative histories these exhibition groupings permit, becomes clear.

[142] Adams, James. "Taking a look into the Arab art world", in: *The Globe and Mail*, 8 November, 2015. Accessed through: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/taking-a-look-into-the-arab-art-world/article27156762/ on 6 January, 2018.

Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi suggests that thematic representations that incorporate many geographic regions might be most productive.[143] Al-Qasimi's statement above is indicative of the barriers that might prohibit such thematic exhibitions from taking place, especially when institutional models still seek to package artists into one geographical definition. In fact, the need for more specific language becomes clear when analyzing the terminology the Sharjah Art Museum uses. 'Arab Art' is used to describe their collection rather than terms like 'Islamic' or 'Middle Eastern', thus allowing for possibilities (and a museological framework) to include art that is not bound by Islam per se. Being one of the rare instances in which a museum actively uses the tactical designation of 'Arab Art' to define its collection, this illustrates the consideration of these issues and gives the museum the opportunity to exhibit artists from the Gulf regions while also including artists from around the Middle East and North Africa. This is in line with scholars re-defining the very limits of such terminology. Art historian Nada Shabout outlines in her edited volume *In New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*. Shabout distinguishes between 'Arab art' and 'Islamic art', stating that "Arab Art […] I loosely define as adhering to an aesthetic formula that is modern and distinct from that of Islamic Art, and that embraces a plurality of experiments and visions united by a conscious negotiation of cultural elements."[144] For Shabout, the difference between Arab and Islamic art lies in modernity, and the aesthetics associated with modern art rather than a more historic Islamic art tradition. While a step in the right direction, the terminology of 'Arab' or 'Middle Eastern' can still fall short when compared to the Islamicate. This is because the geopolitical designations of using the 'Middle East' or the cultural designations of using 'Arab'

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[143] At a public lecture in Toronto, I had the opportunity to ask about Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi the very concerns raised within this chapter. See: 10th Annual Eva Holtby Lecture on Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum. Sheikha Hoor Al-Qasimi lecture on 'Art and Culture in the Gulf', November 10, 2015.

[144] Shabout, Nada. 'Contemporaneity Art in the Arab World', in: Nada Shabout (ed.), *In New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, London: TransGlobe Publishing, 2011, p. 16.

would fail as measures of adequate "worlding" and also lack in providing the lateral connections needed within global art histories. Aside from the Sharjah Art Museum and its specific collections, when it comes to broader theoretical concerns, neither 'Arab' or 'Middle Eastern' would be inclusive of predominantly Muslim regions like Pakistan and Bangladesh in South Asia. The value of bringing these regions into dialogue is clear, and is reflected in the coinage of the MENASA region (Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia) in cultural studies. Here, the Islamicate would provide a framework where the MENASA and diaspora could be engaged with productively, and possibly account for more geographic spheres that this ever-extending acronym might benefit from.[145]

Arguably, the majority of 'Islamic art' collections in the West are too broadly labelled, and often exhibit non-religious Middle Eastern or Arab art, including Christian art from those regions. According to Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, world art studies as a discipline calls for scholarly attention to the interculturalization within the arts. This refers to the artistic influences that are exerted by one culture or tradition onto another, or the mutual artistic cross-fertilization that takes place between two or more sites of study.[146] Traditionally, the concept of interculturalization, or transculturation, has had a legacy of encompassing only one-way traffic of cultural encounter that has become attached to initial concepts of acculturation. With the mislabelled "Islamic art" collections hindering these connections, the Islamicate transcends nation-

[145] At the University of Toronto art history symposium, which took place on March 9th 2018, art historian Iftikhar Dadi cautioned against throwing away old terminology that we deem insufficient, and instead he finds it more productive to push current language to hold new meanings. I would like to stress that the Islamicate is not meant to provide a new word or definition. Rather, I push the terminology that was already coined by Hodgson in 1974 to better encompass the complexity of Islamic art, and test the limits of current disciplinary language and its effect on knowledge production within museums in order to better theorize the incompatibilities that rigid geography-based methodologies pose in studying diasporic and transnational identities.

[146] Wilfried van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans (eds), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008.

state and arbitrary colonial borders to better elucidate a potentially two-way process of cultural exchanges, in this case specifically artistic exchanges, and the complex histories that can arise at these intersections. Scholars of global art histories, such as Steven Nelson, Reiko Tomii, Iftikhar Dadi, Sonal Khullar, and even world literature scholar Pheng Cheah, have also articulated the need for these issues of geography to be addressed, some fearing that such strong geographic anchors work to disallow a broader art-historical record based in materials and practices.[147]

To foreground the need for such methodology, it is important to stress that museum exhibitions are sites of knowledge production. Unfortunately, museum structures themselves can limit the ways cultural exchanges are displayed and curated. Museums are frequently organized into colonial, region-specific departments, such as Asian, Islamic Middle East, South and South-East Asian, or Near East.[148] The epistemologies underlying these separations materialize at the thematic level of exhibition curating. Colonial borders are maintained and complex histories are dissolved, flattened, or ignored, and countries then vie for representation and inclusion. An instance of contention would be deciding whether to include Iranian art in an exhibition of Arab art, or works from Turkish artists. The same is true for the difficult decision to include Indian art alongside Chinese art, which share a continent but have vastly different geo-cultural traditions. For instance, which department could fit a nation like Kurdistan within its geographic-based structure? With colonial borders

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[147] Steven Nelson, 'Conversation Without Borders', in: Jill H. Casid and Aruna D'Souza, *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, p. 85.

[148] One is example is the Asian Art department at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Like in other institutions, "the collections of the Asian Department are very broad in terms of chronology, geography and media. They cover a period of more than 5000 years, from 3,500 BC to the present day, and a huge region that encompasses China, Korea and Japan, South-East Asia, from Burma to Indonesia, Pakistan, India and the other countries of South Asia, Central Asia, from Tibet to the Caspian Sea and the Middle East." 'Asian Department', accessed through: http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/asian-department/, on 14 April 2018.

separating Kurdistan and making it part of Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, how can the art and history of Kurdistan exist both within a department of a museum, and thematically within exhibitions? When asking such questions, departmental structures in museums become an unspecific way of grouping and organizing cultures, bound by colonial categories and nation-state borders that limit their representation and lateral connections. It is through these lateral connections that, I argue, post-colonial narratives can take place, and links of colonial histories and pasts are then created in a productive fashion that reveal the ways in which boundaries and borders are maintained. These questions outline the problems and gaps within current museum models, and the need to explore the practical application of different museological approaches that bring postcolonial inquiry and critical race theory in further dialogue with museum studies.

It is important to question the very politics of naming and identification, for the sheer inclusion of such histories within the history of art is a newer development. The study of the visual arts from cultures with an oral tradition rather than a textual tradition like in Africa, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the Americas was at first left mainly to cultural anthropologists. It is during the second half of the twentieth century that art historians increasingly examined these art forms. Art historians "doing field work" adopted the methods and approaches of anthropologists to a large extent, and their work tended not to be published in mainstream art historical journals.[149] Because of this struggle, it is vital that frameworks like the Islamicate be adopted in museum models institutionally and not only at the thematic discretion of individual curators, for the risk is too high to fall back

[149] Van Damme, Wilfried. 'Introducing World Art Studies', in: Wilfried van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans (eds), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008, p. 55.

within the boundaries already drawn in the sand by the disciplinary and institutional structures historically upheld and currently in place.[150]

LATERAL CONNECTIONS: LOCAL-TO-LOCAL

The case study examined in this section illustrates how the Islamicate reinforces and provides a solid example for the disciplinary shift in global art histories. It does so in its facilitation of lateral connections between locales, and its complication of the questions of geography within art history. These lateral, local-to-local connections not only wrest art history away from nationalist frameworks, but they also have the potential of eclipsing Eurocentrism.

In his chapter of *Art History: In the Wake of the Global Turn*, art historian Steven Nelson writes about a conference panel at the Clark Art Institute in November 2011 dedicated to these pressing issues. He explains how panellists of this conference on the 'global turn' of art history asked whether current geographic categories—Africa, Eastern Europe, West Asia—still held meaning.[151] The scholars of the roundtable wondered whether there were other kinds of formations that would enhance and push forward art historical inquiry. They asked how one might theorize geography, what would be the role of art and art history (academic as well as curatorial practice) in doing such work, and whether we had the tools to describe what is going on in the world.[152] In fact, the conference and its working groups seemed dedicated to discussing a new order of shifting

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[150] Conceptually, I connect the Islamicate to notions of transnationalism and diaspora in the ways it offers a new way of envisioning a more complex understanding of cultural circulation, heritage formation, and community outside of colonial nation-state definitions that ignore imperial histories.
[151] Nelson, Steven. 'Conversation Without Borders', in: Jill H. Casid and Aruna D'Souza, *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
[152] *Ibid*., p. 85.

away from geographic boundaries within the study of art history, and how this method of inquiry could be feasible. To this day, scholars of global art histories are still grappling with the same concerns. It is through these issues and positioning of my research that I consider the case study of the Islamicate to be a demonstrable exercise in pushing the limits and boundaries of these questions and concerns.

In terms of methods, it is imperative to explore the praxis of re-thinking art history in a global context while still paying rigorous attention to the local. A risk of global theorizations is the rise of an uncritical world art history, and its effect on both comparative work and research that focuses on the local. It is with these concerns in mind that the Islamicate is applied as an art historical model both attentively and self-reflexively. For instance, art historian Reiko Tomii values making connections and finding resonances between artists from different geographic regions around the world. As she locates similarities between Japanese artists and non-Japanese artists, she impressively links the artists' local practices to the global narrative and illuminates the fundamentally "similar yet dissimilar" characteristics of their work.[153] Therefore, to quantify the uses of such global measures and their querying of geographic boundaries within art history, it is important to discuss the complications of the local within this globalization to avoid a reduction of theoretical concerns.

As a way of rethinking an exhibition strategy by incorporating the Islamicate, I focus on the exhibition *Embellished Reality: Indian Painted Photographs* held at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, Canada in 2012. The exhibition, curated by Deepali Dewan, explored a transcultural history of photography. The exhibition catalogue explains that the methods of hand-painted photography were "introduced in the latter half of the nineteenth century, at a time when

[153] Tomii, Reiko. *Radicalism in the Wilderness: International Contemporaneity and 1960s Art in Japan*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2016, p. 12.

the world was seemingly getting smaller through ever-increasing trade, travel, and tourism, [and] painted photographs gave colour to black-and-white images of a changing world and new ways of being."[154] As the exhibition traces the evolution of painted photographs in India from the 1860s to the 2000s, the catalogue "explores photographic history in India and in Europe to show how Indian painted photographs fit into both local and transcultural practices of photographic manipulation."[155]

I question, with a transcultural historiography of photography being an objective of the show, what types of histories could have been brought to the fore if hand-painted photography were examined within other "similar yet dissimilar" locales as well. Take for instance hand-painted photography in Egypt. The Middle East played a critical role in the development of photography both as a new technology and as an art form. Many European photographers travelled to the Middle East to amass portfolios of Egyptian antiquity, sites of holy lands, and the exotic Other, making the region one of the principal training grounds for the early practice of photography.[156] But what could the development of the photographic medium in a site such as Egypt offer to the development of photography in India? With Egypt first colonized by the French in 1798, and later enduring British occupation in 1882, colonialism and its interlocutors could be seen as a powerful link between the vastly different regions. While India has had a longer and more vexed relationship with colonization, being imperially under Dutch, Danish, French, British, and Portuguese rules, India

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[154] Dewan, Deepali and Olga Zotova, *Embellished Reality: Indian Painted Photographs*, Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum Press, 2011. This catalogue accompanies an exhibition of the same title, *Embellished Reality: Indian Painted Photographs*, held at the ROM from June 4, 2011 to June 17, 2012. The cited text appears on the dust jacket of the catalogue. The catalogue itself is more specific and is comprised of two coherent essays, one dealing with the history and development of the painted photograph in India and the other with the study of the use of color in the manipulation of these images.

[155] *Ibid*.

[156] Behdad, Ali and Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013, p. 1.

was under British rule during the period photography was invented and developed. Therefore, the technological development of photography during these same periods could help outline another historiography: one of photography's involvements with colonial expansion and capitalism. If there had been a small component of the exhibition or catalogue to discuss hand-painted photography in Egypt, interesting ruptures would have occurred within traditional histories and understandings of photography. The relationship between hand-painted photography in India, Egypt, and the capitalism that closely followed the colonial European travellers seeking such photographs, I contend, could have created new dimensions of studies within this history of photography.

Philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak coined the term "comparison in extremis" as referring to a comparative analysis that focuses on situations of extreme violence as a way of revealing underlying structures of power.[157] In fact, Spivak coined this term in an explicit critique of comparative studies (which is a major discourse in the discipline of area studies) in order to foster a close reading that is enabled by the deep knowledge of language, culture, and history. Therefore, "comparison in extremis" is a form of comparison that teases out, stresses, or performs differences (including epistemological differences), and the theory emerges out of a context of unacknowledged suffering and the invisibility of subaltern identities.[158] Using the comparison of colonial histories between Egypt and India as an example, the Islamicate therefore fosters this close reading, and the "comparison in extremis" illustrates how European travellers purchased hand-

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[157] Spivak, Gayatri. 'Rethinking Comparativism', in: *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of* Globalization, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 475.

[158] In 1988 Gayatri Spivak published her influential essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' The term 'subaltern' designates the populations which are socially, politically, and geographically outside of dominant and hegemonic power structures. The essay contends that western academic thinking is produced in order to support western economic interests. Spivak holds that knowledge is never innocent and that it expresses the interests of its producers. For Spivak, knowledge is like any other commodity that holds imbalanced power dynamics between the global south and global north. Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in: Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

painted photographs of the pyramids and of local populations in Cairo that fed into a highly orientalized vision of the Middle East. These then have strong connections to the history of image making in India and their own colonial ties to the British Empire, and perhaps influence how they informed and cited each other.

Zijlmans and Van Damme have outlined that there are three fundamental topics that warrant attention once we start looking at the visual arts across time and place: the first concern is the origins of art, the second topic is intercultural comparison, and the third is the cross-fertilization of artistic tradition between cultures.[159] As illustrated through this exhibition, the Islamicate provides a way of operationalizing world art studies, as it becomes a methodology to address each one of these concerns. The capitalist function of photography comes to the fore and provides a fuller picture of hand-painted photography and its origins. The intercultural comparison between Egypt and India, however controversial, opens up a range of fundamental questions concerning the place and role of visual arts within the history of colonialism. Finally, the cross-fertilization that occurs because of colonial expansion and the very transportability of photographs leads to discussions about artistic exchanges between cultures, and removes the invention and development of photography from its often-Eurocentric bubble. Therefore, the strategic inclusion of different, but closely related locales, illustrates a history of hand-painted photography that then becomes deeply enmeshed in issues of capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism. As literary theorist Walter Mignolo advocates for a decolonial methodology of comparison that focuses on the colonial matrix of power that shapes the production of knowledge, the Islamicate does just that.[160] The exhibition's aim of developing a more robust transcultural history of photography would have been well supported by

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[159] Van Damme, Wilfried. op. cit. (note 11), p. 27-29.
[160] Mignolo, Walter. 'On Comparison: Who is Comparing What and Why?', in: Rita Felski and Susan Friedman (eds), *Comparison: Theories, Approaches,* Uses, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, p. 6.

globalizing methodologies like the Islamicate, and a more global art historical narrative could have been developed through the study of hand painted photographs in Egypt.

It is important to note that I do not wish to remove the study of a specific locale, nor do I wish to homogenize or group together all histories and temporalities. As scholars Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman question how constructive comparison, or relational thinking, can be used productively to rethink history in postcolonial and global contexts, they find value in exploring new special modes of analysis based on networks, interrelations and circulations.[161] I do contend that an exhibition of painted photography in India, like that of Dewan's, has great value. However, asking these important questions tests the types of knowledge that can be expanded upon and produced when the geography-based structures of museums are seen as hindering rather than fostering lateral connections.

To achieve what I advocate for, the conceptual framework of the exhibition in question would not need to be changed from exhibiting Indian hand-painted photographs to being an exhibition on Indian *and* Egyptian hand-painted photographs. I think that the inclusion of another locale such as Cairo can happen productively in an exhibition that is solely about Indian photography, for instance. Such inclusions may happen as ruptures throughout an exhibition, incorporated as a part of exhibition texts, and used within public programming. As historian Sebastian Conrad argues in his book, *What is Global History?,* global and world historians cannot *simply* focus on the links and connections. Instead, Conrad explains how "connections need to be embedded in processes of structural transformation."[162] His concept of integration goes beyond connectedness, and stresses that global history is not a history of globalization. Rather, it focuses

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[161] *Ibid*., p. 1.
[162] Conrad, Sebastian. *What Is Global History?*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016, p. 64–65.

on the degree to which world regions were integrated into global systems, and the relative material, cultural, and political impacts of their relationships to global structures. Therefore, studies and exhibitions of specific locales should certainly still exist, but imagining the complexity of that narrative when structured in relation to the colonial and imperial history of another locale could add dimensions to an art history that would have gotten buried through more traditional curatorial practices and art historical writing that is built along limited geographic boundaries. Through this integration of global systems, new art historical accounts become uncovered and complicate the Eurocentric canon that has been complicit in excluding such narratives from traditional historiography.

DE-PROBLEMATIZING THE ISLAMICATE

Oppositional views against more globalized narratives and decentred approaches to the history of art are worried about the disciplinary implications of disrupting the status quo. As scholars have argued, it is this exact worry that keeps the centre-periphery dynamic within the discipline.[163] With the West's political and economic power being greatly undermined within art history, a common avoidance of these global narratives insists upon the inescapability of the Eurocentrism of art history. As art historian Aruna D'Souza points out, with this mentality, Eurocentrism becomes a policing structure, a maintenance strategy that reproduces its perimeter by insisting that one cannot participate in art history meaningfully without simply contributing to its ideological boundaries that are inherently Eurocentric.[164] It is because of the too readily dismissed ideas of de-centring

[163] See the research of Kobena Mercer, Steven Nelson, Paul Dave-Mukherji, David J. Roxbergh, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Jill Casid, Aruna D'Souza, and others.
[164] Aruna D'Souza, 'Introduction', in: Jill H. Casid and Aruna D'Souza, *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, p. XV.

and de-canonizing that I find it necessary to de-problematize a methodology like the Islamicate. In thinking through the limitations of such ideas throughout this analysis, I contend that other theories that work with concepts of global art histories will be better equipped to develop and build on one another and create an incontestable argument for other postcolonial frameworks.

This analysis has outlined the pitfalls of thematic exhibitions when museum departments are organized too rigidly around geographic and often colonial borders. It becomes clear that an uncritical global system of cultural organization is not the answer, and has the potential to reinforce the Eurocentrism present within art historical canons and traditional historiographies. In returning to museums and their either non-specific or too-narrowly geographic categories, I wonder where the Islamicate would fit in between these two oppositional museum structures. Would the Islamicate function as another geographic category alongside Asian Art, Indian Art, and African Art? Could the Islamicate function productively alongside, or alternately, instead of, these geography-based structures as a way of providing possibility and flexibility for the cultures that do not fit so neatly within constructed colonial borders? I have outlined the problems and gaps within the current museum and art historical models, and future scholarship needs to explore the practical application of other critical museological approaches that bring critical race theory and postcolonialism in further dialogue with museum studies.

Within this dissertation, the Islamicate methodology allows for Syrian-American artist Jamil Hellu to be analyzed alongside diasporic artists from different national identities, like Iranian-Canadian artist Ebrin Bagheri and Moroccan-Canadian artist 2Fik. Within formations of diaspora, the Islamicate holds new possibilities for conceptualizing the ways in which diasporic subjects are identified in relation to a singular nation-state and offers another framework to discuss diasporic entanglements with nation and empire. This is because the Islamicate is connected to notions of transnationalism and diaspora in the ways it offers a new way of envisioning a more complex

understanding of cultural circulation, heritage formation, and community outside of colonial nation-state definitions that ignore imperial histories. The Islamicate is also a noteworthy methodology when developed through an interdisciplinary queer theory lens, as I bring regions of the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia together in this study that would be left outside of academic paradigms regarding the "Middle East" as a stable geographic location. This framework de-centres the nation-state as being foundational to identity formation and brings together artists from these seemingly disparate nationalisms in order to illustrate how diaspora and nation-state identities hinder the ways in which complex cultural identification is articulated and understood. In this way, the Islamicate is used within this dissertation as a way of keeping imperialism at the forefront of the study of sexualities in order to situate how pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts have resisted complete colonization and continue to exist in the diaspora.

In this chapter I have laid the foundation of theorizing the Islamicate as a method to global art history and I have explained in depth the inadequacies of current language and epistemologies for studying cultural production in the Middle East. The Islamicate provides a valuable framework for my dissertation that allows me to link various geographies that are technically outside the Middle East, but are connected in important ways. As will be made clear in the next chapter, this method is important for the study of gender and sexuality in the Middle East as contact zones effectively changed gender discourses all across North Africa, West Asia, the Middle East, and the areas governed by the former Ottoman Empire. In order to adequately discuss these widely varying colonial histories in different geographic locations that are all undeniably tied to empire, the Islamicate is a way to theorize these concerns in a productive way. For these reasons, the Islamicate is not only the primary case study within this chapter, but it is also the primary method used throughout this dissertation to bring theoretical proximity to regions that would otherwise fall outside the purview of traditional understandings of what constitutes the Middle East or the Arab

world. Locating these hangovers from area studies that prevent a full understanding of imperial dimensions within cultural formation, this case study implemented the problem-centered approach mentioned earlier in the introduction. As the Islamicate and this problem-centered-approach forms a larger framework for my dissertation project, it is also an example of horizontal art histories being implemented through praxis in order to mitigate the ways in which centre-periphery dynamics are formed.

CHAPTER THREE

AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY: DIASPORA CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE QUEER DIASPORIC LENS

After establishing the Islamicate as a productive methodology and an example of world art studies, how can the history of sexuality be studied in a similarly postcolonial and decentered way? The fight to represent local experiences and histories of sexualities in the Middle East is a continuing challenge, partly due to the Eurocentric foundation on which the history of sexuality studies is built. Part of this issue comes from the mandatory starting point in addressing the history of sexuality within the academy, the canon of which includes Michel Foucault's seminal book series *History of Sexuality*. It is my contention that Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, while a valuable contribution to the field, does not adequately address the history of colonial violence the Western world committed on gender and sexuality in Islamicate regions. Because of this, it is important to examine the various sexualities and forms of desire that are excluded from Eurocentric histories of sexuality and contribute to non-Western ways of being as periphery. In this chapter I demonstrate the ways in which Foucault's *History of Sexuality* neglects to recognize the various ways gender and sexuality in the Middle East are understood, and the blind spots of racialized discourses created in this void.

In order to study a history of same-sex desire that de-centers Western epistemologies, I propose shifting the methodological approach to studying the history of coloniality rather than primarily centering history around a static and hegemonic concept like 'sexuality'.

Methodologically speaking, starting with the history of sexuality as a point of analysis pre-determines that there is a stable sexuality and universal sexual discourse available. As this chapter demonstrates, sexuality as an identity marker simply did not exist in pre-modern Islamicate regions. Non-Western sexual discourses that exist outside of such stable identity models—identity models of sexuality that are arguably Western constructs—start to unravel within this narrative. The dangers in using hegemonic sexuality structures as the starting point of analysis is that, slowly, the study of sexuality reifies itself as one primarily understood and accepted in the Global North, and insidiously cementing the West's imperial association with queer tolerance and progress. In keeping hegemonic concepts of sexuality as a methodological framework, working outside the Western model of sexual discourse is nearly impossible and binary thinking between East and West becomes even more engrained. In changing the assumptions about what sexuality means and looks like in other cultures, other stories are uncovered and un-othered. As a way of providing a critical literature review outlining the history of Islamicate sexualities, this chapter starts by outlining why it is important to decolonize and deconstruct Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, a key text for the study of sexuality in academia. I propose a map of studies that I suggest are important to rethink methods, epistemologies, and understandings of alternative histories of sexuality in the Middle East and Islamicate cultures. Lastly, these ideas culminate in the analysis of Syrian-American visual artist, Jamil Hellu, to illustrate the ways in which diaspora consciousness plays an integral role in ensuring that the pre-Modern sexual scripts and codes of desire that were perceived to be colonized by Western epistemological ways of being queer still exist today.

In this chapter I find it necessary to dismantle the mechanisms of imperialism and the colonial structures that exclude these very histories from being a part of dominant discourse. While not diminishing the contributions Foucault and his successors made to the discipline, I argue that the parameters and limits of understanding Islamicate desire are unproductively pre-determined

when *The History of Sexuality* becomes the canon and starting point for disciplinary scholarship. In Foucault's own words, "the history of sexuality—that is, the history of what functioned in the nineteenth century as a specific field of truth—must first be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses."[165] I propose doing just that, while also rejecting the very possibility of a stable sexuality and locating the structural and epistemological gaps that keep histories of Islamicate sexualities as periphery to the assumed universality a stable 'history of sexuality' holds.

COLONIAL MODERNITY AND ISLAMICATE DESIRE

Current literature engaging with Middle Eastern homosexuality is focused on issues of modernity, multiple modernities, and the West's claim to modernity. Modernity[166] as a time period signals social, political, and historic conditions at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century. Ultimately, the literature on Arab sexualities contends that the West created a discourse around sexuality that the Middle East never had, leading to the notion of homocolonialism (which I will discuss at length later in this chapter)—imperialist ideologies in the name of sexual tolerance. As a push against colonial forces and imperialism, homosexuality in the Middle East was then made into an illegal identity category, an identity category that many argue did not exist prior to this increased contact with Western explorers and travelers.[167]

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[165] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 69.

[166] Not to be confused with Modernism, which points to the cultural trends that respond to the conditions of Modernity in a myriad of ways, such as modern art.

[167] Colonial fantasies were very strong contributors to the binaries between a sexually salacious East and the more puritanical West, reinforcing these binaries. While European tourists shamed the Middle East for shameful display of same-sex intimacy, Romantic Orientalist European paintings, such as portraits of English poet Lord Byron (1788–1824) in fancy Oriental dress, expressed a European fascination with non-European homoeroticism and can be read as clearly flamboyant. Lord Byron himself echoed these very tensions with his love of colourful Eastern dress that began

Scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Irene Silverblatt, and Sonia Saldivar-Hull are but a few who question this new imperial structure of power and examine how modernity is used to colonize social and cultural practices in the name of Western advancement. They argue that modernity was formed by European philosophers, academics and politicians, and that modernity involves the colonization of time and space in order to create a border in relation to a self-determining Other and its own European identity. In this way, Europeans colonized the world and built on the ideas of Western civilization and modernity as the endpoints of historical time, with Europe as the centre of the world.[168] Mignolo also goes as far as to say that coloniality[169] is constitutive of modernity, and "there is no modernity without coloniality."[170]

The disregard of colonial power within Foucault's analysis of pre-modern sexual discourses, and the reductive distinction made between sexual identities (West) and sexual acts (East) in his binary development of the *ars eoritca* and *scientia sexualis*, work to flatten entire complex networks of desire and homosocial cultural attitudes. What I pay attention to is an

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as early as the age of fourteen, when he attended a masquerade dressed as a Turkish boy. As an adult he travelled through the Ottoman Empire, and it is clear from his correspondence that one of his main motives in setting out on extended travels in 1809–10 was a hope for homosexual experience. Eustathius Georgiou, a volatile Greek boy with "ambrosial curls," carried a parasol to protect his complexion from the sun that made Byron's valet cringe. The Franco-Greek Nicolo Giraud, with his limpid eyes, taught Byron Italian in Athens, taking a whole day to conjugate the verb "to embrace." By the end of Byron's stay in Greece he was boasting to his Methodist friends that he had achieved more than 200 "pl and opt Cs," their code for unlimited sexual intercourse taken from Petronius's *Satyricon* – "coitum plenum et optabilem." Later in life Byron joined the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire, for which Greeks revere him as a national hero. When Byron arrived back in England in the summer 1811, prejudice against homosexuals was on the rise, and he was exiled due to sodomy, a crime bearing the death sentence in homophobic nineteenth-century England. See Fiona MacCarthy's biography of Lord Byron, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2002).

[168] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[169] This is a term that Walter Mignolo uses in his writing, and signals modernity's elaborate façade of "civilizing" as its necessary foundation in the terror-logic of imperial rule. See Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, p. x.

[170] *Ibid*., p. 3.

alternative history of sexuality that centers coloniality to expand upon Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. This method will complicate the understanding of colonial discourses and their influences and impact on gender, sexuality, and all cultural and legal texts governing Islamicate bodies.[171]

To outline the foundation of Islamicate sexuality studies, I start by examining anthropological accounts of sexuality in the Arab world, a genre of scholarship that accounts for some of the earlier inquiries on the topic. Providing anthropological theories of the sexuality and gender norms of other cultures, their archives cannot be ignored as they "add greatly to current Western discourses about sexuality."[172] For this reason, Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe's collection *Islamic Homosexualities* from 1997 remains an important one. Moving beyond earlier and classically Orientalist writings by journalists and imperial travelers such as Schmitt and Sofer's *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies* (1992),[173] Murray and Roscoe's various contributions

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[171] Dr. Robert Aldrich's study, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (Routledge, 2003) is an example of this scholarship. However, this book lies outside of the dominant academic canon. Aldrich's study primarily focuses on micro-histories of male intimacy in imperial settings, examining a broad range of colonial empires. While a necessary study that breaks new ground in surveying the relationship between homosexuality and imperialism, Aldrich's thesis does not account for coloniality and the ways in which imperialism changed local sexual discourses within the colonies. Rather, colonial outposts are written about as being spaces of sexual liberation for European men who did not fit the metropole's heterosexual social norms. While this may be true, the decolonization of histories of sexualities lies in naming the crucial power imperialism had in erasing local sexual discourses and either leaving a void or replacing them with a heterosexualized version mirroring that of Western modernity. The denial or disregard of this relationship between imperialism and changing sexual discourses then does not account for coloniality, and I argue is not adequately contributing to anti-racist, de-imperialist and decolonial scholarship on sexuality.

[172] This quote was taken from the back cover of Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe's *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1997). This quote was a review given by the *American Anthropoligist,* and lays testament to the homocolonial discourse this wave of scholarship on Arab sexualities relies on, as well as its constant relation of Arab sexualities with Western notions of sexualities.

[173] Joseph Massad critiques Schmitt and Sofer's Orientalist study for their use of the 7th century Qur'an to study Muslims of the 20th century, creating ahistoricism and universalized Western "gay"

draw more specifically on contemporary ideas in sexuality studies and give heavy emphasis to Islamic historiography. Outlining how status-differentiated[174] homosexual patterns and age-differentiated[175] sexual patterns were permitted, common, and transmitted through art and poetry within Islamic societies, Murray concludes that his hypothesized model of the trans-Islamic "sexuality" is not distinguished between "homosexual" and "heterosexual", but between the sexual acts of being an active or passive sexual partner with someone of the same sex.[176] Overlooking the fact that local instances of homosociality[177] existed in its own right, Roscoe explains that although Egypt and southwest Asia (including Persia) lacked institutionalized age-differentiated same-sex patterns, these areas were Hellenized during Alexander's conquests and exposed to Greek sexual patterns.[178] While it is important to trace transmission of sexual practices within this history of sexuality, it becomes an assumed truth that Egyptian, Syrian, Phoenician, and other North African

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concepts as the vehicle of inquiry. See: Massad, Joseph Andoni. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 166; Schmitt, Arno, and Jehoeda Sofer. *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*. 1st edition. Binghamton, N.Y: Routledge, 1992.

[174] Status-differentiated homosexual relations include all sexual relations between males where one partner is of a higher status than the other. This hierarchical model of sexuality was based on a distinction between the man with the higher status doing the inserting and the man of lower status penetrated. Roscoe cites Boswell and his terms of the "penetration code." Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1997). p. 56.

[175] Age-differentiated homosexual relations include the practice of pederasty, which is the relationship between an adult male mentor and their youths. This flourished in Athens and ancient Greece, and is historically prevalent throughout Islamicate societies.

[176] Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1997). p. 41.

[177] The concept of *homosociality* describes and defines social bonds between persons of the same sex. It is, for example, frequently used in studies on men and masculinities, and defined as a mechanism and social dynamic that explains the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity (Hammarén and Johansson, *Homosociality,* 2014). More precisely for our purposes here, Afsenah Najmabadi identifies *homosociality* as spaces of male socialization, such as old-style coffeehouses and *zurkhanah* (male sports clubs in Iran), and they oftentimes act as spaces of seduction and illicit sex (Najmabadi, *Men with Mustaches*, 2005. p. 19).

[178] Murray, Stephen O., and Will Roscoe, *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, and Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1997). p. 62.

cultures were exposed to homosexuality only as an import from Greek and Roman traditions, thus making their indigenous traditions presumably heterosexual.

Arguing that homocolonialism[179] and the Gay International[180] are responsible in part for the Western import of "gay" identity into the Middle East, Joseph Massad is quite critical of Murray and Roscoe's collection and posits that their writing is indicative of their limited knowledge of Muslim societies.[181] Further to this, Massad also finds that Murray and Roscoe's book has language-based errors and mistakes when translating from Arabic, and holds that the issue becomes a fight to represent the so-called "real" Arab or Muslim position on male-male sexuality.[182]

DISCOURSES OF POWER: SILENCING AND COLONIAL CHANGE

Developing and expanding upon the literature on Islamicate sexualities, this section focuses on the intersections of colonialism and sexual discourses to illustrate how imperialism changed the ways in which gender is expressed and sexualities were understood in Islamicate regions. Examining the

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[179] Momin Rahman defines homocolonialism as "the deployment of LGBTIQ rights and visibility to stigmatize non-Western cultures and conversely reassert the supremacy of the Western nations and civilization" (Rahman, *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity,* 2014. p. 7). Specifically, Rahman characterizes "Western exceptionalism as the primary political idea that is triangulated through the process of 'homocolonialism' that institutes the opposition of Muslim cultures and sexuality politics by deploying LGBTIQ rights and visibility to punish non-Western cultures, and conversely reassert the supremacy of the 'home' Western nations and civilization" (Rahman, *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity,* 2014. p. 118).

[180] Joseph Massad defines the *Gay International* as the missionary universalization of Western gay rights with an "orientalist impulse, borrowed from predominant representations of the Arab and Muslim worlds in the United States and Europe, [that] continues to guide all branches of the human rights community" (Massad, *Re-Orienting Desire*, p. 362).

[181] Massad, Joseph. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): p. 370. Massad critiques the book *Islamic Sexualities* to point out that *Islamic* is an adjective referring to the religion of Islam, while Muslim refers to people who adhere to it; Massad points out that it is unclear how Islam, the religion, can have a homosexuality.

[182] Massad, Joseph. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): p. 371.

various silencing practices that were introduced in the Ottoman Empire by colonial travelers, this section illustrates the Western pressures leading to the censorship of Ottoman homoerotic cultural practices. This suppression of local sexual scripts culminated in the drastic shift in local language, changing cultural traditions, and impacts to the gender presentation of Ottoman men and women. These radical changes in local norms were a direct result of Victorian sexual discourses European travelers imposed on local populations, and it becomes clear that the history of colonialism is so deeply entangled with the history of Islamicate sexual desire that separating the two becomes an unproductive task.

Like Murray and Roscoe's work, much contemporary literature on pre-modern sexuality in the Middle East still relies heavily on Islamic historiography. Khaled El-Rouayheb's study, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, pieces together archival sources from the Arab-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire in the centuries immediately preceding the beginnings of modernization and westernization in the 19th century. Less anthropological and more based on cultural and legal archives, El- Rouayheb's central contention is that pre-modern Arab-Islamic culture lacked the concept of "homosexuality" that is understood in the Anglo-Euro-American sense as being an identity category. Rather, instances of homosocial and homoerotic behavior were commonly depicted in literature and openly written about in poetry and stories at the time. This openly-accepted homoerotic behaviour is then contrasted with later travel journals of European travelers who visited the Ottoman Empire, noting their astonishment and disgust that local men openly flaunted their relations with other men and adolescent boys.[183]

[183] El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 1.

Noteworthy is El-Rouayheb's vehement assertion that Islamic law indeed prohibited sexual intercourse between men,[184] so to say that homosexuality existed as unproblematic is false. He notes, however, the overwhelmingly numerous amounts of biographical accounts, poetic anthologies, and belletristic writings that are openly dedicated to same-sex relations, like poems of a man's passion for a teenage boy. El-Rouayheb criticizes modern historians for presuming these instances to be manifestations of "homosexuality" and urges more temporally and locally specific readings of these same-sex relations. In fact, he rigorously avoids labeling any of his findings as being indicative of homosexual tolerance at the risk of making sweeping generalizations about sexual practices in pre-modern Arab-Islamic civilizations. While this caution is needed, El-Rouayheb does little to compare these popular and numerous instances of male-to-male infatuations with the encroachment of Western values and ideas upon the region in the nineteenth century. In fact, it is not until his conclusion that modernity and coloniality is mentioned. Caught between the contradictions of anal intercourse between men being illegal under Islamic law, and the noble and respected men who publicly expressed same-sex desire, El- Rouayheb affirms:

> The profuseness of homoerotic poetry and anecdotes in Arab-Islamic literature may be seen as an indication that 'in practice' homosexuality was nevertheless indulged or tolerated in Arab-Islamic societies. Yet, as stated at the outset of this study, such an interpretation seems to simplify a more complex picture.[185]

In trying to avoid the sweeping generalizations of homosexual tolerance in the Arab-Islamic world, El-Rouayheb's findings seem to minimize the invisibility of homosexuality as a social issue prior to increased European contact. As historian Dror Ze'evi explicitly mentions in his study of the

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[184] El-Rouayheb outlines very detailed descriptions of how *liwāt* (sodomy) was handled in Islamic law, specifically in the four acknowledged schools of law in the Ottoman Empire: *Hanaf'i, Shafi'i, Hanbali, Maliki.* (El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 119-121.)

[185] El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 136.

Ottoman Middle East of the sixteenth to twentieth century—the same timeframe as El- Rouayheb's study—major conflicts about the permissibility of same-sex relations simply did not exist. Though legally frowned upon, same-sex desires were taken to be part of life and their illegality was usually ignored until modernization (and Westernization) led to a previously invisible part of life to suddenly become an object for observation and comparison with Victorian cultural norms.[186] As seen in the understandable reluctance of El-Rouayheb to label the pre-Modern Ottoman Middle East as being tolerant of same sex desire, there is a historical tension in having these examples be construed as the existence and acceptance of homosexuality, which is inherently a modern concept. Thus, the evidence suggests that homosexuality did not exist in pre-modern Arab-Islamic civilizations, and instead same-sex desire was simply a non-categorized facet of everyday life that was legally condemned but otherwise tolerated.

Foucault traces the repression of sexuality of the bourgeoisie in the Victorian era and claims that on the subject of sex, silence became the rule.[187] The histories of change at the turn of the century show that the mechanisms of silence that Foucault writes about need to be extended beyond the power of Victorian rule over Victorian people, and linked accordingly to the silencing practices that were introduced by travelers to publicly shame the homoerotic practices present in the Ottoman Middle East. Dror Ze'evi's study *Producing Desire* successfully maps out the progress of Western sexuality colonizing the local traditions of homosocial desire in the Ottoman Middle East. Underlying all historicity in Ze'evi's study is the supposition that there was a great loss at the turn of the century, and local sexual scripts were erased but not replaced with new ones, leaving a silence and void in the discourse of Ottoman sexuality. Following Foucault's theory of silence on

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[186] Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. p. 168-169.
[187] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 3.

the subject of sex within Victorian puritanical society, such silences in the Middle East are evident in the imposed censorship, expurgatory practices in publishing literature, and in the public shame caused by the European travel journals in the 19th century Ottoman Empire. Since these Victorian travellers deemed homosociality as not modern, there became an adversity toward all forms of "homosexuality" that became typical of the second half of the twentieth century.[188] Examples of imposed censoring include a new edition of *The Arabian Nights* published in Cairo in 1930, and while it followed the older editions of 1835 and 1890, this new version omitted the few stories that included pederastic love affairs that were same-sex in nature. Likewise, two years later in 1932, a heavily expurgated version of the *Diwan* of Abu Nuwas was published in Cairo, but unlike the earlier 1898 and 1905 editions, it abandoned the traditional thematic organization of poetry in order to exclude a section for love poetry of male youths (*ghazal al-mudhakkar*).[189] As Ze'evi elaborates on modernity's stronghold on local sexual discourses in the pre-modern Ottoman Empire:

> Thus began the journey to supress established sexual discourses, silence them, and replace them with others. None of the discursive scripts […] —medicine, law, Sufi literature, dream interpretation, shadow theatre—were spared. As we have seen, they all either disappeared in the late nineteenth century or were transformed into almost sterile genres in which sex and sexuality are seldom discussed, and even then always obliquely […] The sense of embarrassment felt toward the old sexual discourse could not, in and of itself, produce a new one. As familiar sexual scripts collapsed under the onslaught of the travelogue, no new ones came to take their place. The Ottoman and Arab lands experienced unprecedented transformation: sexual discourse moves out of the textual sphere and into the arena of male and female intimate circles, while a curtain of silence descended on the sexual stage.[190]

This profound loss and silencing of Arab-Islamic homosocial desire, as outlined by Ze'evi, can be traced mechanically within language as well. This silence was achieved by removing local

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[188] El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 160.
[189] *Ibid*., p. 158.
[190] Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. p. 165.

understandings of homosocial desire—something that existed as a non-issue, something that did not need a name or categorization—and replacing them with specific Arabic words created by Europeans that reflected Western sexual practices. Joseph Massad outlines the following:

> The Arabic word for sex, jins, appeared sometime in the early twentieth century carrying with it not only its new meanings of biological sex and national origin but also its old meanings of type and kind and ethnolinguistic origin, among others. The word in the sense of type and kind has existed in Arabic since time immemorial and is derived from the Greek genus. As late as 1870, its connotation of sex had not yet come into usage. An unspecific word for sexuality, jinsiyyah —which also means nationality and citizenship —was coined in the 1950s by translators of the works of Freud.[191]

More recently Muta‘ al-Safadi, translator of Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, has introduced the more specific scholarly term, *jinsaniyyah*.[192] Important here is the legacy this linguistic coloniality has on the current Middle Eastern discourse of sexuality. European expressions of sexual deviance were adopted in Arabic in the mid-1950s, translating it literally as *al-shudhudh al-jinsi*, this became a coinage now commonly used in the media and in polite company to refer to the Western concept of homosexuality.[193] These changes in language that normalize European concepts that define and govern gender and sexuality are significant emblems of the power Victorians had over the Ottomans and other Islamicate cultures. This power stems from European control over modernity, and the Middle East desire to be included within the tenants of being a modern region. These examples clearly illustrate the immense power colonialism had on the linguistic discourse on sexuality, and the long-term effects changing, altering, erasing, and replacing the language of sexuality has on a civilization and its future generations. Foucault

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[191] Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): p. 372.

[192] See Muta‘ al-Safadi, trans., Iradat al-ma’rifah, al-juz ’al-awwal min tarikh al-jinsaniyya [TheWill to Know, Volume 1: The History of Sexuality], by Michel Foucault (Beirut: Markaz al-Inma’ al-Qawmi, 1990). Abridged in Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): p. 372.

[193] Massad, Joseph. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): p. 372.

expressly states that

> if sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom.[194]

Here, we see the immense influence European travelers, European translators, European psychoanalysts, and European psychologists had in shaping the linguistic terms of homosexuality in Arabic. They were the true holders of power that created the very mechanisms of repression that did not formerly exist, and in creating the very rules of sexual conduct and modern sexual citizenship Europeans impacted the heterosexualization of the Middle East. The new system that was created at the turn of the 20th century established Victorian puritanical sexual discourses as the established law, and thus the gold standard of successful modernity.

BLINDSPOTS OF THE *ARS EROTICA* AND *SCIENTIA SEXUALIS*

According to Foucault,

> historically, there have been two great procedures for producing the truth of sex. On the one hand, the societies—and they are numerous: China, Japan, India, Rome, the Arabo-Moslem societies—which endowed themselves with an *ars erotica*. In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden….[195]

The knowledge passed on by the *ars erotica* is a knowledge of sensual pleasure, limiting the sexual discourses in Eastern civilizations as only being concerned with sexual acts. Determining that erotic

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[194] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 6.
[195] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 57.

art, or the *ars erotica*, exists in cultures as purely "pleasure" and existing outside the rule of social regulation is counterfactual to the historical nuances of *how* same-sex desire existed under the rule of Islamic law and was widely permitted within religious, social and political contexts. The *ars erotica* both undermines and ignores the very social conditions that created limits and boundaries for same sex desire, and the social apparatuses that govern the ways in which same-sex love was permitted to exist in pre-modern Islamicate societies. Assuming a Western audience as his universal reader,[196] Foucault continues to state, "on the face of it at least, our civilization possesses no *ars erotica*. In return, it is undoubtedly the only civilization to practice a *scientia sexualis*; or rather, the only civilization to have developed over the centuries procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power […] ."[197] Determining that European civilization is the only civilization to develop rules governing sex and a science of sexuality undermines the complex systems of governance in pre-modern Islamicate societies and the ways in which official and unofficial social codes also had an imbued power dynamic between sexual truth and its citizens. This science of sexuality is an important facet to colonial discourses because of the ways in which Victorian laws governing sex became the only acceptable true rule of law for governing sexual desire. In Foucault's own words, 'sexuality' is "the correlative of that slowly developed discursive practice which constitutes the *scientia sexualis*. The essential features of this sexuality are not the expression of a representation that is more or less distorted by ideology, or of a misunderstanding caused by taboos; they correspond to the functional requirements of a discourse

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[196] Joseph Massad critiques Schmitt and Sofer for the same Eurocentricism, quoting their use of "us" in the text to only refer to Western gay audiences, relegating Muslims as subjects to be observed but never active agents in scholarship. (See: Massad, Joseph Andoni. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 166; Schmitt, Arno, and Jehoeda Sofer. *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*. 1st edition. Binghamton, N.Y: Routledge, 1992. p. 20.)

[197] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 58.

that must produce its truth."[198] In theorizing the binaries that exist between Eastern and Western modes of sexual discourses, Foucault presents the West's *scientia sexualis* as being a more advanced process of the East's *ars erotica*, the former being imbued with scientific sexual truth and the latter being a variable version of sexual discourse tainted by local ideology. Thus, in Foucault's own words, the conflict is between the "*scientia sexualis* versus *ars erotica*, no doubt. But it should be noted that the *ars erotica* did not disappear altogether from Western civilization; nor has it always been absent from the movement by which one sought to produce a science of sexuality."[199] Here, the *ars erotica* is always a minor component to the more advanced *scientia sexualis,* but ultimately the erotic arts fails to have a science of sexuality as part of its discourse.

To avoid the way "Foucault haunts studies of sexualities of 'other places and other times"[200], to use Afsenah Najmabadi's words, Joseph Boone's study *Homoerotics of Orientalism* anthologizes many of the themes discussed by the aforementioned scholars using a fluctuation between contemporary homoeroticism and historical same-sex desire as a way to avoid dichotomizing cultures.[201] This back and forth is necessary to Boone's methodological approach,

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[198] *Ibid*., p. 68.
[199] *Ibid*., p. 70.
[200] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards*. p. 19.
[201] Focusing more on visual culture, Joseph Boone's book *Homoerotics of Orientalism* anthologizes many of the themes discussed by the aforementioned scholars by fluctuating between contemporaneity and historiography as a way to avoid dichotomizing cultures. Boone locates the fissures in Orientalist representation, including positive depictions of the Orient within European artworks, homoerotic Occidentalism present within Middle Eastern artworks, and various instances of sexual diversity in both sets of works. His book impressively maps out a history of homoerotic orientalism in literature, poetry, visual arts, travel journals, and includes contemporary hangovers of orientalism. More so than other sources, Boone links this historicized orientalism with current global issues and the political reverberations modernity and its projects had on sexual discourses in the Middle East. Noteworthy is the art historical focus of the volume, linking the history of representation contrapuntally in relation to sexual narratives in literary, legal and religious texts. For this reason, Boon's study is a necessary intervention in the field, as it provides a history of Orientalism from multiple perspectives. Like Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan's edited collection *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, Boone importantly locates the fissures in Orientalist representation, including positive depictions of the Orient within

for he argues that the critic needs to be prepared to encounter diversities that do not always fall into a neat bifurcation between, for instance, pre-modern erotic practices and "modern" sexual identities or types.[202] To avoid such dichotomization, Boone outright rejects a Foucaultian "History of Sexuality", for it imbues a predetermined starting point for sexual discourse. Rather, Boone argues for the *necessity to work backwards* as a way of avoiding predetermined claims about sexual identities (West) and sexual acts (East), a binary assumption that obscures the actual interplay of practices and identity throughout Islamicate history to the beginning of the twentieth century. Boone finds this distinction paramount in Foucault's *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis,* which has since been "accepted as axiomatic in studies of sexuality and queer theory."[203] It is clear that Foucault's constructed binaries between East and West leaves same-sex desire in Islamicate cultures widely misrepresented, and as Valerie Traub argues, this orientalizing distinction is historically inaccurate.[204] According to Boone, Foucault distinguishes the sexual economies of East/West in such broad terms to conveniently "establish [the] pre-modern/modern periodization"[205] that supports his argument about the West's evolution of a disciplinary regime of modern sexual types, while the East remains locked in a timeless *ars erotica*.[206] In nuancing such dualistic and reductive distinctions, I echo that there is a clear sense of thriving but not always welcome homoerotic subculture that coexisted with other subcultures in a multilayered social order

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European artworks, the homoerotic Occidentalism present within Middle Eastern artworks, and the various instances of sexual diversity in both sets of works.

[202] Joseph A. Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). p. 49.

[203] Boone, Joseph. *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). p. xxiii.

[204] Traub, Valerie. *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. p. 17.

[205] Boone, Joseph *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). p. xxx.

[206] *Ibid*, p. xxx.

whose constituencies often included overlapping members.[207] The many challenges this binary distinction creates is articulated by Najmabadi as she states that Foucault's

> "bold proposal that the homosexual as a type did not exist before it was invented in nineteenth-century Europe was critical to the ensuing rich work on the history of sexualities […] . Crossing from eros to sex seems to make everyone screech to a halt. Most would agree that we could talk about same-sex acts but not about homosexuality as a concept that defined particular notions of erotic desire, which we now associate with the Foucauldian 'homosexual as a human type.'"[208]

To better illustrate the gaps and weaknesses within Foucault's *ars erotica* and the *scientia sexualis* theory, I turn again to Dror Ze'evi's examination of the Islamic legal system and literature on morality. Interestingly, Ze'evi introduces medicine and its ancillary disciplines—shadow theatre, travel journals, and dream interpretations—into his study, allowing for the examination of different sexual scripts. These wide-ranging archival sources allow Ze'evi to examine a larger system of sexual desire that help to illustrate the ways in which the average Ottoman subject lived with homosociality in their daily lives. Taking, for instance, traditional dream interpretation manuals, while they were later banned and replaced with European psychoanalysis, they were widely popular and used in much of the premodern Middle East and North Africa. Representing an important layer of sexual consciousness and considered to be scientific knowledge in many parts of the premodern world, these dream interpretation manuals evolved from ancient Greek origins and continued to proliferate through translations and contributions in many Islamicate societies.[209] The psychosexual connotations within these manuals, as Ze'evi claims, can be extended to offer a

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[207] *Ibid*, p. 35.
[208] Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). p. 19.
[209] Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. p. 8. See also Steven M. Oberhelman, "Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power in Ancient and Medieval Greek and Arabic Dream Literature," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature,* ed. Wright and Rowson, p. 55-93.

glimpse of sexual discourse beyond the purview of only the Ottoman Empire.[210] These other sources also highlight the production of sexual discourse by illustrating both the *official* scripts being offered (like those governed by medical, legal and religious writing), and the *unofficial*, often radically different ways sexual desire was manifested and understood in society (through the visual artistry of shadow theatre, in addition to literature and poems).

This history of both official and unofficial sexual scripts of same-sex desire within the Ottoman Middle East is important because of Foucault's limiting and reductive development of the *ars erotica* and the *scientia sexualis* to discuss the economies of sex in pre-modern periods. Writing about ancient Greece rather than the much more recent instances of homoerotic desire in Ottoman Empire is noteworthy for it predetermines a starting point of same-sex desire as being located within Western civilization. Also interesting is the conflation of artistry (in this case, specific European ideas of artist workshops), and pederasty. As Foucault states, "the relationship to the master who holds the secrets is of paramount importance; only he, working alone, can transmit this art in an esoteric manner […]. The effects of this masterful art […] are said to transfigure the one

[210] This pattern of locating histories of sexualities that show resonances and have patterns in multiple places in Islamicate regions is the reason why micro-studies focusing on one region often do not account for trans-regionalism within these histories. Edited by Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi, the volume *Islamicate Sexualities* (2008) focuses on a wide cross-section of Muslim cultures ranging from Iberia in the mid-sixteenth century, to Arab literatures in Egypt from the late medieval times. Supported by a variety of historical literary studies, the anthology takes the task of naming language and translation as a primary dilemma within their arguments, avoiding falling into the pitfalls of Massad's Gay International and the risk of perpetuating a homocolonial discourse. Conscious of this postcolonial and anti-racist trajectory, the editors chose Marshall G.S. Hodgson's coinage, *Islamicate*, which was intended to highlight a complex of attitudes and practices that pertain to cultures and societies that live by various versions of the religion of Islam. Used as a conceptual movement away from the nineteenth-century universalizing European idea, Islamicate refers not only to what is historically understood as Islamic but all that is associated with Muslim styles and modes of cultural expression. This is important as it provides a language and framework to address issues of sexuality in places that are different but nonetheless related, like Southeast Asia and the Middle East, while providing academic and theoretical grounding for this work.

fortunate enough to receive its privileges: an absolute mastery of the body, a singular bliss, obliviousness to time and limits, the elixir of life, the exile of death and its threats."[211] For Foucault to assume that all homosocial relations happening between older men and younger adolescent boys happened in the realm of erotic art production flattens the complex histories of pederasty and mentorship that El-Rouayheb, Ze'evi and other historians rigorously detail. The *ars erotica* also flattens histories of non-Western desires for it ignores the many other ways homoerotic desire was imbedded in pre-Modern discourses in areas of the Middle East. This includes dream interpretations, legal writing, poetry, shadow plays, oral histories, and their connection to the common public. How the general population lived with homoerotic discourse as a non-issue is something that the *ars erotica* cannot account for, reducing complex pre-modern networks of homosocial desire in the Arab-Islamic world to mere visual accounts of pleasure and sexual acts.

The travelogues which consist of books and manuscripts written by travelers from Europe to the Ottoman Middle East provide instances of external vantage points that compare intimate sexual scripts between the West and the Other.[212] As an apparatus from which Orientalism spread, these travelogues used homosociality in the Middle East as a sign of perverted morality and "stood for the Orient's passivity, laziness, cowardice, and submission."[213] Convincingly proving the overall impact these travelogues had on the Ottoman Middle East once circulated, Ze'evi uses John Gagnon and Jeffery Weeks' notions of sexual scripts to drive his theory.[214] Distinct from El-

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[211] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 58.

[212] For a partial description of this travel literature, see Carter Vaughn Findley, "An Ottoman Occidentalist in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madam Gülnar," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (February 1998): p. 15.

[213] Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. p. 150.

[214] The guiding principles of uses the notion of "scripts" put forward by John Gagnon and applied by Jeffery Weeks. In their 1984 essay *Sexual Scripts,* John Gagnon and William Simon define scripts as being a metaphor for conceptualizing the production of behaviour within social life. It

Rouayheb, Ze'evi asserts an internal and external blueprint for sexual actions, helping to govern desire. Through these scripts, it is possible to map out instances of normalcy, deviance, and where homosocial desires fit within this spectrum.[215] In terms of influencing the ways in which homosociality became unmodern and depraved, European travel had a profound impact because they were translated from their respective Anglo-European languages into Arabic and local languages, and then circulated. This act of imperial violence that was meant solely to shame local populations for deviating from Victorian sexual discourses had far-reaching implications that reverberate in the Middle East to this day.

In keeping with this historiography of colonial discourse, Afsaneh Najmabadi's book *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards* provides a detailed account of normative gender scripts being re-written by narratives of Western Modernity, and the change in signifiers of femininity and masculinity in nineteenth-century Iran. Rather than strictly focusing on homocolonial discourses that revolve around sexualities, Najmabadi's study adds crucial gender discourse to the notion of gender-colonialism and the assimilation of local gender-scripts after the nineteenth century in Iran. While El- Rouayheb and Dror Ze'evi investigate the partial convergence of European modernist productions of homosexuality as a vice with Islamic jurisprudential discourse on *liwat* (sodomy), Najmabadi's study takes a different approach. Najmabadi investigates

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has been a highly influential study on the sociological aspects of sexuality, the social constructionist approach, and the foundational text to view sexuality as scripted. John Gagnon suggests that "Scripts, like blueprints, the whos, whats, whens, wheres, and whys for given types of activity… It is like a blueprint or roadmap or recipe, giving directions…" (see: John H. Gaghmpm. *Human Sexualities.* Scott, Foresman and Co., Glenview, Illinois [1997], p. 6.)

[215] Ze'evi also examines the period of modernity and the changes within the nineteenth century as the foremost comparison with all pre-modern examples of homosocial desire. Colonialism, and in this case, homocolonialism, is at the forefront of his argument. This provides valuable insight to the shaping of European ideas about sexuality, and the profound impact this had on the Ottoman Middle East. This temporal and geographic parallel—between Eastern sexual discourses and that of Western ideals, both pre and post Modernity—is precisely the claim that El-Rouayheb does not engage with.

the modernist production of heterosexuality through the screen of gender, and its reconceptualization from the gender norms prior to increased contact with Europe in the sixteenth century. Using visual art, written stories and national archives, Najmabadi maps out homoerotic figures in pre-modern Persia (not unlike the beardless adolescent youths featured in El-Rouhayeb and Ze'evi's study of the Ottoman empire), and the morphing of these figures and their aesthetic from something of sexual desire to something of social abjection. In doing so, gender norms changed to be more in line with the Europeanization and heterosexualization of the modernist project, as did the physical appearance of these genders. This homocolonialism is paramount in the anxiety surrounding men with shaved beards. While an *amrad* was once a beardless adolescent and highly desired object of beauty in pre-modern Iran, the word later became a term for describing beardless Europeans, illustrating the complex relationship between desire, sexuality, and colonialism. Women's upper-lip hair was likewise shamed as un-modern and manly by European travelers, when prior to this the soft fuzz was only attributed to young boys and youth, not men, and was seen as a desired beauty standard before a boy develops a full beard. This resulted in facial hair becoming highly politicized and the development of Persian men with moustaches instead of beards. While insidious, Najmabadi's study illustrates that becoming modern required one's modernity be legible for the already modern, and Iran's modernity had to be recognizable by the Europeans.[216] The examples here document the process of looking European. Commonly critiqued by Najmabadi, Massad and other scholars, Murray and Roscoe's previously-mentioned book, *Islamic Homosexualities*, is one instance where same-sex practices as signs of pre-modernity is often reduced to homosexuality being a consequence of gender segregation and ignored the inner-workings of colonialism and its role in actively changing local discourses on sexuality and gender.

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[216] Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). p. 137.

This homosexuality as a type of frustrated heterosexuality is a common pitfall of contemporary scholarship and creates a modernist disavowal of male and female homoeroticism as always something located in the past, always already resolved and overcome.[217]

Part of the problematic outlined within this chapter has to do with Foucault's relegation of pre-modern Islamicate homosociality and same-sex desire as being a distant historical phenomenon, framing complex same-sex relations as only a part of pederasty akin to that of ancient Greece.[218] As this dissertation aims to demonstrate this falsity, my contention is that the pre-Modern sexual scripts and codes of desire do still exist today and the study of diasporic homosexualities is a valuable link to connect a colonial moment to a diasporic present. It is the existence of these pre-modern sexual scripts that are assumed to be historic and long extinguished that I argue creates the tensions for the queer diasporic subject. These historical tensions that are at odds with contemporary queer subjectivity contribute to diasporic non-belonging within the Western gay imaginary, for they exemplify modes of same-sex desires and histories that veer away from Western conceptions of linear gay identity.

The first wave of scholarship on the sexualities of the Arab or Muslim world (which Murray and Roscoe's book would fall into) has been relatively colonial and rather othering. Because of this, I find great value in the later generation of postcolonial scholarship as it is more reflective of the lived experience of Arab and Queer subjects. Subsequent chapters of this dissertation will consider more contemporary postcolonial issues focusing on themes of diaspora and contemporary queer transnational subjects in order to provide a much-needed continuation of the aforementioned

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[217] Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). p. 240.
[218] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Reissue edition (New York: Vintage, 1990). p. 57.

histories. I outline this schism in scholarship intentionally to account for the difference in subject position and Arab-Muslim narratives in a post September 11th, 2001 (9/11) context. This context separates all scholarship quite naturally as it shifts narratives of homo-Orientalism[219] to one of terrorism and identity categories viewed within the lens of homonationalism[220] and human security. Therefore, this dissertation's incorporated analysis of the Arab homosexual subject post-9/11 within the historical study of gender and sexuality is necessary to advance the field.

Thus far, I have provided a comprehensive overview of the history of sexuality in the Middle East and in Islamicate cultures. What becomes clear is how deeply entangled the history of sexuality is with the history of colonialism, and how imperial discourses had a profound impact on the gender and sexual discourses in the Middle East to this day. Valuable scholarship exists chronicling the historiography of these entanglements and the changing sexual discourses over time in Islamicate regions, as well as focusing primarily on the diaspora and current lived experiences of transnational sexual discourses.[221] What seems to lack in this scholarship is the connection of the historic changes that took place over the course of modernity in the Middle East, and how these changes create a direct causal effect on the current understanding of queerness in the Arab world. There is an unintentional schism within the academy between modern and pre-modern histories of

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[219] Homo-Orientalism follows the same pattern of reductive stereotypes and essentializing features of traditional Orientalist depictions, but highlight the sexually perverse nature of Arab men. This can be done by over-sexualizing the Arab men, making them promiscuous, and a level of homoeroticism adds to a visual narrative of sexual deviance.

[220] Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[221] For contemporary gay Middle East studies see: Merabet, Sofian. *Queer Beirut*. University of Texas Press, 2015; Georgis, Dina. *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013; Rahman, Momin. "Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities." *Sociology* 44 (2010): 944–61; Aly, Ramy M. K. *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity*. London: Pluto Press, 2015; Kugle, Scott. *Living Out Islam: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*. New York: New York University Press, 2014; Kugle, Scott. *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2010.

sexualities. The reality is that pre-modern sexual scripts in the Middle East, Islamicate cultures, and in diaspora are still very much connected to the imperial powers that changed them over the course of modernization, and this is directly linked to diasporic subjects today.[222] It is because of this that I aim to further develop historical accounts of homosociality in the Middle East with the lived experiences of the queer diaspora today. It is through this direct one-to-one relationality that I find much value will be garnered in assessing current sexual discourses as being a result of colonial intervention and the direct consequences of imperialism. I find it relevant to dismantle the very canon of queer theory and sexuality studies that contributes to totalizing versions of homosexuality, and results in violent erasures and disavowals and incompatibilities between the Middle East and homosexuality.

DIASPORA CONSCIOUSNESS: VISUALIZING HOMOCOLONIALISM

How do these histories affect the queer Middle Eastern diaspora today? Because of the powerful links between visual cultural and diasporic subjectivity, I contend that queer diasporic artists play a role in keeping alive the link between the colonial past and the contemporary present, even at a subconscious level.[223] Whether or not this trait of diasporic artists is distinguishable from

[222] The accounts of revision and erasure of homosociality happened over time, but all the while not very long ago. Many of these shifts were still seen in my parents' generation in Egypt (1950's), when much of these linguistic changes (as one example) were taking place. This then reverberates to their own understanding of homosexuality, a rejection of homosocial relations, and indoctrination in vehement anti-homosociality rhetoric pushed as measures of modernizing the nation, and themselves.

[223] According to Robin Cohen, diasporas exhibit several of the following features: "(1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; (4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; (5) a return movement; (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; (7) a troubled relationship with host societies; (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries;

contemporary artists based in the Middle East today is beyond the scope of this one analysis, as diaspora consciousness is a key component as to why past histories can be embedded within diasporic imaginings of self, desire, and being.[224] More specifically, linking contemporary diasporic art to a colonial moment examines processes and practices that contribute to the formation of diaspora consciousness. For the purpose of this analysis, *diaspora consciousness* is defined, borrowing from Robin Cohen, as a strong and enduring group consciousness about the homeland, and feelings of solidarity more or less shared by the members of a diasporic collectivity in the host country.[225] I contend that diaspora consciousness is an integral component to embedding colonial histories, trauma and loss within diasporic experiences today, weaving traditional ways of understanding gender, sexuality and the self with contemporary ways of being. As Paul Gilroy articulates, "principally, identity provides a way of understanding the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed."[226] Importantly, Gilroy elaborates that "to share an identity is apparently to be bonded on the most fundamental levels: national, 'racial', ethnic, regional, local. And yet, identity is always particular, as much about difference as about shared belonging."[227] It is this interplay of sameness and difference that I find underpins the queer Arab diaspora's search for belonging. Historically, their same-sex desires have been marked by derision after the advent of Western modernity in the Middle East, and within North America there is a heightened sense of difference between 'us' and 'them', that is, the assimilation process that marks a 'good immigrant.'

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and (9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries." (Cohen, Robin. Global Diasporas: An Introduction. London: UCL P, 1997. p. 180).

[224] On diaspora consciousness, see: Cohen 1997: 184-187; Gilroy 1999: 318; Clifford 1999: 256.

[225] Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: UCL P, 1997. p. 184-187.

[226] Gilroy, Paul. 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity.' In *Identity and Difference*. Ed. Kathryn Woodward. London: Sage and Open U, 1999. p. 299-346.

[227] Gilroy, Paul. 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity.' In *Identity and Difference*. Ed. Kathryn Woodward. London: Sage and Open U, 1999. p. 299-346.

As Sherene Razack notes, a common trope is "the story of the unassimilable, fatally pre-modern Muslim community encountering an advanced civilization,"[228] and this orientalist trope is something that arguably enforces the strict binary that has been manufactured between same-sex desire and being Arab, a dichotomy felt both in the Middle East and in the diaspora. This theory linking diaspora consciousness to queer art production builds on James Clifford's theories on diasporic futures:

> diaspora consciousness is thus constituted both negatively and positively. It is constituted negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion […]. Diaspora consciousness is produced positively through identification with world-historical cultural/political forces, such as 'Africa' or 'China.' The process may not be as much about being African or Chinese, as about being American or British, or wherever one has settled, differently.[229]

This means that the processes of subject formation, or what Nadine Naber calls "articulating Arabness" is intertwined within the processes of queer embodiment. While the interplays of race and sexual desire are not new, the very ways in which diaspora consciousness is articulated by queer diasporic artists as having components of former, colonized, historic ways of understanding gender and sexual identity is noteworthy. I echo Nadine Naber's enmeshed dynamics of race and gender, and believe that contemporary "articulations of Arabness are grounded in Arab histories and sensibilities about family, selfhood, and ways of being in the world but are also hybrid, syncretic, and historically contingent."[230] It is because of this subject formation and the complex interplay of sexual identity, cultural heritage, and racialization that I argue that colonialism did not fully extinguish the local gender discourses and codes of same-sex desire that existed in the Middle East for centuries. Instead, my contention is that the pre-Modern sexual scripts and codes of desire do still exist today, and the study of diasporic homosexualities is a valuable link to connect a

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[228] Razack, *Casting Out*, p. 117.
[229] Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. London: Harvard UP, 1999. p. 256-257.
[230] Naber, *Arab America*, p. 8.

colonial moment to a diasporic present. This is due, in part, to the strength of diaspora consciousness and the rigorous binaries that queer Arab diasporic subjects must face in negotiating their multifaceted identity, and "our articulations of Arabness are shaped by long-standing traditions, by the isolation of running a mom-and-pop store, by the travel of news and stories through the internet and satellite TV, by Arab responses (past and present) to European colonialism and U.S. empire, and by the words and images of contemporary media."[231]

The powerful histories of coloniality and imperial power outlined in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which homosexuality in the Middle East was defined, criminalized, and outlawed at the turn of the twentieth century. These historic measures of change are not insular, and they affect the ways in which gender and sexuality are currently defined and understood in the Middle East and its diaspora. Artist Jamil Hellu is a San Francisco-based visual artist whose work revolves around representations of identity and exploring transnational interpretations of queer sexuality. Born and raised in Brazil with a Syrian father and a Paraguayan mother, Hellu uses photography, video, performance, and mixed-media art installations to create contrasting metaphors about the politics of cultural identities and the fluidity of sexuality. As Hellu states in an interview:

> My father's family is from Syria, originally from a town called Mashta al-Helu, from which I bear my last name. Looking for ways to voice my despair over homophobia and violence in the Middle East, I started to produce works claiming my own Arab roots. My latest projects explore my identity as a gay man in relation to my Syrian heritage and Arab ethnicity.[232]

In his 2016 installation *Be My Guest* (figures 6 and 7), the audience is confronted by two beautifully refurbished antique chairs with a footrest positioned between the two, creating an intimate seating

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[231] *Ibid*., p. 8.

[232] Soldi, Rafael. "Q&A With Jamil Hellu." *Strange Fire Collective*. http://www.strangefirecollective.com/qa-jamil-hellu (Accessed August 8 2019).

area. The two chairs face each other at an angle and are flanked by white curtains matching the same pattern on the furniture. Upon closer inspection, the white textile with black patterns appear to be representational, and figurative scenes start to emerge from the black ink (figures 8 and 9). These images are of Arab men engaging in various scenes of intimacy with one another, and in the tender interactions they appear to be in various stages of undress. Sometimes kissing, hugging, wrestling, dancing, these representations of men are stamped repeatedly in black ink onto the white textile to create a repetitive design, a visual pattern of intimacy. In this artwork, Hellu refers to homosexuality as being taboo in both Victorian-era empires and Arab contexts, and he uses Victorian furniture as a metaphor for the cultural history of sexual repression in the Middle East.

The ways in which the men are meant to be visually identified as Arab and the tensions this imagery creates with the Victorian furniture in which they adorn are noteworthy. In order to create a cultural lineage, the men are visibly hairy, play instruments that are popular in the Middle East, like the *oud*, and wear identifiably Arab headdresses and culturally specific clothing like the *galabia*. The tension here between East and West, modern and Victorian, all work in complex ways with one another, and on multiple levels.[233] These scenes of men having sexual interactions with men are the very things made invisible in the Middle East during the Victorian era, and this artwork does more than merely make them visible. By upholstering these tender and intimate scenes of Arab men onto the Victorian era furniture, they now define the very surface which they cover. In this defiant act of colonizing the pristine white surface of the furniture with depictions of racialized same-sex intimacy that the colonial powers tried to erase, this installation ensures that these depictions are permanently related to Victorian discourses of sex and knowledge production. The

[233] Tensions between what it means to be a Western queer subject while still maintaining culturally relevant ideologies of gender and sexuality is something queer theorist Martin Manalansan addresses in his book *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

power relations between the Victorian ruling class and the Middle East that were made invisible during imperializing missions of Western modernity are not only made visible in this artwork, but they are inseparable from one another.

Wanting to address the history of violence inflicted upon homosexual discourse in the Middle East, Hellu traces this violence to a puritanical Victorian period while simultaneously linking this homocolonialism to the violence experienced by contemporary queer subjects. This artistic interrogation of coloniality deftly connects the historical moment in time when imperialism altered sexual discourses in the Middle East with the homophobic violence experienced by the contemporary diaspora. This link is paramount to my thesis for the abject homophobia that has now been associated with the un-modern Middle East is visibly turned into a complex relationship with Victorian rule of law governing sexual discourses, an import of colonialism, and erasing local intonations of same-sex intimacy at the turn of the twentieth century.

There is another dynamic tension present within the artwork: one between Western gayness and a more culturally-relevant same-sex intimacy that has existed and still exists within Islamicate regions.[234] The Islamicate same-sex desire, facial hair, beauty standards, and the conventions of homosociality that have permitted men to be intimate with one another (like traditional sporting activities, bathhouses, cafés, and shisha bars to name a few) are put alongside markers of gay sex synonymous with the global North, such as BDSM harnesses, jock straps, and sexual scenes that

[234] This is reflected in the literature of Momin Rahman's discussions of exclusion (Rahman, Momin. "Queer as Intersectionality: Theorizing Gay Muslim Identities." *Sociology* 44 (2010): 944–61), Martin Mansalan's writing on difference and incompatibility (Martin Manalansan, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), and why Sekna-Hammound Becket proposes alternative models of coming out for Arab and Muslim queer-identifying subjects (Sekneh Hammound-Beckett, "Azima Ila Hayati- an Invitation in to My Life: Narrative Conversations about Sexual Identity." *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work* 2007, no. 1 (2007): 29-39).

allude to cruising categories of gay male identification in the West, like being a *bear, otter,* or *cub*.[235] In this artwork, Jamil Hellu displays the many ways in which Arab men wear their traditional Middle Eastern headdress, using multiplicity and repetition as a visual strategy to illustrate the numerous variations of styles according to distinct nationalities.[236] In *Be My Guest*, Arab men wearing Palestinian *kiffaya* over their heads or the Saudi head-covering known as *ghutra* are engaging in the very tensions their specific histories of gender, sexuality, and nationalism represent. Dressed as modern Arab men but engaging in sexual acts that have been made illegal and perverse in part by Victorian-era travelers and their imperial apparatuses of Orientalism like travelogues circulating the Middle East, the historical tensions between acceptable and non-acceptable sexual behavior is made visible. These enmeshed historical entanglements are apparent through the frictions that emerge through the manufactured dichotomy of being Arab and being gay.

It is important to elaborate more on Hellu's engagement with such historical and political discourses, since the artist is more than simply making them visual or visible. What is the artist's intervention? What are the new questions, problems, challenges or limits posed by the artist's visual strategies? In creating a link between diaspora consciousness and sexual imperialism in the Middle East, I assert that artists like Hellu offer a "long overdue look at the way concepts of community and belonging are made across the diaspora, and produce insight into the possibilities for decolonizing Arabness or rearticulating Arabness beyond Orientalism or reverse Orientalism."[237]

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[235] For example, 'bears' comprise of a subculture of gay men who valorize the larger, hairy body. For critical writing on gay subcultures, see: Hennen, Peter. *Bear Bodies, Bear Masculinity: Recuperation, Resistance, or Retreat?* Gender and Society Vol 19- issue 1. 2005.

[236] This point is supported by Ramy Aly's argument that fashions and aesthetic orientation in the Arab world and the Arab diaspora seem to flow in opposite directions. (See: Aly, Ramy. *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity*. Pluto Press: London, 2015.)

[237] Naber, *Arab America*, p. 9.

This indicates that colonial trauma is deeply woven within diaspora consciousness, and is reflected in the artwork created by the queer diasporic artists in North America looking to visualize and create complex representation of their own lived experiences. I assert that this diaspora consciousness can be a powerful driving tool in creating visual art, even at a subconscious level. In the examples shown of Hellu's artwork, a complex historical archive has been mined to create powerful resonances between an imperial past with a queer futurity that accounts for a diasporic present, and other artists may rely more heavily on their diasporic consciousness to create these links. As the visual analysis of Jamil Hellu's work illustrates, these colonial histories are articulated by visual artists who are creating historically contingent representations of queer diasporic intimacy that specifically outline a historical coloniality they have never lived, yet which reverberates today.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUEERING ARCHIVES OF PHOTOGRAPHY: LINKING A COLONIAL HISTORY TO A DIASPORIC PRESENT

In the previous chapter, I outlined the ways in which queer diasporic artists articulate diaspora consciousness and illustrated it as having components of former, colonized, historic ways of understanding gender and sexual identity. This in turn helps support the argument that queer diasporic artists play a role in keeping alive links between the colonial past and the contemporary present, even at a subconscious level.[238] In this chapter I will continue to develop facets of diaspora consciousness and present a history of homocolonialism in the Middle East that is firmly linked to current diasporic subjectivity in North America. To do so, I will introduce photography as an invaluable tool to imperial discourses in helping to shape gender and sexuality at a time of colonial contact in the Middle East. Then I will introduce the artwork of Iranian-Canadian artist Ebrin Bagheri, connecting his contemporary drawings to the colonial photographic archives in an attempt

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[238] I refer to the subconscious less in the psychoanalytic sense and more as a component of diaspora consciousness. In the context of diaspora consciousness, a generational distance is arguably necessary when processing and representing traumatic memory. As Cathy Caruth has expressed on remembering trauma, "the pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it."[238] To this effect, traumatic memory is not experienced during the event itself, but it is the later coping of the traumatic event that creates such difficult memories. Here, it is clear that the distancing of the traumatic event either through time, or in this case generationally, can result in a better understanding of the traumatic event itself, leading to a more effective managing of the traumatic memory. See: Cathy Caruth, 'Preface," and p. xii-ix, 1-12 "Introduction," in Cathy Caruth ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 4.

to show the connectedness of the visual imagery. The colonial dimensions of the photographic medium are undeniably relevant to the study of visual culture and the history of photography, and I will demonstrate that these colonial dimensions of representation shape the ways in which gender and sexuality in the Middle East are pictured, depicted, and illustrated today. These rich archives of colonial encounter hold seeds of same-sex desire and representation that, I argue, are firmly incorporated in the diaspora consciousness of queer subjects in North America. More importantly, in analyzing the artwork of Ebrin Bagheri I emphasize how these links happen subconsciously, unintentionally, and sometimes unknowingly to the diasporic artists, firmly supporting the link between historical colonialism in the Middle East and the ways in which coloniality actively shapes the experiences of gender and sexuality in the contemporary diaspora.

VISUALIZING INTIMACY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

As established in previous chapters, just as histories of colonialism cannot be separated from histories of art, the emphasis of Western scholars interested in representations of sexuality in the Arab and Muslim worlds coincides with the emergence of Western gay scholarship on sexuality.[239] As discussed above, Arab scholar Joseph Massad critiques what he terms the "Gay International," a mission of homocolonialism and Western exceptionalism cloaked in discourses of human rights that seeks to export Western models of homosexuality into places where it did not previously exist, effectively erasing local scripts of sexual identity.[240] This needs to be examined in relation to

[239] Massad, Joseph. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2, 2002. p. 365.
[240] Massad, Joseph. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Western exceptionalism and the dominant (Euro-American) discourse on gay identity in the Middle East which contends that homosexuality is hated, foreign, and not tolerated.[241]

Yet, as this analysis of contemporary visual art and archival research will show, queerness finds a way to dwell and remain in these seemingly "inhospitable" places like the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. It begs the question: who defines queer hospitality? The answer, of course, is Western queerness and its unquestionable authenticity. As I discussed previously, this in turn is reified by canonical texts like Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* in the way they become axiomatic texts on all histories of sexuality across all geographic periods, rather than only being a limited study on sexuality discourses in Western Europe.[242] In this chapter, I avoid discussing queerness in terms of global-to-local, and instead make historical connections to the contemporary diaspora in order to see how the local subject speaks to queerness. This method takes away global powers of 'importing' notions of queerness where it did not previously exist, and instead examines the ways in which same-sex desires exist freely and locally by populations in the Middle East and the diaspora. With scholars arguing that queer identity is an inherently Western construct,[243] what would an analysis of same-sex discourses of the Global South could look like if we do not speak

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[241] An example of antiquated human rights arguments are those made by Brian Whitaker in his book *Unspeakable Love, Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*. While outlining key issues in Middle Eastern sexuality studies through interviews and first-hand accounts, Whitaker takes a human rights stance that dichotomizes sexuality discourses into Western categories of identification, namely a Euro-American universalism and that of the Other. This othering of the sexual discourses that do not resemble that of Western homosexuality is one of the pitfalls this universalist human rights methodology creates.

[242] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Reissue edition. New York: NY, 1990.

[243] For instance, in Khaled El-Rouayheb's study, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, he outlines the overwhelmingly numerous amounts of biographic accounts, poetic anthologies, and belletristic writings that are openly dedicated to same-sex relations, like poems of a man's passion for a teenage boy. El-Rouayheb, however, criticizes modern historians for presuming these instances to be manifestations of "homosexuality" and urges more temporally- and locally-specific readings of these same sex relations.

of queer at all? In other words, how would the conversation on same-sex desire in the Middle East change if we unlearned our assumptions, and instead study local-to-local historiographies more productively? This method would also consider the contribution of a trans-local approach to the study of homosexual discourse in the Middle East, and the relationship queerness has had with colonial histories of imperial expansion.[244] While I attempt to address some of these concerns in this chapter and in my overall dissertation, these questions are important to challenge gay-international discourses and to avoid a reproduction of colonial and imperial logics under a harmful universalist framework of human rights, gay liberation, and sexual freedoms that only mirror a Euro-American model.

The particular history of photography in the Middle East had an impact on the photographs that were taken, the power relationships between the photographer and the photographed subject, as well as the value given to contributions made by local populations to the nascent medium in the mid nineteenth-century. In establishing the importance between the history of photography in the

[244] There is a site of productive tension in questioning the use and non-use of 'queerness' as a marker of non-Western centric desire. A main issue surrounding this contention is that scholars of Islamicate same sex desires have outlined that a stable gay identity did not exist prior to the modern period and this is in fact a Western concept of subjectivity. To use queer in an analysis of historical desire in the Global South would then be inaccurate. While scholars like Joseph Massad contend that contemporary queer identification in the Middle East stems from colonialism, scholars like Samar Habib deny Massad's protest against the view that there is an authentic form of homosexual identity indigenous to the Arab World. Habib rejects Massad's assertion that coming out and visibility strategies are Western imports that are colonial impositions, labeling this as oppressive to Arab individuals who do in fact identify as gay and still live in the Middle East. As the terminology of "queer" becomes contentious in postcolonial contexts, the productive tension I wish to draw upon lies in the contrapuntal study of historic and contemporary art. That is, questioning how queer is identified in one context and disidentified in another, all while analyzing pre-modern same-sex desire in relation to a contemporary queer artist. Then, the conceptual discussion I would like to have is about pushing back against a hegemonic gay Western identity in the usage of the term 'queer,' and instead imagine other ways of discussing same-sex and homoerotic desire. See: Samar Habib "Introduction: Islam and Homosexuality," In *Islam and Homosexuality.* Vol. 1. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010): p. xvii.

Middle East with the power of representation, how do photographic and colonial encounter impact art production in the current diaspora? Do these imperial pasts have a direct correlation with the ways in which subjects in the diaspora conceive and visualize their own identities? Notably, where does eroticism lie within an image, and how do we read queerness in an image?[245] To work through these questions, I turn to visual analysis and examine the artwork of Iranian-Canadian artist Ebrin Bagheri. Born in 1983, Bagheri is currently living and working in Toronto, Canada. Working primarily in drawing and painting, Bagheri has been exploring issues pertinent to Iranian culture and identity. Particularly, Bagheri uses portraiture to explore themes of masculinity and gender. In these portraits, Bagheri alludes to historical notions of pre-modern desire and alternative gender norms. Greatly invested in Persian literature and poetry, Bagheri's large-scale drawings echo Persian miniature paintings in their details and intricacy. Using these poetic and literary tropes in conjunction with elements of Persian visual culture, Bagheri's work complicates notions of Persian culture, contemporary Iranian identity, and the conflicting themes of gender and sexuality that might arise at their intersection.

In his 2015 artwork *Untitled* (Figure 10) from his "Eastern Desires" series (2014-2017), Bagheri uses delicate drawing techniques coupled with immense detail to depict scenes of Iranian men that fluctuate between contemporary subjects and Iran prior to the industrial revolution. These intimate scenes, at times evocative of *hammam* or bathhouse settings, are coupled with visual

[245] Informed by Sharon Holland and her book *The Erotic Life of Racism,* my use of the term ''erotic'' does not anchor itself in the psychoanalytic but rather fluctuates between dictionary definitions of the words ''desire'' and ''erotic.'' The homoeroticism I study is located between the object relations inherent in ''desire''—a wish for something—and the desired subject as object, demonstrating the way in which sexuality is inextricable from the erotic itself. It is also important to think of 'colonial homoeroticism' in relation to and distinct from 'diasporic homoeroticism,' for the power dynamics that govern the sexual body change within the two conceptions of eroticization. See: Holland, Sharon Patricia. *The Erotic Life of Racism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

motifs reminiscent of Qajar dynasty Persian paintings that point to a masculinity unlike traditional depictions of Iranian men.[246] Later series of works like "Someone Who is Like No-One" (2017) take similar historical references and delicate drawing techniques, coupled with jarring visual tropes that look out of place. Such tropes include bloodied hands like in *Untitled [I]* (2017, Figure 11) or figures with red noses seen in *Untitled [II]* (2017, Figure 12) that add a dimension of abnormalities within the characters. These tropes can be interpreted as being linked to themes of illness, disease, quarantine and, in the case of the clown-like red nose, even a trickster element to imply that these are figures that fall outside of normative social acceptance. This theme of not-belonging is extended in the artist's use of traditional notions of hiding, and various critiques of the binaries between private/public culture and visibility/invisibility. Using these different strategies, precolonial and colonial discourses of sexuality are examined as part of the context of Bagheri's art, and this lens helps to understand queer diasporic art production in relation to a colonial legacy and the complex agency of diasporic artists.

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[246] I find it important to question the language used to title the series, and whether or not this language is a type of self-Orientalizing. If so, does this language speak to Bagheri's distance from his Iranian culture by being in the diaspora, heightening his need for cultural authenticity. In thinking through these themes, I contend that using tropes such as foreignness, exoticism and Otherness can be done productively and strategically in order to add critical discourse to sex and gender. The historicity that is analyzed within this chapter is an example of how Orientalist tropes are a part of a wider system of cultural and visual elements that are entangled within a web of imperial and colonial contact. Because of this, it is not whether or not Bagheri's language/tropes are self-Orientalising; rather, I am more concerned with the links and connections between his visual imagery, histories of sexuality, and histories of colonialism, all of which include orientalism as a primary component within the asymmetries of power. In this way, I argue that Bagheri's work is in some measure also responding to and is critically resonant with Canadian islamophobia, racism and homo-Orientalism. This response to racism and orientalism can be seen in Bagheri naming his series historically orientalist terms such as "Eastern Desires," and he critiques the isolation and Othering that can be felt by the queer Iranian diaspora in his series "People You May Know."

HISTORIES OF (COLONIAL) PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A crucial link between the history of photography and Europe's knowledge about the Middle East has existed since the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839.[247] When Louis-Jacques-Mandé-Daguerre introduced his invention to the Chambre des députés in France, politician, mathematician and physicist Dominique François Arago commented upon "the extraordinary advantages that could have been derived from so exact and rapid a means of reproduction during the expedition to Egypt," and recommended that the Institut d'Egypte be equipped immediately with the new visual technology.[248] In subsequent decades, many European photographers followed Arago's suggestion and, with the support of various governmental institutions, photographers traveled to the Middle East to amass portfolios of Egyptian antiquity and the sites of the holy lands, making the region one of the principal training grounds for the early practice of photography, in part due to the abundance of natural sunlight.[249] This link between photography and the Middle East is likewise seen in Daguerre's British counterpart, William Henry Fox Talbot, who invented the salted paper and calotype photographic processes. In 1846 Talbot published a pamphlet entitled "The Talbotype Applied to Hieroglyphics," which was distributed among archeologists and orientalist scholars.[250]

The dominant historiography understands photography as a Western import into Eastern lands. Historians of photography have generally assigned only marginal importance to the Middle

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[247] Behdad, Ali, & Gartlan, Luke. (Eds). *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2013. p. 1.
[248] Arago, Dominique François. "Report of the commission of the chamber of deputies." In Trachtenberg, Alan, ed. *Classic Essays on Photography*. New Haven, Conn: Leete's Island Books, 1980. p. 17.
[249] Behdad, Ali, & Gartlan, Luke. (Eds). *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation.* Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2013. p. 1.
[250] Perez, Nissan. *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)*. New York, NY: Harry. Abrams, 1988. p. 15.

East in the works of the many European photographers in the nineteenth century, and even less importance to the various traditions of indigenous photography that emerged in the region soon after the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839.[251] Currently, the study of photography in the Middle East does not focus on indigenous photography, but rather on historiographies of European photographers traveling to the Middle East on imperialist adventures during a period of colonial expansion.[252] These European photographers and photo studios that dominated the history of Middle Eastern photography include: Le Gray, Du Camp, Salzmann, Tancrède Dumas, Francis Frith, Felice Beato, Emile Béchard, Hippolyte Arnoux, and Alexandre Leroux; as well as Maison Bonfils, Maison Lehnert & Landrock, Maison Garrigues, Photoglob Zurich, and Underwood and Underwood. Tellingly, all of these photographers and photography studios still define the imagery and historical narrative of photography in the Middle East. Then, how does one study, interpret, and read the visual imagery of Middle Eastern photography from local photographers and artists? While fully answering this question is beyond the scope of this research, it is important to consider it when locating the power that photography had in colonial missions of imperialism in the Middle East, and the gaps in knowledge created in its wake. In his detailed study of Middle Eastern portrait photography, *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860–1910*, historian Stephen Sheehi argues that asking how Middle Eastern photography is *really* different only re-inscribes the binaries of the dominant historical narrative of Middle Eastern photography.[253] Cultural difference, and arguably Western exceptionalism, is maintained if photography from

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[251] Behdad, Ali, & Gartlan, Luke. (Eds). *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2013. p. 1.

[252] For scholars trying to fill this gap and correct the oversight of indigenous photographers in the Middle East, see: Ritter, Markus, and Staci Gem Scheiwiller. *The Indigenous Lens: Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.

[253] Sheehi, Stephen. *The Arab Imago: A Social History of Portrait Photography, 1860–1910*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016. p. xxi.

"Eastern lands" is distinct from the Western master-image. Rather than strictly analyzing the subject matter of the image itself, orientalism's asymmetries of power should be read as part of the photographic image as much as the subject matter.[254] The clear divide between European photographers in the Middle East and local photographers in the Middle East is indicative of the Western exceptionalism that maintains this Eurocentric master-narrative and disenfranchises Arabs from proprietorship of the universalizing power of photography.[255]

Photography in the Middle East can be used to excavate the image of gender, the changing sexual discourses within the archive, and the visualized homoeroticism of a local population. To push this further, I argue that photography in the Middle East during colonial periods can also provide a useful link for understanding the contemporary diaspora's relationship to their own locally relevant—in Bagheri's case, Persian—history. Photography then acts as a tool that links these colonial histories to the contemporary moment, giving better insight into how the diaspora experiences their sexuality. This removes value judgments of modernity, progress, and social acceptance from the discussion, and instead provides an analysis that is rooted in historical causality and seeks to find the cause-and-effect relationships between colonial histories in the Middle East and the current queer diaspora.[256]

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[254] Orientalism is defined as the West's patronizing representations of "The East" and the overall exoticization of the societies and peoples who inhabit countries in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. According to Said (1978), orientalism is inextricably tied to the imperialist societies who produced it, which makes much Orientalist work inherently political and central to power.

[255] This summary of photography in the Middle East is expanded upon as a case study in: Andrew Gayed & Siobhan Angus (2018) *Visual Pedagogies: Decolonizing and Decentering the History of Photography*, Studies in Art Education, 59:3, p. 228-242.

[256] Modernity as a time period signals social, political, and historic conditions (typically urbanization, mass production, democratization, etc.) at the end of the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century. This is not to be confused with Modernism, which points to the cultural trends that respond to the conditions of Modernity in a myriad of ways, such as modern art.

READING LOSS IN AN IMAGE

To understand the context in which the photographic archives exist, it is important to further outline the complex relationship between sexuality and colonialism. To do so, I find it productive not to discuss colonialism as only a minor component within the study of sexuality. Instead, I contend that the history of colonialism is a valuable tool, and in some ways one of the most important tools, to access what a history of sexuality looks like. As feminist historian Afseneh Najmabadi notes, "in the nineteenth century, homoeroticism and same-sex practices came to mark Iran as backward; heteronormalization of eros and sex became a condition of 'achieving modernity,' a project that called for heterosocialization of public space and a reconfiguration of family life."[257] This heteronormalization lies in the deep overlaps between colonialism, same-sex desire, and how visual culture was used within the imperial civilizing mission of Western modernity. Part of the heteronormalization that Najmabadi writes about is a direct result of European travelers in the Ottoman Empire who openly criticized and judged local traditions, inevitably leading to the censorship of homoerotic cultural practices. These silencing practices culminated in a drastic shift in language that resulted from Victorian sexual discourses being imposed on local conceptions of gender, sexuality, and physical presentation. Historians have documented the travel journals (also known as travelogues) of European travelers who visited regions of the Ottoman Empire, noting their astonishment and disgust with same-sex traditions whereby local men openly flaunted their relations with other men and adolescent boys. It should be noted that these travel journals were translated from their respective Anglo-European languages into Arabic and local languages to be

[257] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 3.

circulated in order to cause shame and embarrassment, making the journals an irreparable act of repression and sexual imperialism.[258]

As Najmabadi notes, nineteenth-century Qajar sensibilities deemed that a beautiful face could belong to either a young male or a female with identical features. The assumed normalcy of the man/woman binary became a European imposition, and negatively affected modes of maleness in nineteenth-century Iran that were distinct from manhood or masculinity. As Najmabadi asserts, "in early Qajar art, for instance, beauty was not distinguished by gender. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a highly gender-differentiated portrayal of beauty emerged, along with a concept of love that assumed heterosexuality as natural."[259] As I examined in Chapter Three, in *The History of Sexuality* Michel Foucault traces the repression of sexuality in the Victorian era of the bourgeoisie, claiming that on the subject of sex, silence became the rule.[260] The mechanisms of silence that Foucault writes about, however, need to be developed and linked according to the silencing practices that European travelers introduced to publicly shame the homoerotic practices present in Islamicate regions. Dror Ze'evi also contends that likewise, in the Ottoman Empire, there was a great loss at the turn of the century, and local sexual scripts were erased but not replaced with new ones, leaving a silence and void in the discourse of Ottoman sexuality. Such silences are evident in the imposed censorship in literature, expurgatory practices in publishing literature, and in the public shame caused by the European travel journals in the 19th century Ottoman Empire.[261]

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[258] See: El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World: 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005; and Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
[259] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 4.
[260] Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Reissue edition. New York: NY, 1990. p. 3.
[261] Ze'evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. p. 165.

I argue that we can read this loss through the photographs of European orientalists in the Middle East, like the Austro-Hungarian photographer Rudolf Lehnert and his Swiss business partner Ernst Landrock. Rudolf Lehnert was born in Bohemia in 1876, which was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and now part of the Czech Republic. He first traveled to Tunis in 1904 where he met his friend, and later business partner, Ernst Landrock, and the pair established a photographic studio in Tunis and worked closely together for more than 20 years. They later established studios in Munich, Leipzig and Cairo, publishing their photographs under the photography studio of "Lehnert & Landrock".

In their 1932 photograph *Jeune Kayble en Algerie* (Figure 13), a young Algerian boy who seems adolescent in age stands in front of the camera. His pose is a frontal portrait framing his shoulders, making the face and gaze of the boy the focus of the picture. The boy stares at the viewer without any facial hair, adorned with several flowers on the side of his face, and dark luscious hair peeks through the loosely-wound turban covering his head. While not immediately clear, this photograph pictures the very loss outlined above, both in the subject of the young boy, and in the elements excluded from the scene, like facial hair. As many authors have marked the significance of facial hair and age in homoerotic literature and cultural traditions,[262] Najmabadi points out that "the growth of a full-grown beard marked adult manhood, [and] the adolescent male's transition

[262] Wright, J. W. and Everett K. Rowson, eds., *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ Press, 1997); Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Islamicate Sexualities: Translations Across Temporal Geographies of Desire. Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs," vol. 39 (Cambridge, Mass: Center: Harvard University Press, 2008); Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*; Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Najmabadi Afsaneh, "Mapping Transformations of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Modern Iran," *Social Analysis* 49 (2005): 52–76.

from an object of desire to a desiring subject."[263] Facial hair was so important to aesthetics of beauty that an adult man who shaved his beard in pre-modern Persia was thought to be declaring his craving to be desired by other men, also known as *mukhannas,* the term translates to mean an adult man desiring to be an object of desire for other adult men.[264] As explained in the eleventh-century Persian book of advice, *Qabusnamah,* etiquette and moral behavior that prohibited men from shaving their beards were related to this critical transition from one state to the next.[265] It should also be noted that "for a male adolescent, to be an object of desire of adult men was considered unavoidable, if not acceptable or cherished by all."[266] In the photograph taken by Lehnert and Landrock (Figure 13), the subject is lacking most visible facial hair. Therefore, the viewer is meant to assume that this boy does not yet have a beard and is still not marked by adult manhood. This implies that the young Algerian boy photographed by Lehnert and Landrock would be an object of desire par excellence, yet the standards of beauty in Islamicate societies change rapidly over the course of the century when facial hair became a visible cultural difference between Europeans and local populations. In Qajar period Iran, men's beards (and later women's mustaches), were a visual marker of difference between Europe and Iran. As Najmabadi argues, "to become modern required one's modernity be legible for the already modern; Iran's modernity

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[263] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 15.

[264] As Najmabadi points out, this term was linked to *'ubnah,* which is considered in medical discourse as an illness. Socially, the male love desire was acceptable before this point, and decrees against shaving one's beard showed the cultural fear that young men may want to remain an object of desire rather than over time (and age) becoming the desiring man. The same disapproval was true if an older man was no longer beardless, but they remained interested in other older men. See: Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards*. p. 16 and 23.

[265] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 15.

[266] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 16.

had to be recognizable by the Europeans. One had to look European."[267] To further investigate this loss, I contend that we must look outside the frame of the photograph in order to engage with the content of the photograph itself.

To elucidate the colonial ramifications of a photograph such as Lehnert and Landrock's or the changing discourses of gender that are recorded, circulated and therefore influenced by the medium of photography, I suggest we compare this photograph to a contemporary drawing by Bagheri. One might immediately recognize the Islamicate attributes to the figure, but not necessarily the homoeroticism behind the drawing. In conducting a deep reading of the symbolic and stylistic elements, it becomes clear that this drawing speaks to the photography of Lehnert and Landrock in surprising yet harmonious ways. Bagheri's 2015 drawing *Untitled [II]* (Figure 14) from his series *Eastern Desires* bears many resemblances to the aforementioned photograph, mirroring the focus of a young adolescent boy, the composition of the frontal portrait, and the soft drawing techniques echoing the fogginess of the photograph itself. In this drawing, a young male of no more than twenty years of age stares longingly at the viewer. His head covered in a turban that is slightly askew make visible to the viewer his long, luxurious locks of hair falling to the side of his head. His long eyelashes, steady gaze and wisps of faint facial hair accentuate his soft features. The Figure is clothed in a tunic embellished with red cherries, mirroring the cherries adorning one of his earlobes like an earring. Similar to the young Algerian boy in the European photograph, the youthful boy in Bagheri's drawing does not have a full beard and instead has a *khatt,* which is the

[267] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 137.

mere hint of a mustache, and marks the moment before the full growth of facial hair takes place.[268] It is at this time that an adolescent is considered most beautiful, but that hint of a mustache also heralds the beginning of the end of his status as object of desire for adult men, and his own movement into adult manhood. It has been noted that displaying abundant curls of hair was particularly associated with male sexual fantasy, fulfilling "adult male desire for music, wine, dance, homo/heterosex, or just plain voyeuristic pleasure."[269] Here, Bagheri captures the moment when this boy is still an *amrad,* a young adolescent male who, according to the beauty standards of the pre-modern Persian culture, was an object of utmost desire.

The cherries juxtapose the conceived masculinity of the boy with their fragility and softness. The cherries repeated over his tunic might speak to a delicateness and softness incongruent with normative depictions of masculinity, and his earring references another homosocial instance in Islamicate historiography. Both the flowers ornamented at the side of the Algerian boy's head in Lehnert and Landrock's photograph (Figure 13) and Bagheri's subject adorned with a rich red cherry earring evoke the history of the dancing boys, or köçek, present in the Ottoman Empire. While Ze'evi analyzes these dancing boys for their gender-bending sexual fluidity, historian Joseph Boone outlines that the dancing boys were an established norm throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and performed in cafés, at court, in wedding processions and even religious festivals.

[268] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 15.
[269] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 93.

These dancing boys were adorned with jewelry and were elaborately dressed, and numerous orientalist photographs document the European fascination with these young boys.[270]

French photographers Hippolyte Délié and Émile Béchard are an orientalist team who showed much fascination in producing photographs of the Middle East and the local population. Working in Egypt, French photographer Henri Béchard operated a studio in Cairo in the Ezbekiah Garden district where he sold photographs of the region to tourists, as well as ethnographic photographs and Egyptian costume studies.[271] French photographer Émile Béchard (assumed to be related to Henri) is best known for having presented at the Universal Exhibition of 1878 in Paris a set of photographs he took in Egypt; this earned him a gold medal. Émile Béchard formed a studio with Hippolyte Délié in their Esbekiah studio in Cairo during the 1870s, then going by the moniker "Délié et Béchard."[272] The partnership was dissolved sometime after 1872 and both continued to work in Egypt as commercial photographers.[273]

The photograph *Au Jardin de l'Esbekieh (Cairo)* by Délié & Béchard (c. 1870, Figure 15) is no exception to the homocolonial fetishism of local aesthetics of beauty, and illustrates a young boy dancing. As mentioned above, known as a köçek and elaborately adorned with body jewelry and long dangling earrings to accompany his long flowing gown, the boy holds cymbals in each hand. The provenance of the photograph signals that the image was captured in Cairo, so this likely

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[270] See: Joseph A. Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014) p. 106; as well as the homoerotic photographs studied and shown in Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, eds., *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, 1st edition (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013).

[271] In 1888, Henri Béchard published a set of photogravures, *L'Égypte et la Nubie*.

[272] They had the photographic concession at the Cairo antiquities museum and produced the photobook *Album du Musée Boulaq: Photographie par Délié et Béchard, avec texte explicatif par Auguste Marriette Bey (Cairo, 1872)*.

[273] The timing of their partnership is unclear, but it is certain that both worked separately at various times. This is known because cartes-de-visite and cabinet cards exist with both single logos for each photographer as well as with a joint logo. Please see: Hannavy, John. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Egyptian boy shows us what the köçek looked like before they disappeared from public discourse. As historian Joseph Boone outlines, instead of recognizing an androgynous ideal of beauty in the Middle East, European travelers tended to see what seemed like an unsettling class of effeminate traits combined with a dress that was neither male nor female.[274] In fact, the nineteenth century British orientalist William Ouseley, who served an ambassador in Persia, described the köçek as "wearing the complete dress of a woman, and imitating, with the most disgusting effeminacy, the looks and attitudes of the dancing girl."[275] The consequences of the value judgements imposed by European critiques led to the banning of the köçek from public performances in the mid-nineteenth-century. This example indicates a degree to which Middle Eastern people were seeing their heritage negatively reflected back to them in Western writings, and they began to modify those cultural traditions that seemed to stand in the way of achieving Western modernity.[276] In Islamicate regions, homosexually suspect activities, as determined by Europeans, then became a cultural aspect seen as being part of a regressive past and so then a homoerotic and homosocial tradition was extinguished.

The subject in Bagheri's drawing marks a moment prior to the banning of the köçek from public performances in the mid-nineteenth century, prior to European travelers' shaming the unabashed homoerotic culture of coffeehouses and public baths which were too lurid for their tastes, and before language was created to give derision to long-standing local traditions that were deemed backwards and un-modern. While the subject in Bagheri's drawing (Figure 14) lacks the jewelry of the young Egyptian boy of Délié & Béchard's photograph (Figure 15), the cherry

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[274] Boone, Joseph. *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. p. 104.
[275] Ouseley, William. *Travels in Various Countries of the East; More Particularly, Persia.* 3 Volumes. London: UK, 1823. p. 405.
[276] Boone, Joseph. *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. p. 106.

earrings lay reference to this loss—a ghostly reminder of the köçek that only remains within the frame of Délié & Béchard's photograph, but is now removed from public consciousness.

When relating Rudolf Lehnert's hand-painted photograph, *Jeunes Arabes, Tunis* (1910, Figure 16) to the men in Bagheri's *Untitled [II]* (Figure 11) drawing, it becomes clear that kinship affiliation and embodiment becomes reimagined as Bagheri insists on remembering and reinventing historical ways of being. This method allows for these archives to speak to one another in ways that uncover the very histories of colonialism and imperial power that led to their making. Unlike the young boys in Lehnert's photograph (Figure 16), Bagheri's young men are more dominant and assertive in their pose. Taking up most of the picture frame in their composition, Bagheri's young men lack the passivity and docility of many Orientalist photographs, creating a different power dynamic between the subject and viewer. Drawing on the work of feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey, it is in their traditional exhibitionist role that eroticized boys are simultaneously looked at and displayed by European travelers and photographers. Like objectified women within the history of Western art, their appearance is coded for strong visual and erotic impact within Orientalist photography so that they can signify a desire "to-be-looked-at-ness."[277] The group of young men in Bagheri's drawing is noteworthy in the ways in which male homoerotic affective bonds were reimagined after homoeroticism and same-sex practices became marked as a sign of Iran's backwardness. Rejecting the heterosexualization of eros and sex which became a condition of achieving modernity,[278] Bagheri's drawing redefines the male same-sex intimacy that Europeans deemed a

[277] Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen*, Volume 16, Issue 3, 1 October, 1975. p. 6–18.
[278] Najmabadi, Afsenah. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. p. 147.

vice, and instead eroticism is once again depicted as a component of male bonding. This analysis has used contemporary art in order to trace gender fluidity across much of North Africa and the changing scripts governing same-sex desire across multiple regions in the area. In this study, comparative analysis between time and place is essential in order to assess the movement of colonial powers and the changing beauty standards in Persia, and the results of altered gender roles in the Ottoman Empire. In-line with feminist theorist Gayatri Gopinath's use of the term "queer regions", this research displaces area studies through queer theory and applies a trans-temporal exploration of the archive in order to better understand the current moment.[279]

PICTURING ERASURE WITHIN SOUTH-SOUTH RELATIONALITY

In examining Lehnert and Landrock's photograph *Ahmed, Tunisie* (Figure 17), sometimes known as *Boy with Flowers* (1908), in relation to Bagheri's oeuvre, there is a parallel aesthetics of beauty with dancing boys and the handsome beardless youth that were hired at coffeehouses to serve patrons all across the Middle East and North Africa. As historian Khaled El-Rouayheb notes, the famous Damascene poet Ahmad al-'Inayati was said to have the habit of going every morning to the coffeehouses "with running water and handsome cup-bearer […] and drink numerous cups of coffee."[280]

The archives I analyze in relation to Ebrin Bagheri's artwork are not only homoerotic, but they are also colonial and homocolonial archives of imperial encounter. Bagheri reimagines not

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[279] Gopinath, Gayatri. "Who's Your Daddy: Queer Diasporic Framings of the Region." In Bald, Vivek, & Chatterji, Miabi, & Reddy, Sujani, & Prashad, Vijay (eds) *The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in an Age of U.S. Power*. New York University Press, 2013. p. 274.
[280] El-Rouayheb, Khalid. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 43.

just photographic subject matter, but through the process of drawing he uses his own hand to remove the colonial language imbued within the photographic development of the medium and within these archives. In doing so, he reinvents the original archival sources and, I argue, he locates his own Iranian-ness within the once-Orientalized homoerotic photographs of young boys taken by European travelers. He does so by inserting his local understandings of Iranian tradition that transcend geographic borders and share similar sexual discourses with the rest of the Middle East and North Africa. Bagheri globalizes a regionally colonial history of desire and representation by using the language of the photographic archives into his contemporary drawing, thus blurring the lines between the photographic medium and the drawing technique. Bagheri's drawing is reminiscent of a pre-modern sexual script of the beardless *amarad,* the playfulness of the köçek, and the beautiful server boys working coffeehouses and bathhouses. By expanding local tradition to encompass much of the Ottoman Empire, Bagheri's drawing cites a specific moment in multiple geographic spheres and creating a network of inter-connection between locales. These aesthetic and homosocial traditions are not necessarily solely Iranian, but also speak widely to the conventions of beauty and sexual fluidity that were present across North Africa, the Middle East, and the entire Ottoman Empire.

The complication of temporal boundaries is important, as it is a valuable method for coping with the gaps within colonial archives. Archival records serve as primary documents within art history, but what happens when records from this period do not exist due to colonial encounter and imperialism? Often, the archives remaining in the Global South are the archives and objects that were left behind and deemed unworthy of looting by colonial powers, thus creating major gaps within archival records and surviving artifacts. What this analysis illustrates is that these archival gaps can also exist in other ways, the gaps themselves being seen within European representations of local populations. Due to the active erasure of local sexual scripts and same-sex desire that were

imposed by European travelers, even the records that do remain will forever be clouded by an immense loss and absence. Imperial encounter and colonialism in and of itself has created this gap and changed the way local populations conceive of same-sex desire, including the ways in which it is pictured and visualized. It is because of this gap that I turn to contemporary artists who are reimagining these colonial archives, even at a subconscious or instinctive level, to create a counter-archive where homoerotic desire has not been silenced or removed. This complication of temporal boundaries then is a liberating complication of linear time and provides an empowered and anti-colonial reading of history that accounts for the current moment and the diasporas experiencing these histories. In order for dynamics of power to always be at the fore of queer theoretical analysis, it is important to question how these sexual logics connect historic colonialism with the contemporary diaspora.

DIASPORA CONSCIOUSNESS: A PRACTICE OF "DECOLONIAL AESTHESIS"

Through Bagheri's use of historic cultural tropes that are not only Iranian but are a part of many geo-cultural traditions across much of the Ottoman Empire, I excavate and uncover the trappings of colonial history that are embedded within the artist's diaspora consciousness.[281] The connections I make within this analysis are not links that the artist himself made. Archival research is not part of Bagheri's practice and he has confirmed that he had not seen the archives within my study while producing his work. Therefore, I ask: What does it mean for Bagheri to produce drawings that

[281] The term 'geo-cultural' is from the discipline of cultural geography which is the study of the many cultural aspects found throughout the world and how they relate to the spaces and places where they originate and then travel as people continually move across various areas.

visually echo photographs he has never seen?[282] How can this speak to the power of photography as a tool for excavation and locating colonial histories? What type of archival excavation can be accomplished by studying historical archives in tandem with contemporary art?[283] The ubiquity of photographs makes them perfectly suited to be something that 'is not seen' but is somehow always present, especially at the core of identity formation and narratives of sexual desire.[284] This analysis contributes to demonstrating that artwork such as Bagheri's speaks to archival photography in ways that the archive may not be able to do alone. These colonial legacies are a part of his own identity as a queer Iranian man living in Canada and speak to the deeply entrenched homosocial practices and local traditions rooted in same-sex desire that have not fully been extinguished by colonialism, even within a multi-generational context. In the words of Walter Mignolo, "when you felt coloniality, you felt the colonial wound."[285] Bagheri depicts everyday forms of Islamicate same-sex desire with contemporary subjects mirroring traditional scenes that resemble scenes from the colonial archive, demonstrating they are not fully colonized because they inform Bagheri's

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[282] This question can be answered in part by the discussion in Chapter 1, *Trauma and the Single Narrative,* bringing the phantom image in dialogue with diasporic consciousness. This connection indicated that the phantom image relates heavily to the subconscious production of visual art and is linked to colonial trauma and imperial archives in powerful ways.

[283] While this case study deals with one artist, and this is accompanied by additional artists elsewhere in the dissertation, this broader claim is built through cumulative research and future studies. As this research develops, more artists will be added to the corpus of queer diasporic art production, furthering the connection between colonial archives and contemporary art.

[284] Within my analysis 'identity' is not a stable commodity; instead, I am pushing for a different conception of subjectivity that is not fully anchored in linear/stable/hegemonic 'identity', per se. For instance, we can think of 'erotic' as not solely being called into existence through 'identity', but the 'erotic' can be that which helps constitute various forms of identification and disidentifications in different contexts. In this analysis, identity involves the ways in which a queer person of colour is perceived by transnational social orders, and also the ways in which they 'disidentify' with essentialist Eurocentric markers of identity. In this way, subject formation falls outside the boundaries of nation state and normative citizenship and identifications.

[285] Mignolo, Walter. "Forward: Decolonial Body-Geo-Politics at Large" in Bakshi, Sandeep, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco, eds. *Decolonizing Sexualities: Transnational Perspectives, Critical Interventions*. Oxford: Counterpress, 2016. p. vii.

conception of his own Iranian identity. I contend that his subject position and seemingly subconscious referencing of the visual tropes and aesthetic details present within the photographic archives show that these pre-modern sexual scripts are still alive and felt within the diaspora. From these archives, I argue that Bagheri, whether intentionally or not, does a queer reimagining of the photographic archives and produces drawings that are steeped in photographic history.

Diaspora consciousness again becomes a driving force in which to link contemporary art production and queer diasporic subjectivity. Within the case study explored in this chapter, diasporic consciousness stands in utopically as a figure for the imaginative completion of what Paul Gilroy identifies as a creative (and by extension theoretical) trajectory sometimes denied to minoritarian constituencies.[286] The historical record of desire and the aesthetics of intimacy is instrumental in locating contemporary notions of sexual discourse in the Middle East, and the necessary cause-and-effect relationship sexuality discourses in the Middle East have on those currently living in the diaspora. This cause and effect relationship is demonstrated in the artwork of contemporary artists currently living in the North American diaspora, and in the artworks of Jamil Hellu, Ebrin Bagheri, and 2Fik (discussed in the following chapter), are in-depth case studies to provide an intellectual and methodological framework for these claims within my dissertation. In this way, the examples analyzed within this chapter illustrate how diaspora consciousness involves "a self-conscious transvaluation of diaspora [and] foregrounds the specular relationship of West and non-West; it thus brings to the fore issues of identity construction in cultural difference."[287] This historical lens provides a necessary methodology for understanding human rights discourses around sexual tolerance and cultural specificity. Such exploration of diaspora

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[286] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. p. 132-33.

[287] Dayal, Samir. "Diaspora and Double Consciousness." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 29, no. 1 (1996): 46-62. p. 51.

consciousness as accounting for and being related to queer diasporic art production can be productive in shaping the dimensions of what Gilroy terms the "fatal junction of the concept of nationality with the concept of culture."[288] Thus, the study of historical visual culture concurrently with contemporary art is a productive method to illustrate how the history of same-sex desire in the Middle East is currently manifested and negotiated by artists transnationally in the diaspora. The diaspora, their "queer desires, bodies and subjectivities become dense sites of meaning in the production and reproduction of notions of 'culture', 'tradition', and communal belonging."[289] The link connecting diaspora consciousness and queer subjectivity in the diaspora is a large claim, and one that I develop throughout this dissertation and in future research. However, by examining these dense sites of meaning, as Gopinath puts it, in order to investigate the ways in which historical colonial trauma directly impacts meaning-making for queer diasporic subjects in the West is a promising starting-point.

The relationships outlined in this chapter between the diasporic artist and colonial trauma can be seen as being a part of a larger framework called decolonial aestheSis. Coined by Rolando Vazquez and Walter Mignolo, they define the term as follows:

> Decolonial aestheSis is a movement that is naming and articulating practices that challenge and subvert the hegemony of modern/colonial aestheSis. Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving. Decolonial aestheSis is an option that delivers a radical critique to modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics and, simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the

[288] Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. p. 2.
[289] Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires.* Duke University Press, North Carolina, 2005. p. 2.

> confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts.[290]

To Vazquez and Mignolo, the shift from "aesthetics" to "aestheSis" is an important decolonial method, as aestheTics is "an aspect of the colonial matrix of power, of the imperial structure of control that began to be put in place in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the colonization of the New World, and that was transformed and expanded through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and up to this day."[291] Under their intellectual project of decolonizing aesthetics to become a decolonial aestheSis, my theories linking diaspora consciousness to the art production of the queer diaspora can contribute to naming practices that challenge and subvert the hegemony of modern and colonial norms.[292] Like decolonial aestheSis, my arguments anchored on the queer diaspora reimagining colonial trauma within their artistic repertoire is "an option that delivers a radical critique to modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics and, simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the confluence of popular practices of re-existence."[293]

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[290] Mignolo, Walter and Vazquez, Rolando. "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings – Social Text." Accessed November 25, 2019. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/. p. 4.

[291] Mignolo, Walter and Vazquez, Rolando. "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings – Social Text." Accessed November 25, 2019. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/. p. 6.

[292] As Gayatri Gopinath suggests, to understand queerness as diasporic and diaspora as queer is to recuperate "desires, practices, and subjectivities that are rendered impossible or unimaginable within conventional diasporic or nationalist imaginaries (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*, p. 11). Such a critical framework of a "specifically queer diaspora… may begin to unsettle the ways in which the diaspora shores up the gender and sexual ideologies of dominant nationalism on the one hand, and processes of globalization on the other" (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*, p. 10).

[293] Mignolo, Walter and Vazquez, Rolando. "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings – Social Text." Accessed November 25, 2019. https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/. Page 5.

CONCLUSION: DRAWING AS PHOTOGRAPHY

What does it mean to locate photography within a drawing? To answer this question, I have turned to contemporary drawing as a method to study the use of colonial photography within the Middle East at the turn of the century. I used photography in order to analyze historical narratives of same-sex desire as the medium itself circulates, which helps create an imaginary of the Middle East that is then reified in culture, and therefore trains us to see. While an unconventional pairing for analysis, it is my contention that to illustrate the colonial ramifications of photography in the Middle East that exist outside of the picture plane itself, it is important to look at how the living diaspora uses the language, tropes, composition, and stylistic elements that are particular to photography and examine how they have developed this visuality into a decolonized representation of same sex desire in other mediums.

In comparing the striking similarities in subject matter, composition, and monochromatic colour between Bagheri's drawings and the photographs, it becomes clear that the photography of these images is inescapable. The language developed and cemented by photography to depict, sexualize, eroticize, and in the case of these colonial archives, Orientalize, is well embedded within the drawings of Ebrin Bagheri. It becomes unproductive to separate the photography from the drawing, and the drawings themselves not only reference a history of photography in the Middle East, but they also explore the language and tropes of local photography through a less mechanical medium. Elsewhere, I have explored contemporary Arab artists and their use of hand-painted photography to add subjectivity, inserting their voice to articulate their identity in a way that added a personal element of touch and manipulation to a photograph.[294] Here, we see something different:

[294] For analysis of hand painted photography, see: Gayed, Andrew. "The Exilic Aesthetic: Articulations of Patriotism by the Expatriate." *Persona Journal, the Department of Theatre and*

rather than further manipulate the photographs which hold the colonial knowledge of representation, the medium of photography itself is explored elsewhere, and Bagheri's drawing becomes inextricably tied to the photography which it references. The eroticized boys are pictured within the photograph; however, and more importantly, the reading of loss, of coloniality and of local eroticization is located outside the frame of the photograph itself. It is for this reason that the turning to drawing as a way of understanding the colonial impacts of these photographs becomes less of a controversial decision, and instead a necessary step in the analysis of visual culture that helps to understand the very study of colonial photography in the Middle East and the role photography played in the changing sexual politics that ensued from the nineteenth century and continue to develop today.

Bagheri's youthful subject marks a moment of uncolonized sexual scripts that reflect Islamicate notions of beauty and desire, left to be interpreted and read in modern society with the language of modernized sexual scripts, and under the purview of contemporary art. This interesting flux and flow of historicized sexual bodies and the contemporary artist brings pre-modern sexual discourses out of the archives, and into the lived reality of queer diasporic subjects today. The shadow of homosociality and the erasure of alternative sexual codes and same-sex desire is seen in the longing gaze of Bagheri's youth, in that fleeting moment in between being an object of desire to becoming an object of abjection. This work gestures to a compelling question about the im/possibilities of diasporic self-representation in relation to colonial frames and conventions of representation. This analysis questions the ways in which we can see ourselves outside the visibilization-regimes of the colonizing eye.

Film Arts at the Superior School of Art in Portugal. Experiments and Displacements, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2014. p. 37-54. See also: Gayed, Andrew. *Nationalism, Migration and Exile: The Photographs of Youssef Nabil*. MA Dissertation, Carleton University: Ottawa, Ontario. April 2016.

In this chapter I have examined photographs from several European travelers that are emblematic of a genre in order to historicize same-sex desire in the Middle East, across North Africa, and the regions formerly a part of the Ottoman Empire to investigate Middle Eastern contemporary art, and its relationship to gender colonial discourses that had an impact on same-sex desire. The target analysis in this chapter and my overall dissertation is contemporary diasporic art, and fully historicizing same-sex desire in the Ottoman Empire or a pre-modern Persianate society is beyond the scope of my research. Rather, as a method of building causal relationships between imperialism in Islamicate regions and the contemporary queer diaspora, I began by historicizing European and colonial encounters at the turn of the twentieth century. This was done by illustrating the effect Victorian sensibilities had on pre-modern homosociality and same-sex desire in Islamicate regions connected by language, culture, and empire. This history of changing sexual discourse was later illustrated through European colonial photographs in the Middle East that depict homoeroticism, specifically eroticized images of indigenous populations that were taken by Europeans. I focused on European travelers who photographed pictures of local young men (if my reading is correct) and I analyzed the aesthetics of these photographic archives in relation to contemporary drawings by Iranian artist Ebrin Bagheri as a way of investigating the modernist production of heterosexuality through the lens of gender, and its reconceptualization as locally relevant and indigenous gender norms before increased contact with Europe in the sixteenth century. In exploring the visual art of a queer diasporic subject, I analyzed the ways in which Bagheri's contemporary drawings carry traces of pre-modern same-sex desire to elucidate that the colonial hangovers of the colonized local sexual scripts are still alive, and deeply embedded within diaspora consciousness. As argued throughout this dissertation, the double bind that the queer diasporic subject often faces can be linked to these aftereffects and tensions. To illustrate the Eurocentric

canon of queer history that relegated Islamicate same-sex desire to the periphery, I used a multi-temporal approach to show how pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts were not fully colonized and still live on in the diaspora.[295] Weary of compartmentalized approaches of area studies that focus too heavily on nation-state epistemologies that are not adequately attuned to the interconnectedness of empire and culture, I propose a multi-temporal approach that allows for a connection to be made visible between the gender logics of different locales existing within the lived experiences of the diaspora. This approach allows for tracing the ways in which diaspora consciousness holds facets of connected locales and colonial histories of gender and sexuality, thus better exploring how this impacts diasporic formation as queer subjects in the West through visual analysis of their artworks.

Importantly, this analysis is meant to challenge the Eurocentricism of dominant queer theory and gay scholarship by focusing on alternative sexual discourses that are not reducible to hegemonic Euro-American notions of gay identity. My examination of historical colonial encounter in relation to contemporary diasporic art becomes another logic used to challenge area studies scholarship, which remains centered on the nation-state. Focusing on local-to-local connections between different Islamicate regions in North Africa and the former Ottoman Empire allows for simultaneously challenging the homogeneity of "global gay identity" by addressing how colonial encounter has been transformed and negotiated in local sites. This chapter has illustrated

[295] I conceptualize 'the pre-modern' as being a time period before the turn of the century, and prior to the period of modernity as defined by the West. Pre-modern histories in the Global South signal a period prior to one that has been characterized by Western Modernity as being the pinnacle of the advancement of modern industrial societies and social progress. Conceptually I anchor this term in relation to an Islamicate pre-modern history that is not geographically specific, but connected in surprising and productive ways through gender and sexual discourses. In bringing the contemporary diaspora in relation to Islamicate pre-modern histories, I see this story as divested from anachronistic Western conceptions of progress and authentic gay identity. In this regard I conceptualize my analysis as re-mediating understandings of temporality (and spatiality), and the trans-temporal queer gaze is in reference to a contemporary diasporic identity formation that is in constant relation to a homo-colonial history.

that pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts are not fully colonized and live on in multigenerational subjects of the diaspora. I have outlined the process of colonization and the immense struggle Islamicate sexual discourses faced in the age of modernization. The study of visual culture (both archival and the contemporary art of living artists) shows how hangovers of these sexual scripts are still alive and deeply entrenched within diaspora consciousness. The double bind that the queer diasporic subject often faces can be linked to these hangovers and tensions, and the study of visual art and culture better illustrates the specific ways in which these sexual scripts are both manifested and negotiated by non-Western subjects in the West.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMING OUT À L'ORIENTAL: DIASPORIC ART AND COLONIAL WOUNDS

"The curves of my lips rewrite the history of Islam." – 2Fik[296]

What does it mean to "come out *à l'oriental*"? Coming out can be seen as an epistemology for gay individuals living open and free lives, and the concept is well theorized within Western queer theory.[297] But who is entitled to, and included within, the safety of living "out and proud"? The gatekeepers of Western modernity and Western gay identity regulate the parameters of what it means to live a "truly" gay life. For this reason, current literature engaging with Middle Eastern homosexuality focuses on issues of modernity, multiple modernities, and the West's claim to modernity. Traditionally, modernity as a time period signals social, political, and historic conditions at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.[298]

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[296] Quote from the book cover of: Provencher, Denis. *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 105.

[297] See: Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008); Somerville, Siobhan. "Feminism, Queer Theory, and the Racial Closet," *Criticism* 52, no. 2 (2010): 191–200; Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Eribon, Didier. and Michael Lucey, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); and Bersani, Leo. *Is the Rectum a Grave? and Other Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[298] Modernity is not to be confused with Modernism, which points to the cultural trends that responded to the conditions of modernity in myriad ways, such as modern art.

However, numerous scholars now question this definition as an imperial structure of power that masks how modernity colonizes social and cultural practices in the name of Western advancement. For example, the postcolonial literature on Arab sexualities contends that the West created a discourse around sexuality that the Middle East never had, leading to the notion of homocolonialism or imperialist ideologies in the name of sexual tolerance. I use homocolonialism to mean the deployment of LGBTQI rights and visibility to stigmatize non-Western cultures, all the while reasserting supremacy of the Western nations' values, politics and principles for a modern civilization.[299]

According to historian Khaled El-Rouayheb, the term *homosexualität* was coined in the late 1860s by the Austro-Hungarian writer Karl Maria Kertbeny, and the English equivalent first appeared in print some twenty years later.[300] At the turn of the twentieth century, colonial governing bodies imposed Victorian and Euro-American sexual discourses on Middle Eastern cultures. As a push against colonial forces and imperialism, homosexuality in the Middle East was then made an illegal identity category, an identity category that many argue did not exist prior to increased contact with Western explorers and travelers. In an effort to appeal to these travelers and lay claim to modernity, Middle Eastern governing bodies self-regulated the sexuality of their citizens along heterosexual lines in keeping with Western modernity.[301] As El-Rouayheb notes,

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[299] In Momin Rahman's core argument, he explains homocolonialism as being an actor in the specific understandings of modernity that underpins the sources of oppression between Muslim cultures and sexual diversity. See: Rahman, Momin. *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[300] El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 5.

[301] As seen in the previous chapters, pre-modern same-sex desire is well documented in the Middle East. El-Rouayheb outlines numerous biographic accounts, poetic anthologies, and belletristic writings openly dedicated to same-sex relations, such as poems about a man's passion for a teenage boy. See *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1-42. Historians also cite the travel journals of Europeans who visited various regions of the Ottoman Empire, noting their astonishment and disgust with same-sex

between the middle of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, the prevalent tolerance of same sex desire was declining, likely in part due to the adoption of European Victorian attitudes by the new, modern, educated and westernized elite.[302]

Queer theorist Momin Rahman argues that we must accept that the Muslim experience of sexual diversity politics is significantly different from the Western one and that this reality undermines any assumption that processes of Muslim modernization will inevitably lead to the same outcomes around sexuality as those experienced in the West. Middle Eastern homosexuality will never look the same as Western homosexuality.[303] He posits that the queer Muslim, intersectional in identity, challenges the monolithic, monocultural versions of queer Western identity politics. Here, the sheer existence of queer diasporic Muslims destabilize Western queer discourse. [304] This assertion of the Muslim queer subject lying outside of normative Western queer politics (and even the encouragement of being outside this Western queer politics) points to issues

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tradition and local men openly flaunting their relations with other men and adolescent boys. It should be noted that these travel journals were often translated into Arabic and local languages in order to be circulated to cause shame and embarrassment, thus making them a part of irreparable acts of repression and sexual imperialism. See Ze'evi, Dror, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Joseph A. Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[302] El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 156.

[303] Rahman, Momin. *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[304] Intersectionality is a framework designed to explore the dynamic between co-existing identities (e.g., woman, Black) and connected systems of oppression (e.g., patriarchy, white supremacy). The term was coined by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to challenge the assumption that continues to undermine the feminist movement that women are a homogeneous group, equally positioned by structures of power. In a feminist context, it allows for a fully developed understanding of how factors such as race and class shape women's lived experiences, how they interact with gender. See: Crenshaw, Kimberly. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1300.

of genuine difference and incompatibility. As I have traced elsewhere,[305] these ideas are steeped in issues of colonialism and imperialism, and are the hangovers of precolonial sexual scripts that make the Islamicate queer subject an outlier.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that there exists a strong relationship between the historical construction of colonial sexualities and contemporary expressions of diasporic sexualities. I use the history of gender, sexuality, colonialism, and their triangulation in the Middle East as the foundation for outlining a cause-and-effect dynamic that reverberates to contemporary queer diasporic subjects. In order to link late-nineteenth century colonialism to the contemporary diaspora, I will focus on contemporary art that uses these historic moments as the foundation for artistic inspiration. Here I investigate the performance art and photography of Montreal-based Moroccan artist 2Fik (Toufique). A French-born Moroccan who migrated to the francophone province of Quebec in Canada, 2Fik uses his own diasporic identity as a subject in his work to explore the dichotomies of his Moroccan-Canadian culture and his lived experience as a queer Arab.[306] Using performance and photography as primary modes of art production, 2Fik invents multifaceted characters that transform and translate the different aspects of his cultural and sexual identity, performing each character in complex narratives within his photography. Oftentimes language—Arabic, French, and English—works together with the visual in 2Fik's artwork to bring

[305] See Gayed, Andrew. "Queering Middle Eastern Contemporary Art and its Diaspora," in *Unsettling Colonial Modernity: Islamicate Contexts in Focus*, eds. Siavash Saffari, Roxana Akhbari, Kara Abdolmaleki, Evelyn Hamdon (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 140–155; Andrew Gayed, "Islamicate Sexualities: The Artworks of Ebrin Bagheri," *Esse Arts + Opinions Magazine,* Special Issue, *LGBTQIA* 91 (2017).

[306] It should be noted that in his interviews with Denis Provencher, 2Fik used the term Arab to refer to his own cultural experience and also identify his own performative characters. Provencher, Denis. *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

semiotic and etymological dimension to his visual art.[307] His performance art becomes an integral and inseparable part of his photography, for these characters provide a level of depth in investigating the process of cultural transformation that allows him to navigate geographic borders, geopolitics, and decolonial aesthetics.

I do not wish to speak ahistorically of settler colonial contexts, as homosexuality in the Global North was also criminalized in the past. What is important here, however, are the ways in which white settler puritanism has been used as a measuring stick to label the Other as backward and outside of modernity. This was true of the Middle East (and, it should be noted, of settler colonial contexts that labelled Indigenous peoples guilty of primitivism), first for perceived gender fluidity and then, as sexual tolerance became the new marker of Western modernity, for the heterosexism the region had adopted in order to become modern. Thus, the sexual discourses of the Middle East remain the reason the West's perception generally excludes the region as having achieved modernity. This vicious cycle of regulation by the West is inherently a colonial construct meant to control the very outcome it produces.

In this chapter, I analyze 2Fik's contemporary art in order to illustrate the complexities of Islamicate sexualities in the diaspora. I use 2Fik's visual art as a case study to investigate the historical links between queer diasporic identities, modernity, and Western imperialism. To do so, I begin by outlining epistemologies of coming out as a way of illustrating transnational queer identity,[308] and in this case, coming out *à l'oriental*. Next, I turn to modern art to question the ways

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[307] For an in-depth analysis of the languages used by queer Maghrebi-French artists, writers, and filmmakers., see: Provencher, Denis *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

[308] I use "transnational queer identity" to speak of a non-Western way of being a queer subject, most often referring to sexual norms of the Global South. A transnational queer identity is necessarily diasporic, and involves different global, local, and multi-national negotiations in order to form queer subjectivity in the diaspora.

in which pre-modern Islamicate sexual scripts colonized by modernity might still exist within diasporic subjects today. Finally, I analyze the fictional characters that 2Fik has created in his artistic practice as a way of understanding the tensions between different dichotomies within his own diasporic identity—East versus West, traditional versus modern, and transnational versus hybrid. Throughout this discussion I draw links between settler colonialism and its intersection with the queer diaspora. Issues of modernity and progress in Canada (as well as the larger Euro-American context) are intrinsically tied to queer rights, liberal tolerance, and how these uphold whiteness and naturalize settler colonialism. This discussion illustrates the ways in which contemporary art can be used to queer kinship models as well as the ways in which queer identity can nuance theories of transnationalism and diaspora, especially how sexuality is performed in transnational contexts. I contend that queer contemporary Arab artists, not just 2Fik, can be seen as a necessary link bridging art history and modernity with contemporary queer identity.

COMING OUT *À L'ORIENTAL*

2Fik speaks about his self-discovery concerning his sexuality in terms of coming out *à l'oriental,* or, a Middle Eastern style of coming out. In an interview, 2Fik defined coming out *à l'oriental* as an

> expression that makes reference to the use of eastern and Arab-Muslim cultural references in order to explain the disregard for social obligations related to heterosexuality (marriage, reproduction, etc.). The goal of this type of *coming out* is to take up the arguments of the culture of origin (Morocco) and not use those in the host culture (France) of the person in front of you (papa) hence reinforcing the thesis, encouraging comprehension of the message and avoiding any interpretation such as 'victim-of-the-western-system-that-made-you-homosexual'.[309]

[309] Provencher, Denis. *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 57.

Coming out *à l'oriental* calls upon local language and signifiers that 2Fik's father and any Moroccan listener can understand. It is a method of queer self-expression that provincializes global signifiers of gay identity, such as the rainbow flag or the pride parade, to centre on a culturally local understanding of same-sex desire, kinship, and cultural practices.[310]

In the work titled *Arabesque* (2006) (Figure 18), a gender-fluid subject wearing a black two-piece bikini and a pink hijab is digitally collaged to appear numerous times in the frame. The slender figure holds a baton with a pink ribbon tied to the end of it, mirroring the pink hijab that conceals their identity. In playful movements of dance and *joie de vivre*, the figure frolics in an open field twirling the baton so that the pink ribbon creates arabesque designs in the air. The movements of the pink ribbon resemble Arabic script, and the pink veil, its modesty juxtaposed to the black bikini, creates recognizable feminine signifiers as 2Fik situates himself within his own cultural context. As scholar Denis Provencher recounts, this image visually reinforces 2Fik's argument that any sort of communication with his parents has to occur *on* and *in* their own terms.[311] *Arabesque* then becomes a coming out of sorts, but the pink arabesque designs only *mimic* Arabic script. They create no real language and no real meaning, forming only a symbolic language that is visually recognizable but has no words. In expressing the inability of the rainbow flag to

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[310] Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* points to Eurocentrism within the study of historical modernity, and the centrality that Europe takes in histories of civilization, industrialization and progress. Chakrabarty begins with outlining how conventional theoretical models have been based on European history, with key themes like the development of capitalism and modernity being central to these narratives. He argues that Europe is template of modernity, a body of scholarship that defines how academics view the world, and not just a geographic region. Provincializing Europe entails returning Europe to its rightful place as *one* world region among many, decentered as a way of thinking through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations.

[311] Provencher, Denis. *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 81.

communicate his own coming out to his parents, 2Fik states: "you cannot communicate with people using your own lingo. Communication is a message that is sent and a message that comes back. You have to take into account your listener."[312] In this case, the global and arguably Western signifier of the rainbow flag becomes provincialized, and 2Fik insists on reverting back to a visual language that his parents can understand. The gender fluidity, the culturally arabesque performance, and the religious signifiers of Islam present in this work all point to another way of expressing one's sexual identity in a local and culturally specific way.[313]

To illustrate what the incompatibilities between Western and non-Western signifiers looks like in a south-south comparison, queer theorist Martin Manalansan writes in his seminal study on the queer Filipino diaspora that visibility and identity models based on individual proclamations of the self are historically and geographically specific to Western centres.[314] Reconceptualizing narratives such as coming out points to possibilities of negotiating and reconciling transnational diasporic sensibilities with transnational queer identification. For the *bakla*, a Filipino homosexual or effeminate person, undisclosed homosexuality is not synonymous with being "in hiding" or "inside the closet." Many Filipino gay men believe that silence is a part of the discourse of

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[312] *Ibid*., p. 80.

[313] Islamicate gender fluidity is seen in surviving Middle Eastern and later Islamic literature from the fourth to thirteenth centuries, which narrates examples of homosocial relations and gay desire, but not "gay" as a stable identity. For instance, homoerotic relationships between the Mamluk elite in late-medieval Egypt and Syria show that the public expression of homoeroticism (especially in poetry) was fully permitted by Islamic societies both before and during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. See: Rowson, Everett K. "Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamluk Literature: al-Safadi's Law`at al-shaki and Ibn Daniyal's al-Mutayyam," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J.W. Wright, Jr. and Everett K. Rowson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 158–191. Likewise, pre-modern Arab-Islamic texts speak frequently of the androgynous beauty of beardless boys, and poetry and other texts are explicit about anal intercourse and fellatio. Traub, Valerie. *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 24.

[314] Manalansan, Martin. *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

sexuality. This difference in identity formation relates to an individual identifying with a family unit and community in the Philippines versus the individualistic model of identity in North America. The process of coming out and the notion of the "closet" are not constituted for Filipino gay men in the same way as they are for the mainstream gay community in North America, where they are crucial to gay self-formation. Therefore, coming out does not translate to a meaningful category of identity formation for *bakla,* showing how queer identity is constructed differently outside the West.

2Fik's refashioning of queer subjectivity as coming out *à l'oriental* demonstrates the "Queers' struggle towards finding, building, remembering, and settling into a home to create the sphere called diasporic intimacy."[315] This refashioning of what gay identity and coming out can mean for a racialized postcolonial queer shows the incompatibility between how a diasporic subject may be socialized as a queer subject in the West and the values and understandings of their own sexual desires from a cultural perspective. Within the context of the diaspora, it is important to question the truism of Canada as a gay-friendly nation, which tends to render invisible racist discourses within queer organizing and ignores past and ongoing processes of colonialism. The works of Indigenous, queer, feminist, and Two-Spirit activists and scholars demonstrate the ways in which gender and sexuality are centred in colonial processes.[316] Just as the *bakla* becomes both an identity and a linguistic tool, the non-Western sexuality scripts colonized by Western gay

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[315] *Ibid*., p. 91.

[316] See for example: Smith, Andrea. 2005. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide.* Cambridge, MA: South End Press.; Smith, Andrea. 2011. "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism." In *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, ed. Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen. 43-65. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.; Morgensen, Scott Lauria. 2010. "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism and Queer Modernities." GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 1–2:105–32.; Morgensen, Scott Lauria. 2012. "Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel: Articulating Two-Spirit and Palestinian Queer Critiques." *Settler Colonial Studies* 2(2):167–90.

identity shape and transform how the diasporic subject *becomes* queer or learns to be a queer person of colour.

The metaphor of "coming out" present in *Arabesque* poses certain incompatibilities with the Western notion of freeing one's self from the confines of the closet. The work represents the myriad ways Middle Eastern subjects in the diaspora express and live their sexual identities in meaningful ways. Psychologist Sekna Hammoud-Beckett offers the notion of "letting in" as an alternative to normative models of "coming out."[317] This term refers to the conscious and selective invitation of people into one's 'club of life'. "Letting in" is a process that is highly relevant to the diaspora because it provides an alternative to the Western subject's imposition of visibility in order to be complete, and thus alters perceptions of what it means to live a "truly" gay life. In its visual ambiguity and cultural specificity, 2Fik's *Arabesque* can be seen as a letting in and, I argue, a crucial part of what it means to come out *à l'oriental*. These methods and visual strategies link the experiences of gay subjects in the Middle East to those of members of the diaspora and complicate narratives of superiority and queer acceptance upheld in the Global North. This is done by linking the local and diasporic experiences by a universalizing power of coloniality that affects both sets of subjects on the level of identification and subject formation.

The link between cultural differences and sexual discourses is important and is reiterated in the writing of diaspora scholar Nadine Naber. In her book *Arab America,* Naber argues that the diaspora can intensify its culture in North America, becoming even more culturally and religiously strict than the homeland. The result is a very complicated space for diasporic sexuality, because,

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[317] Hammound-Beckett, Sekneh. "Azima Ila Hayati- an Invitation in to My Life: Narrative Conversations about Sexual Identity." *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work* 2007, no. 1 (2007): 29-39

while the judicial system may support queer subjects in the West, the cultural community and family unit can be the site of abuse, trauma, disownment, and danger.

The process of subjectification for the diasporic individual, and the complexities of becoming a queer subject, are in part related to the pressures that Western discourse puts on other cultures to reproduce a queer identity that is often times hegemonic and incompatible with local settings. Theorist Joseph Massad's "Gay International" framework, discussed at length in previous chapters, explains this process as an incitement to discourse, creating a mission of homocolonialism and Western exceptionalism that seeks to export Western models of homosexuality to places where it did not previously exist, effectively erasing local sexual identity scripts.[318] The imposition of a seemingly universal "gay" identity that is inherently Western is, according to Massad, fundamentally linked to colonialism and colonizing discourses. Most non-Western civilizations, including Muslim and Arab civilizations, had not historically subscribed to binary categories of gender and sexuality, and their imposition produces harmful effects; neither did such binaries exist in the Indigenous Americas prior to colonization and slavery as reflected in gender variant or two-spirited individuals within Indigenous cultures and ceremonies.[319] This incitement to discourse, I argue, is illustrated in 2Fik's own navigation of language and cultural specificity as a way of rejecting the colonial notion of homosexuality as existing in the Global North (and the white settler

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[318] Massad, Joseph. *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 188.

[319] For scholarship on queer settler colonialism see: Morgensen, Scott Lauria. "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now." *Settler Colonial Studies* 1.1 (2011): 52-76; Morgensen, Scott Lauria. "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.1-2 (2010): 105-131; Smith, Andrea. "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.1-2 (2010): 41-68; Greensmith, Cameron, and Sulaimon Giwa." Challenging Settler Colonialism in Contemporary Queer Politics: Settler Homonationalism, Pride Toronto, and Two-Spirit Subjectivities." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37.2 (2013): 129-148.

state context of North America in particular), and instead creating an alternative existence based on his own lived experience, showing the ways in which diasporic subjects can exist outside of such rigid parameters of identity formation.

IDENTIFICATION PHOTOGRAPHY AND PERFORMING DIASPORA

How does a diasporic subject perform Islamicate sexuality? What does the performance of sexuality say about the historical construction of race and its relationship to colonialism? To explore these questions, I analyze a series of photographs by 2Fik, all of which resemble passport or identification photographs, and ask how diasporic subjects construct and negotiate their individual identities within the inherited structures of modern sexuality. This section highlights several of 2Fik's performed characters (Figure 27), which demonstrate his alternative kinship model of affiliation and belonging. To date, 2Fik has created fifteen characters that comprise his imagined family unit, and he performs and masquerades as each family member in his photographs. With backstories for each character, including migration or diasporic connections to either Morocco, France, or Canada, 2Fik's performative photography reimagines familial kinship and notions of national identity. Some characters illustrate tradition, strong ties to homeland, and strict cultural values. These characters are linked to modernity as a colonial and modernizing project in the Middle East. Other characters that evoke a notion of cultural hybridity are linked to diaspora as a contemporary, Westernized subject.[320] I analyze the characters and their headshots as photographic identities in their own right. These characters appear as subjects within every one of

[320] 2Fik's *Huit Facettes* portrays the characters in a way that highlights their national identity. In a clockwise order starting in the top left-hand corner: Alice (French-Lebanese); Manon (100% Québécoise); Benjamin (Arab-Quebecker); Fatima (Moroccan); Francine (Anglo-Canadian); Abdel (Morrocan); Sofiane (Moroccan) and Marco (Italian-Moroccan). (figure 34).

2Fik's photographs, regardless of series, comprising the world he has created for himself in his art.[321] The interactions between the characters and their development in storylines is seen throughout the entirety of his photographic oeuvre and not within just one particular series.

Traditional characters like Abdel, a Moroccan-born man who is solely committed to his wife and following Islam contrast with more liberal characters like Sofiane, Abdel's younger brother, who prides himself on rejecting religiosity as he works in the hip-hop scene in Tiohtià:ke| (Montreal), Quebec. In Abdel's identification photograph (Figure 28), which has the aesthetic and composition of a traditional passport photo, the subject sits up straight and is dressed simply but maturely in a red jacket over a plain white button-up shirt. He wears a serious expression, gazing directly at the viewer with his fully-grown beard and a black prayer cap sitting firmly atop his head. His younger brother, Sofiane, however, presents himself very differently (Figure 29). Sofiane's body language is more casual in this youthful snapshot as he sits with his shoulder and head tilted to one side, gives a half smile to the viewer with his mouth open, and sticks out his tongue. Unlike the more honourable older brother, Sofiane is photographed with no markers of Islam or signs of religiosity. His beard is both trimmed down and heavily shaved on the sides in a trendy, youthful style rather than in the style of a cultural signifier of an observant Muslim. He wears a bright yellow t-shirt and a red sweatshirt both embossed with the logo of his favourite soccer team, and a graffitied baseball cap sits defiantly in place of his brother's prayer cap. As both Abdel and Sofiane were born and raised in Casablanca, these identification photographs provide a glimpse of the ways in which culture and heritage are not heterogenous or reducible to geography. In this case, the brothers' shared birthplace and upbringing contrast with their nearly opposite personalities, and their own cultural and religious identities do not mirror each other despite belonging to the same

[321] Like in the *Marriage of Abdel and Fatima* (figure 21).

diasporic community and even family.

Similar passport photographs provide background stories for all of 2Fik's characters. 2Fik's solo exhibition, *2Fik: His and Other Stories,* taking place at Koffler Gallery in spring 2017 provides a glimpse of how central these characters, family, and kinship is to 2Fik's art practice. Upon entering the exhibition of 2Fik's work, these photographs and biographies line the wall so viewers can get to know his constructed family before viewing his other photographs.[322] The tensions between the two Moroccan-born brothers currently living in Montreal speak to ideas of tradition/modern and local/diaspora, and the ways in which navigating cultural tradition within the parameters of Western modernity creates both isolation and seemingly incompatible values. White settler colonialism was and still is intricately and intimately connected to the advance of gender binaries and imperial sexual discourses, and these logics further add to the complexities of a queered, racialized, and religious diaspora.

VISUALIZING DIASPORIC SEXUALITY

The ostensibly oppositional traits that are a constant tension between the two characters of Abdel and Sofiane are also seen in other members of the family.[323] Characters like Ludmilla-Mary (Figure 30) complicate reductive readings of such binaries by embodying these contrasts and contradictions. Her passport photograph shows a fully bearded Muslim man wearing a woman's

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[322] See exhibition shot: Filip, "2Fik: His and Other Stories," http://kofflerarts.org/publication/2017/07/17/2fik-his-and-other-stories-2/.

[323] 2Fik's character Alice (French-Lebanese), for example, could act as a bridge between his characters Fatima (Morrocan) and Manon (born in Quebec). According to the artist, Alice stands in as a sort of transition from the East to the West on all levels: religious, cultural, social, education, etc. (Provencher, Denis *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations.* Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018, p. 63).

head-covering and lists her origins as unknown. Her characteristic traits include "her big beard, her veil and her huge personality." While the artist uses female pronouns in her biography, the wide-eyed figure is sexually ambiguous as her large black beard and brown skin are intensified by her white hijab and the white backdrop. The contrast between the veil and the large beard compromise her stable identity. Simultaneously presenting as both an observant Muslim man and a modest Muslim woman, Ludmilla-Mary directly addresses Islamophobia and homophobia through a complex portrayal of gender non-conformity and cultural hybridity. She embodies the fear and discomfort that the brown-Middle-Eastern-Arab-Other instills,[324] manifesting these qualities visually. Personifying the racialized Other, this gender-queer representation is absent of all identifying traits such as origin story, occupation, love status, ambitions, and personality – all aspects that are present for the majority of the other family members. This absence of identifying traits coupled with the undisclosed gender identity of this racialized character together reveal the very process of racial and sexual identity formation of diasporic subjects. Following Islamophobic rhetoric that marks her body as Other and illegible, perceived aggressive masculinity and subservient and victimized femininity are tested when combined in a non-binary character whose sexual desire cannot be deciphered at first glance. As Provencher states, "creating these characters and taking pictures of them allows [2Fik] to critique stable identities and also to establish a critical

[324] This term is inspired by the work of critical race theorist Sherene Razack who cites the term "Muslim-looking" as part of a resurgence of old Orientalism that "provides the scaffold for the making of an empire dominated by the United States and the white nations who are its allies." Razack, Sherene. *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 5. Furthermore, this term is part of what Razack identifies as "race thinking," which she defines as the denial of a common bond of humanity between people of European descent and those who are not. Race thinking is the belief that there are two levels of humanity and two corresponding legal regimes. It is a structure of thought that divides up the world between the deserving and the undeserving according to descent, developing into racism through its use as a political weapon (p. 6, 8, 179).

distance from himself where he can conduct an analysis of himself and his family."[325] Furthermore, I argue, Ludmilla-Mary's visually unreadable gender and undetermined sexual identity are a part of the incompatibility between Arab-local and Western sexual desires that 2Fik alludes to in his photography, pointing to histories of conflict between Arab sexual discourses and modern Western notions of gay identity.

Between the hyper-masculine Abdel and hyper-feminine characters like Kathryn (Figure 31), gender non-conforming characters like Ludmilla-Mary destabilize binaries that have become normalized within discussions of modernity and tradition. Some characters are immigrants from Morocco while others were born in Canada. The notions of cultural hybridity and authenticity are put to the test in characters like Marco (Figure 32), who was born in Rome but spent several years in Marrakech and lived in Paris before moving to Canada. As a "closeted gay man," Marco is quite macho and, according to the artist, he is "straight-acting." His background in Rome and Paris creates inconstancies with Western concepts of freedom and sexual liberation as he demonstrates a lack of freedom and openness despite living in "liberal" Europe. Being European, Maghrebi, and also diasporic, he does not allow for questions of tradition versus modernity to be easily deduced from the experiences of his brown body. Instead, this racialized figure holds the tensions of transnational sexual identity within his diasporic identity, tensions that resist any easy reduction of sexuality to a binary between queer progress in the West and the lack thereof in the Middle East.

[325] Provencher, Denis. *Queer Maghrebi French: Language, Temporalities, Transfiliations* (Oxford: Liverpool University Press, 2018), p. 66.

QUEERING MODERNITY

2Fik also restages and recreates art historic paintings that often correspond to time periods of Western modernity in his practice in order to locate contemporary racialization and contemporary sexual identity. Links to a colonial past are present within his reinventions of art history and oftentimes modern art as he subverts the racialized subjectification of the diasporic body. His pastiche of canonical artworks includes *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1862) by Édouard Manet (Figure 19); *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) by Rembrandt van Rijn (Figure 20); *Las Meninas* (1656) by Diego Velázquez; *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife* (1854) by Daniel Maclise (Figure 21); and *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) by Benjamin West (Figure 22), among others.

French artist Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres painted *La Grande Odalisque* in 1814 (Figure 23) at a time when France was expanding its colonial empire. This oil painting depicts an odalisque or concubine in a style heralded for its exotic romanticism. In this scene, a fair-skinned nude woman reclines with her back facing the viewer and her face slightly turned to meet our gaze. The orientalism of this painting is inescapable; due to the setting of rich silk, jewels, and a hookah pipe the viewer is meant to believe that this scene takes place in the "Near East." The fair-skinned woman is racialized by her attributes, and French viewers would have presumed her to be a sexual slave to an Arab man. Since odalisques were not actually courtesans or slaves, the woman depicted here is a French sexual myth that suited the colonial discourse of sexual deviance and Arab barbarism. In the mind of an early-nineteenth-century French male viewer, the sort of person for whom this image was made, the odalisque would have conjured up not just a harem slave—itself a misconception—but a set of fears and desires linked to the long history of aggression between

Christian Europe and Islamic Asia and North Africa.[326]

2Fik's photograph, *La Grande Intendante* (2012) (Figure 24), provides a subversive intervention into Ingres's painting that confronts cultural privilege and links colonial history to diasporic identity. In this work, 2Fik's gender non-binary character Ludilla-Mary poses as the odalisque, but her jewels and pearls have been replaced with Windex and rubber gloves. Though she is still adorned with a turban, many markers of the Orient are replaced with household cleaning supplies, like a vacuum cleaner and washrags. While this work can be read as a feminist critique of domestic labour and the misogyny that still exerts control over women's bodies,[327] it also speaks to modernity and diaspora. 2Fik has replaced the odalisque—a woman meant to satisfy the carnal pleasures of the Sultan—with his own brown, diasporic, and queer body. His large beard, traditionally associated with Islam,[328] is juxtaposed with the feminine pose of the odalisque, a pose historically saved for women in Western artistic tradition. His painted red lips add to the gender ambiguity, queering his sexual identity but also his role as concubine. Who is 2Fik in service to in

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[326] Harris, Beth and Steven Zucker, "Painting Colonial Culture: Ingres's La Grande Odalisque," 2018, https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/later-europe-and-americas/enlightenment-revolution/a/ingres-la-grand-odalisque.

[327] Filip, Mona. "2Fik: His and Other Stories," Koffler Centre of the Arts, Toronto, Canada, 2017, http://kofflerarts.org/publication/2017/07/17/2fik-his-and-other-stories-2/.

[328] Muslims learn about the Prophet's views on facial hair not from the *Qur'an*, but through hadith or sayings attributed to Muhammad. One such hadith, in a collection compiled centuries ago by Muslim scholar Muhammad al-Bukhari, stipulates: "Cut the moustaches short and leave the beard." The Prophet Muhammad is believed to have had a beard, and those who insist that devout Muslims grow beards argue that they are doing no more than asking the faithful to emulate the Prophet's actions. There are schools of Islamic law—Hanafi, Maliki, Hanbali, and Shafi'i—which, among many other things, hold strong positions on beard length and the act of shaving. For more, see: Farmanfarmaian, Abouali. "Fear of the Beard," *Transition* 67 (1995): 48–69; Delaney, Carol. "Untangling the Meanings of Hair in Turkish Society," *Anthropological Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1994): 159–72; and BBC News, "Are Beards Obligatory for Devout Muslim Men?" 27 June 2010, https://www.bbc.com/news/10369726. Shaving one's beard could thus be a sign of modernity. Feminist theorist Afsenah Najmabadi outlines the importance of facial hair in her book *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

this image?

Domestic labour is connected to migrant women who often come to Canada through temporary foreign worker programs such as the Live-in Caregiver Program.[329] The image therefore depicts a colonially gendered history of labour and enslavement that is tied to racialized migrant women, indentured labour, and enslaved women. Moreover, the settler colonial state historically used racialized bodies to maintain and support white settler domestic spaces, with immigrants inadvertently participating in active Indigenous elimination and erasure. As literary scholar Lisa Lowe explains, "these distinct yet connected racial logics constituted parts of what was in the nineteenth century an emergent Anglo-American settler imperial imaginary, which continues to be elaborated today."[330] The connection between labour and migration creates an undeniably diasporic reading of this image, as transnational migrant labour is oftentimes associated with a loss of homeland and separation of families.

Given France's colonial empire in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and much of North Africa when Ingres painted this image, orientalism adds another dimension of coloniality that 2Fik reclaims from the scene. The original painting was in fact commissioned by Caroline Murat, Napoleon's sister and the Queen of Naples, and it is clear that colonial politics played a role in the myth of the barbarian, a myth that served the French who could then claim a moral imperative as

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[329] The Live-In Caregiver program (LCP) was established in order to support middle and upper-class families in Canada as adults balance work and care for family members including children and elderly parents. The LCP makes available the opportunity for nannies and domestic workers to become permanent residents and citizens of Canada, and facilitates the immigration of spouses and children and the re-consolidation of families in the diaspora. See Diaz, Robert. Marissa Largo, and Fritz Pino, eds., *Diasporic Intimacies: Queer Filipinos and Canadian Imaginaries* (Evanston, Il: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 15. For more on nonnormative and queer intimacies in transnational feminist writing about gender and labour within the LCP, see: John Paul Catungal, "Toward Queer(er) Futures: Proliferating the "Sexual" in Filipinx Canadian Sexuality Studies," in *Diasporic Intimacies*, 23–40.

[330] Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 8.

they colonized and conquered Africa and the Near East. 2Fik's brown, sexualized, but also ambiguously gendered body plays the role of the colonized body. Illustrating the absurdity of orientalist traditions depicting the Middle East as backward and unmodern, 2Fik satirizes an aesthetic tradition that renders his own body as unmodern and deficient. With deficiency comes a lack, accounting for the incompatibility of Islam with homosexuality. This is unlike the West and its progressive, modern relationship to queer identity. Momin Rahman critiques the assumed mutual exclusivity between queerness and Middle Eastern and/or Asian cultures.[331] Rahman aims to illuminate the intersections and complexities of current binaries within Muslim communities and families, gay communities and culture, and wider Western political culture and discourses. His central argument is that the West has created a discourse of Islamic otherness that positions Islam against homosexuality, meaning that homosexuality is deployed as a marker of the superiority of Western modernity. In this way, a queer culture always existed in the Middle East, even if it was not termed as such, but the West attempted to criminalize it, confine it, and define it, which ultimately led to its suppression.

Even though homosexuality is far from universally accepted in the West, when sexual diversity arises in civilizational debates, it is cast as a defining feature of Western exceptionalism and superiority, thus drawing queerness into the core of definitions of Muslim incompatibility with modernity. Using queer subjectivity as a defining feature of modern nation-states is what feminist theorist Jasbir Puar calls homonationalism, "an analytic to apprehend state formation and a structure of modernity … an assemblage of geopolitical and historical forces, neoliberal interests in capitalist accumulation both cultural and material, biopolitical state practices of population

[331] Rahman, Momin. *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

control, and affective investments in discourses of freedom, liberation, and rights."[332] Building on the idea that homonationalism has become one of the key logics of modernity, postcolonial scholar Nishant Upadhyay argues that race must be seen as central to processes of homonationalism, because within the homonationalist project non-Indigenous queers of colour who were historically colonized and marginalized, over time can be included within the settler state by claiming heteronormative sexual citizenship.[333]

In 2Fik's *La grande intendante*, the viewer is meant to confront the absurdity not only of orientalist depictions of the Other, but also of the long history of sexuality and gender norms in Europe that contributed to the making of the original painting by Ingres. The red lips of the bearded Muslim subject in the photograph are not only gender-bending but also call on a long history of colonial tradition that created the very conception of homosexuality in the European settler colonial context (and throughout the Global North), and its assumed non-progressive counterparts in the Global South.[334] These East/West, Modern/Unmodern binaries are historically unstable and have always been reliant on one another. European visual tropes of Romantic Orientalism enabled Euro-American same-sex desire and provided a safe space for colonial Europeans to behave homosocially in the Middle East. For instance, historian Luke Gartlan examines the significance of outdoor photography in Cairo by Austro-Hungarian Orientalists as expressive of male bonding

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[332] Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 337.

[333] Nishant Upadhyay argues that homonationalism has become one of the key logics of modernity, whereby certain queer bodies are reconstituted as worthy of recognition and protection by nation-states. These queer subjects become indispensable to the maintenance and continuance of the nation-state, while others are excluded through logics of white supremacy, racism, Islamophobia, heteropatriarchy, neoliberalism, and settler colonialism. See: Michael Connors Jackman and Nishant Upadhyay, "Pinkwatching Israel, Whitewashing Canada: Queer (Settler) Politics and Indigenous Colonization in Canada," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3–4, (Fall/Winter 2014), p. 201.

[334] For Gatlan's study, see: Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013).

within the traveler-artist circle. Gartlan argues for the importance of same-sex intimacy in the travels of Orientalist artists and photographers. The perceived tension between prudish Victorian sexual discourse and "sexually litigious" behaviours in the Middle East in the nineteenth century naturally allowed for European travelers to explore a greater range of acceptable codes of behaviour. Thus, these generally male colonial tourists raise questions about a perceived Ottoman homosociality and a Euro-American heterosexuality; namely, why was there not a two-way exchange between colonial morality and colonial fantasy? In this artistic intervention by 2Fik, tradition and modernity are interrogated and the fixity of their binary construction is destabilized.[335]

PROVINCIALIZING MODERNITY AND COLONIAL RULE

What does it mean to provincialize Western modernity? What could identity narratives in the Middle East, and their sexual scripts, look like outside the purview of Western modernity? Taking a step backwards in order to better evaluate the role of race and empire in pre-modern contexts, Italian artist Gentile Bellini's painting, *The Sultan Mehmet II* (1480) (Figure 25), provides another rich source for 2Fik to explore themes of Islam, masculinity, and transnational encounter. The subject of the painting, Mehmet II (the Conqueror), brought an end to the Eastern-Christian world of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 when he seized Constantinople. Mehmet marked the conquest by turning the greatest Byzantine church, Hagia Sophia, into a mosque. According to Tursun Beg, a historian of the fifteenth century, Mehmet built a great mosque, "which not only encompassed all the arts of Hagia Sophia, but modern features constituting a fresh new idiom unequalled in

[335] Colonial fantasies often lie at the crux of these binaries. While European tourists shamed the Middle East for shameful display of same-sex intimacy, Romantic Orientalist European paintings, such as portraits of poet Lord Byron (1788–1824) in fancy Oriental dress, expressed a homoeroticism and can be read as clearly flamboyant.

beauty."[336] At the time Bellini painted his work, the Turks posed a major threat to European powers, particularly in Italy. Poised at the threshold between East and West, Venice especially not only benefited financially from trade with Islamic leaders, but also found itself facing incursions by ambitious Ottoman leaders. For sixteen years, Venice was able to hold its own in a war with the Turks, but ultimately was forced to conclude peace in 1479. As a part of this peace settlement, Bellini worked in Constantinople primarily for Mehmet II (r. 1444–46; 1451–81), painting the sultan's portrait and producing bronze medals bearing his likeness which made the image of the Ottoman ruler increasingly famous in Europe.[337] In fact, Bellini's portraiture of Sultan Mehmet II "has become emblematic of cultural exchange between Venice and the Ottomans,"[338] and a general argument can be made that Mehmet is painted as a representative of Islamic power. The Sultan wears a deep red caftan and a luxurious brown fur mantle, donning a wrapped turban over a red *taj*, a headdress indicative of his rank as well as his identity as a Muslim. In a way, this portrait associates Mehmet the Conqueror and Islam with progress and power. This late medieval context of global colonialism which will compound and lead to early Western modernity show the complex ways in which empire and colonization overlap, and for the diasporic experience it is noteworthy to evaluate the ways in which sexual discourses are a part of and often central to these entangled colonialisms.

2Fik's reimagining of *The Sultan Mehmet II* in his photograph *Le Sultan Abdel* (2012) (Figure 26) provides an interesting commentary on colonialism, power, and diasporic

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[336] Tursun Bey and Halil İnalcık. *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978); Jonathan Jones, "The Sultan Mehmet II, Attributed to Gentile Bellini (1480)," 26 April 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2003/apr/26/art.

[337] "The Sultan Mehmet II." 2017. [accessed 11 December 2018]. https://www.learner.org/courses/globalart/work/80/index.html

[338] Gatward, Cevizli A. "Bellini, Bronze and Bombards: Sultan Mehmed II's Requests Reconsidered." *Renaissance Studies*. (2014): 748-765.

representation in the twenty-first century. In this work, 2Fik's culturally conservative and highly religious character Abdel plays the role of Sultan Mehmet. Abdel sits in a conventional three-quarter portrait pose wearing a modern red dress-shirt and black tie. More traditionally, and as in the Bellini painting, Abdel also wears a brown fur mantle over his shoulders and a white turban on his head with a yellow prayer hat showing underneath. Playing the role of Sultan, Abdel is a fully sovereign leader, and has no dependence on a higher ruler. The title of Sultan carries with it meanings restricted to Muslim countries and a religious significance in contrast to the more secular "king," which is used in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

In this photograph, 2Fik reimagines himself as a sovereign ruler not governed by any colonial power and reimagines kinship relations as he queers his own family history. While Bellini painted six golden crowns hovering over Mehmet's head, 2Fik's photographic portrayal instead has six glowing portraits of his own face. The significance of the crowns in Bellini's portrait is unclear.[339] Art historians Paul Wood and Carol M. Richardson have suggested that they represent the six previous Ottoman Sultans, "with Mehmet himself symbolized by the seventh crown made of pearls at the bottom centre of the jewelled textile at the front of the painting."[340] 2Fik's portrait,

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[339] The crowns also appear in a banner depicted in the *Saint Ursula* cycle of paintings by Carpaccio. Historian Mary L. Pixley writes: "The series of three crowns refers to the three kingdoms of Asia, Greece and Trebizond which were controlled by the Ottoman Turkish empire." "Islamic artifacts and Cultural Currents in the Art of Carpaccio," *Apollo* 158, no. 501 (November 2003), p. 9. Art historian Paul Wood has also noted: "On the reverse of Bellini's portrait medal there are three of them, usually taken to refer to the three components of the Ottoman Empire: the original territories in Asia, Greece (including Constantinople), and Trebizond (the Black Sea port and gateway to the Silk Route into central Asia, captured by Mehmet from Venetian control within a decade of the end of Byzantium, in 1461)." Carol M. Richardson and Paul Wood, "Art in Renaissance Venice: A Portrait," OpenLearn Course at The Open University, https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/visual-art/art-renaissance-venice/content-section-1.4 [accessed 11 December 2018].

[340] Pedani Fabris, cited by S. Bagci in "Art in Renaissance Venice," (Open University Press, 2004), 434. Carol M. Richardson and Paul Wood, "Art in Renaissance Venice: A Portrait," OpenLearn Course at The Open University, https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/visual-art/art-renaissance-venice/content-section-1.4 [accessed 11 December 2018].

however, has little opulence, and no jewelled marker representing the subject's own importance. Instead, the viewer looks at the proud and prominent Abdel as he sits in solitude surrounded by the heads of his ancestors (or even current family members), each face looking down upon him. 2Fik uses his fictional characters as a way of queering kinship dynamics by reimagining familial relations across various diasporic imaginaries, and also by performing each character himself. He sits at the nucleus of this familial unit, depicting the religious and Islamic figure wearing modern Western clothing surrounded by the symbols of his cultural past. Here, the miniature portraits allow the viewer to move between both time and place, as the diasporic figure is not only linked to his cultural geography but also to temporal framings of modernity and tradition. In the vein of José Esteban Muñoz, this work provides a futurity for queer belonging, and I argue 2Fik also rethinks a queer present. As Muñoz powerfully states, "the present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations."[341] In this way, the diasporic and culturally hybrid character of Abdel "is not enough." 2Fik queers and reimagines the present of one of his more culturally conservative family members by nostalgically locating him within a history of power and dominance, but also reimagines and reinvents his own past as he shapes Abdel's own subject position. This rethinking of the present for queer diasporic subjects exposes the mythology of liberal tolerance for queer belonging in settler states in order to push queer politics into a local imaginary that resonates with 2Fik's own experiences and beyond the privilege of heteronormative Western gay citizenship that is predicated on recognizing same-sex marriages, permitting legal adoption for queer citizens, and allowing gays to serve in the military. This work imagines a past and present fraught with colonial domination in order to contextualize the diasporic present. It is

[341] Muñoz, José Esteban, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 27.

through the formation of the diasporic character Abdel, and 2Fik's own identity, that the artwork provides a reading of queer futurity, a queer present, and another way of reimagining identity formation in the Middle East.[342]

How then does 2Fik's reimagining of Western modernity speak to queering the past, and more importantly, the queering of Arab modernity? How does the portrayal and subversion of racialized subjects in colonial spaces, as in racist and orientalist paintings, speak to sexual constructs at the time and modern understanding of sexuality as experienced by diasporic subjects today? To consider these queries, I draw on the ways in which Vimalassery, Hu Pegues, and Goldstein conceive of decolonization as a process of both becoming and unraveling beyond just moving past or healing historical violence. Decolonization has to move past the possibility of an endpoint, or a historical or finished process (whether achieved already or at some future date), to productively grapple with practice.[343] For example, thinking of anti-colonial survival and resistance as a visual and artistic practice allows for the inclusion of the study of historic sexual discourses in the Middle East in relation to contemporary diasporic artists, which provides a way of bridging the disciplinary gap between queer theory and visual culture in order to more productively link a colonial past to a diasporic present.

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[342] In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* José Esteban Muñoz argues that the present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations (p. 27). 2Fik's artwork depicts a queer futurity by removing linear progress myths from his narrative, and by reinventing a historical past in order to reimagine a different queer future for himself and his fictionalized family.

[343] Vimalassery, Manu, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein, "On Colonial Unknowing," *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016).

COLONIAL TRAUMA AND CONTEMPORARY ART

I would like to conclude with an analysis of 2Fik's own character (Figure 33) created in his photographic body of work. In his passport photograph, the self-named, black shell of a figure has absolutely no visual identity. Described as having no origins, his occupation is to play different characters and his ambition is to be a blank canvas that does its best to portray those characters. Under personality traits, 2Fik's character is said to have none, and he only exists through the other characters he enacts. I argue that the absence of a visual identity, mirrored in the lack of identifying characteristics, represents what 2Fik nihilistically illustrates as his own queer diasporic identity.

As I have traced throughout this analysis, Islamicate sexualities in the diaspora are fraught with tensions of coloniality, visuality, and citizenship. I began by outlining how Western epistemologies of queerness are not always conducive to understanding queer, diasporic, and transnational sexual identities, and 2Fik's notion of coming out *à l'oriental* provides a reprieve from, and an alternative form of, sexual and artistic expression. From here, I analyzed 2Fik's passport photos as a way of zeroing in on diasporic subjectivity and the formation of diasporic identity. I then framed these sexual discourses historically, questioning the types of colonial relationships present within discourses of sexuality. Especially important are the imperial connections that have existed between the West and Islamicate regions, which have created a framework of difference that defines Arab sexualities as perpetually unmodern. Here, the colonial traumas that I identified at the start of this analysis are seen as repercussions of, and linked to, contemporary ways of being both diasporic and queer. That is, past colonial trauma is closely linked to the diasporic present and informs visual tropes like coming out *à l'oriental* in methods of artistic creation. These methods involve queering kinship and imagining visual processes that requires rewriting history in order to offer powerful reclamations of colonial domination, and

culturally impacted sexual discourses experienced in the Middle East. Diasporic artists such as 2Fik use performance, character creation, humor, pastiche, and satire productively and affirmatively as a way of laying bare colonial traumas that are often buried and rendered invisible through normative Western queer discourses and the civilizing missions of modernity, which always favour the West. The traumas that the diasporic subject carries are intrinsically tied to settler colonial histories as immigration is a component of Western nations' national imaginary and can be used by the state to reproduce colonial amnesia through the active denial of present-day colonial projects.[344] Overall, in creating a visual description of colonial trauma, contemporary diasporic art exists outside of its own contemporaneity, and is removed from a present moment of subjectivity. Instead, the queer diasporic individual both creates and develops methods to mediate their own relationships to the local and the global, the traditional and the modern, and most importantly, the self and the other.[345]

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[344] Jackman, Michael Conners, and Nishant Upashyah. "Pinkwashing Israel, Whitewashing Canada," p. 201.

[345] This is related, in part, to how I conceptualize queer futurity. In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz argues that the present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations (p. 27). Muñoz argues that we need to think outside of straight time. Straight time has a futurity promised out of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality. The only possible futurity under these guidelines are homonormative capitalism, and queer time needs to step out of the linearity of such progress narratives and question the fundamental values of a queer utopian way of life. I contend that Muñoz's notion of waiting (p. 182) can also be seen as a progress narrative of modernity, and the gay rights discourse in the Middle East. Arab gays are in a stasis of waiting in white straight time. This notion of waiting is important for people of colour because it lines their futurity as different than the future of whites. If we use the example of the Middle East as lacking modernity and being temporally outside the Western norm, the utopian future of progress would inherently be colonial; the future of a Middle East sexual discourse is already determined to align success and goals with Western sexual modernity narratives. How then can we reposition utopianisms with queer Middle Eastern futurity?

CONCLUSION

QUEERING LOCALLY, DIASPORA CONSCIOUSNESS, AND FUTURITY

I have explored the ways in which diasporic articulation of culture is integral to understanding how Middle Eastern sexuality narratives can function globally, and are internalized/re-conceptualized by diasporic sexualities in North America. Rather than articulating Arabness outside of imperial history and under the purview of Orientalist stigma, re-conceptualizing Arabness from different diasporic perspectives helps delineate historic narratives of migration and cultural identity. As argued throughout this dissertation, highlighting the visual art of the diasporic individual has the potential to complicate the absurdity of Orientalist discourse, allowing for a sociological understanding of how community and belonging are made across the diaspora. By correlating racial identity with performativity, herein lies the possibility of decolonizing and rearticulating Arabness beyond Orientalism and historically racist representations. My hope is that the visual analyses, theoretical engagements, and critiques that this research offers mark an instance of that possibility.

In this thesis, I conducted deep readings of the artwork by three artists as case studies to investigate Middle Eastern diasporic artists in North America who are creating political art surrounding queer identity. These artists' art production, read together, provides methodology and analytic approaches to better explore colonial contact zones as a way of nuancing and contributing to the growing scholarship on Middle Eastern contemporary art and cultural studies. By incorporating different sociological strategies in the analysis of contemporary art, this research developed as a way to make self-identification categories less dichotomous and more expansive.

Through visual analysis and multi-temporal comparative studies, I have theorized the various mechanisms of resistance that allow artworks of Arab artists in the diaspora to illustrate queer identities that are different from the global-to-local homocolonialism of Western gay identity, and to provide examples of how local networks of identity are transmitted through visual language and how alternative sexuality scripts are written within transnational contexts.

Examining the artworks of diasporic contemporary artists Jamil Hellu, Ebrin Bagheri, and 2Fik (Toufique), I have focused on the concept of multiple modernisms and their relationship to displacement, trauma, and Arab sexualities/masculinities within a postcolonial and anti-imperialist framework. Global art histories and transnational queer theory are pillars of my theoretical framework, and a postcolonial approach is instrumental in locating contemporary notions of sexual discourse in the Middle East.[346] Such a postcolonial framework illuminated the necessary cause-and-effect relationship that historic sexuality discourses have had on contemporary understandings of sexuality, and how this history affects those currently living in the diaspora. Histories of multiple modernisms are evidence of modernity as a period of industrialized and economic growth happening outside the Global North, and this concept is a critical approach to queer theory and art history in its capacity to decenter European humanist thought that has universalized Western progress as the only mode of cultural advancement. This discussion is part of a decolonial inquiry that works to reframe Islamicate homosexualities in terms of desire and alternative masculinities

[346] In this dissertation, transnational queer theory as a concept has been conceptualized in tandem with queer of colour critique and queer diasporic critique in order to provide important theoretical and political contributions and interventions within the study of race, gender, sexuality, nation, and diaspora. Within a Canadian context, scholars like Robert Diaz, Richard Fung and Amar Wahab have taken diasporic and transnational approaches in tracing the cultural politics of racialized sexual minorities.

rather than through Western notions of visibility and coming out; narratives which are not conducive to understanding how queer Arabs living in the West experience their sexuality.

As demonstrated by the visual art analyzed within this dissertation, diaspora consciousness is a major proponent to keeping alive the link between the pre-colonial past and a contemporary diasporic present. It is interesting to note the ways in which diaspora consciousness manifests itself in varying ways, and the psychological processeses that shape both belonging and subject formation for the queer diaspora. In the case of Jamil Hellu, diaspora consciousness is a powerful tool that connects his lived experiences and personal understandings of what it means to be a queer man with Syrian heritage. Associating his trauma with the Victorian era homocolonialism that wreaked havoc on local ways of being, Hellu's diaspora consciousness holds an imperial violence that shapes the way he understands his own identity in relation to his culture.

This utterance of pain and loss is manifested differently for Ebrin Bagheri, because his diaspora consciousness was the driving force behind the unintentional imagery of his artistic creations. Unaware of the specific archives to which his artwork bears similarities, the power of diaspora consciousness to shape subjectivity is seen on a deeply hidden level within his oeuvre. For Bagheri, his drawings which are based on his imagination are so woven within narratives of Persian history and cultural identity that the ways of understanding his own contemporary sexuality is inseparable from these mechanics. The subconscious or involuntary referencing of historical ways of being as well as the deep history of orientalism and objectification inflicted onto local young men in Islamicate regions bear great weight on the ways in which Bagheri sees this historic past as being related to his current identity. For Bagheri, diaspora consciousness becomes a driving force that informs his visual art production, and the indexical meaning that is associated with the imagery he creates.

2Fik, differently from Bagheri, uses historical remembering as visual strategy to depict how fragile and vulnerable subjectivity is formed. 2Fik's artworks are indicative of an art practice that directly connects diaspora consciousness to a queer futurity in its capacity to visualize trauma and culture trans-temporally, and kinship is reimagined in complex ways through the characters he develops. Weaving historical trauma with diasporic futurity and queer contemporaneity, then, is vital to understanding the ways in which art production can be a valuable site for understanding the formation of diaspora consciousness on a deeply personal level. As demonstrated throughout this dissertation, diaspora consciousness is an integral component to embedding colonial histories, trauma and loss within diasporic experiences today, intertwining culturally traditional ways of understanding gender, sexuality and the self with contemporary ways of being. In other words, the very ways in which queer diasporic artists articulate diaspora consciousness—by having components of former, colonized, historic ways of understanding gender and sexual identity—is indeed noteworthy.

In the various chapters of this dissertation, I approached the terms *local, regional, transnational,* and *global* in different ways. As art historian Alpesh Patel argues, the incorporation of queer theory and feminist critique into the growing literature that explores art history in the context of the 'transnational,' 'global,' 'world' and 'diaspora' has been sorely lacking.[347] In approaching the *local*, I look at the culturally specific ways in which the diaspora articulate their sexuality within North America. This is particularly true in the ways in which I explore the 'local' within ideas of *queering locally*. While the use of the term *regional* has similar connotations, in this case it refers to the interconnectedness of the Islamicate histories of same-sex desire and is closely linked to

[347] Patel, Alpesh Kantilal. *Productive Failure: Writing Queer Transnational South Asian Art Histories*. 2017. p. 7.

historical colonialism in the Middle East and is not tied to one specific locale. In the case of this dissertation, I employ a *transnationally local* lens of study. The term *transnationalism* is used to describe the re-articulation of culture across rigid national boundaries, and dislodging "diaspora from adherence to a conventional nationalist ideology."[348] The term *global* is used more within the context of themes like global art histories, and "on the most general level, we need it as a catchword that allows us to discuss seemingly different pasts in one frame, and to look into connections that earlier paradigms rendered invisible. On a very specific level, it helps us address the emergence of truly global structures."[349] Scholars Françoise Lionnet and Shu-Mei Shih argue that the theorists of transnationalism who argue for a borderless world vis-à-vis outdated notions of globalization are the perpetuators of reifying binary North/South and dominant/resistant modes of culture.[350] Instead, they are for a "cultural transversalism [that] includes minor cultural articulations in productive relationship with the major (in all its possible shapes, forms and kinds), as well as minor-to-minor networks that circumvent the major altogether."[351] To elaborate on their argument, I find the writing of historian Sebastian Conrad illustrative. Conrad argues that, generally speaking, a global history agenda and an interest in specific locales are not mutually exclusive. He uses the term "glocalization" to suggest that global processes that were experienced in and constituted by local contexts point to the vexed relationship between the global and the local. Ultimately, Conrad suggests that "an exclusive focus on macro-perspectives is therefore not sufficient—and neither is a language of specificity and contingency alone."[352] Together, the decolonial logics that I employ

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[348] Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2006. p. 7.
[349] Conrad, Sebastian. *What Is Global History?* Priceton: Priceton University Press, 2016. p. 234.
[350] Lionnet, Françoise, and Shumei Shih. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. p. 8.
[351] Lionnet, Françoise, and Shumei Shih. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. p. 8.
[352] Conrad, Sebastian. *What Is Global History?* Priceton: Priceton University Press, 2016. p. 132.

in using these terms signals for the necessary reshaping of the landscapes of knowledge, and to "rescue history from container thinking."[353]

For these reasons, I begin to develop the theory of *queering locally* as a methodological tool to write a horizontal queer historiography instead of a more traditional vertical one imbued with hierarchies of value. In this case, culturally specific art historical narratives are put in relation to other local sexual discourses in accordance with the horizontal paradigm. This method is applied to illustrate the ways in which the power dynamics that place homogenous Western histories at the center are flawed. Methodologically, this shifts dynamics in the relationship between the centre and the periphery. I wish to advance a horizontal art history of the Middle East that veers away from the "geographico-hierarchical" paradigm of Eurocentric modern history, to instead contribute to the development of a transnational art history that works horizontally and in unison with a transnational queer theory. Such an approach is a strategic use of interdisciplinary research and what Shu-Mei Shih coined "relational comparison," and uses horizontal methods and historiographies of de-centering, de-canonizing, and localizing to combine and create new analytics and histories between different disciplines. I propose *queering locally* as a method of deimperializing the study of queer theory, and a way of providing a horizontal approach to art historical analysis.

To illustrate the dimensions of *queering locally* and the ways in which it is a framework that reimagines geography, I locate the terminology within the wider scope of literature. In her article *Queer Visual Excavations,* feminist theorist Gayatri Gopinath coins the term "queer regions" which she uses "to name the particularities of gender and sexual logics in spaces that exist in a tangential relation to the nation as it is hegemonically defined, even as these spaces are constituted

[353] Conrad, Sebastian. *What Is Global History?* Priceton: Priceton University Press, 2016. p. 234.

through complex regional, national, and global processes."[354] To Gopinath, queer visual aesthetic practices can destabilize nation-centric versions of area studies that are too limited by one geographic region, demonstrating the value in linking multiple geographic regions as a form of analysis.[355] Influenced by this methodology, my dissertation displaces area studies through queer theory and applies a trans-temporal exploration of the archive to better understand the current moment. It is important to question how these sexual logics connect historic colonialism with the contemporary diaspora. By portraying alternative modes of desire, embodiment, kinship and affiliation, artists Jamil Hellu, Ebrin Bagheri and 2Fik insist on remembering and reviving historic ways of being in order to imagine a different present. Connecting the history of same-sex desire across multiple Islamicate regions allows for a trans-local queer reading of contemporary art, and the representation of desire within the diaspora. In this way, my project is not about comparative diasporas or fixating on Bagheri's Iranian heritage and contrasting his experience to 2Fiks Moroccan identity, but instead it is about linking diasporas and diasporic histories to highlight the important connections that existed and may have been extinguished during colonial expansion and imperial encounter. To use Gopinath's language, this dissertation has taken a trans-temporal queer gaze on diasporic artists and the archives of colonial European photography and the art historical canon.

I locate my usage of *queering locally* and the ways in which I connect different and seemingly unrelated locales of the *Islamicate* as being complimentary to Gopinath's path-breaking

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[354] Gopinath, Gayatri. 2017. "Queer Visual Excavations Akram Zaatari, Hashem El Madani, and the Reframing of History in Lebanon." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies.* 13, no. 2: 326-336. p. 327.

[355] This is not a form of comparative analysis per se, as the different geographic regions are not used to measure distinctions and differences between the two. Rather, the different geographic regions are used collectively within her analysis to argue a central query, ensuring that nation-state borders do not hinder two regions speaking to one another productively within academic inquiry.

book titled *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*, and builds on her rubric of the 'aesthetic practices of the queer diaspora' and her theories of "queer regions." A focus on the region or the local is, quite often, a turn to the autobiographical and is inextricably tied to the project of narrating the self while deconstructing an essentialist logic of identity, place, and belonging.[356] I expand on Gopinath's framework of "queer regions" and develop the notion of *queering locally* as a way of describing the ways in which queer diasporic artists of colour articulate a non-Western same-sex desire in the West.

In these ways, I build on Gopinath's use of queer regions that allows her to make connections between regions that seemingly do not belong together, primarily through my intellectual use of the term *Islamicate*, elaborated upon in chapter two. In clarifying her use of the term *region* and her attempt to shift the focus of diaspora studies away from the nation, Gopinath states the following:

> If you think about the typical ways in which diaspora has been formulated, it's always in relation to the nation. The nation becomes the constant and inevitable reference point for diaspora. The nation is that which diasporic subjects leave, that they return to or long to return to. So what I'm saying is that in fact thinking not so much about diaspora–nation but diaspora–region allows for all kinds of different social and political formations to become apparent that are in fact occluded within nationalist narratives.[357]

Inspired by this theorization of diaspora, I have followed the same method of inquiry in resisting thinking through the nation as a way of imagining a new cartography. Instead, I have shifted focus away from the subnational—smaller subsect of the national—characteristics of queer regions that are always linked to a failed or un-modern nationalism in order to emphasize the colonial

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[356] Gopinath, Gayatri. *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*. Duke University Press. 2018. p. 25-26.

[357] Hannabach, Cathy. "Imagine Otherwise: Gayatri Gopinath on Queer Diasporic Aesthetics." *Ideas on Fire.* August 15, 2018. (Accessed September 20, 2019) https://ideasonfire.net/69-gayatri-gopinath/

implications of queer theory within minor-to-minor and south-south transregional analysis. In this way, *queering locally* goes beyond transnational analysis in that 'transnationalism' still connects locales between nationalisms, and nation-state identities remain unquestioned and central to transnational theory. Rather, *queering locally* provides a framework for connecting locales through imperial and colonial ties, and uses the archives to excavate the sexual discourses connecting different locales without the rigid, and often times, unproductive parameters of the nation-state. Queering locally then is another strategy to discuss geographic specificities without being tied to the borders and limits of nation-states. This is part of an inter-referencing system that builds on postcolonial work within cultural studies like Kuan-Hsing Chen's book *Asia as Method,* and the theories of Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih on minor-transnationalisms.[358] *Queering locally* is complimentary to Gopinath's "queer regions" in its queer optic, or the south-south relationality. Where the terms converge is the site of their analysis. While a queer region is the sub-national place that is conducive to understanding gender and sexuality formations in relation to the nation,[359] Gopinath writes of the aesthetic practices of the queer diaspora as being that which emerge from an artwork and its aesthetics. In this way, *queering locally* is a complimentary theory that helps analyze what the aesthetic practices of the queer diaspora looks like in that it offers the potential

[358] Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih coined the term "Minor Transnationalism" in order to move beyond the limitations of postcolonialism, globalization theory, ethnic studies, and transnationalism for the study of minority communities. Within this idea they argued that transnational studies and its related fields emphasize the interactions and relationships between the minor culture and mainstream society. Importantly, they criticize that by exclusively analyzing these vertical connections, "we forget to look sideways to lateral networks that are not readily apparent." Lionnet, Françoise and Shu-mei Shih. 2005. "Introduction: Thinking through the Minor, Transnationally." In *Minor Transnationalism*, Durham: Duke University Press. p. 1-23.

[359] The term "queer regions" is used by Gopinath as a way of studying various historical formations under a different lens. An example Gopinath gives is the Southern states of the United States of America. While the American south is a subnational region, it is also the archetypal example of American nationalism. The American south then is a queer region in that national idealism is put onto the region at the sub-national level, meaning the regions' relationship to gender, race and sexuality becomes even more intertwined with the national imaginary.

of imagining a queer present that is intertwined in the complexities of multiple geographic spheres, temporalities, and histories. This means that my usage of *queering locally* is less concerned about national and sub-national identities and instead focuses on the ways in which queer otherness is visualized, depicted, and actualized by diasporic queer subjects of colour in North America. This theory works within Gopinath's framework of the aesthetic practices of the queer diaspora and *queering locally* gives language to the ways in which art from the diaspora can simultaneously express the artists own experience of queer identity and also highlight the ways artists reference different geographies and histories in order to complicate linear identity narratives.

As Gopinath elaborates on her choice of terminology, she explains that the region is both subnational and supranational space, and queering the ways in which we think about different regions produces alternative cartographies.[360] What a concept like *queering locally* provides is another framework that follows a similar rubric to "queer regions", and contributes to understanding the aesthetic practices of the queer diaspora from multiple angles. The main differentiation between my own theoretical framework and Gopinath's is that *queering locally* allows me to centre the visual content from an art historical perspective, being attuned to the ways in which aesthetic practices of queer otherness are articulated in a bottom-up analysis. Therefore, *queering locally* is a part of many differing but converging strategies that work together as a framework that contributes to better understanding the art production of queer diasporic subjects in the West and the ways in which queerness is visualized.

Ultimately, the study of diaspora means having to contend with the colonial moment, and I shift my methodological approach to investigate the history of colonialism through the photographic archive. I believe this methodological shift from studying a history of sexuality to

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[360] Gopinath, Gayatri. *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*. Duke University Press. 2018. p. 10.

investigating a history of colonial encounter provides a more productive way of exploring queer identity in the diaspora and its relationship to local ways of being. This dissertation has done a queer diasporic reading of both contemporary art and also of the colonial archives in order to have them resonate with the themes of trauma, displacement, and unbelonging that echo from queer diasporic identity.

In my linking of diasporic contemporary art with historical archives of both visual culture and queer theory, this dissertation is a part of an intellectual effort that by default discusses the recent past and the present condition for the queer Middle Eastern diaspora. Even through the purview of the historical archive, the case studies and frameworks offered in this analysis show that it is both through the visual analysis and focus on contemporary artists that histories of colonial violence and imperial logics must be better linked to the current experiences of queer desire in the Middle East and in the diaspora.

APPENDIX

IMAGES IN CHAPTER ONE:

Trauma and the Single Narrative: Reading Arab Art and Photography

Figure 1

Wafaa Bilal, 3rdi, 2010.

Surgically implanted camera.

Figure 2

Wafaa Bilal, 3rdi, 2010.

Photograph from Surgically implanted camera.

Figure 3

A Syrian boy walks amid the rubble of destroyed buildings in the northern city of Aleppo, which was recaptured by government forces in 2016.

Photo: Agence France-Presse

Figure 4:

Larissa Sansour, *Nation Estate*. 2012.

Figure 5

June 9, 2016 – Syrian rescue workers and citizens in Aleppo evacuate people from a building following a barrel bomb attack by Syrian government forces on the rebel held Al-Fardous neighborhood of the northern city of Aleppo.

IMAGES FOR CHAPTER THREE

An Alternative History of Sexuality:
Diaspora Consciousness and the Queer Diasporic Lens

Figure 6

Jamil Hellu, *Be My Guest,* (2016) Installation: mirror, ottoman, 2 chairs, 2 pillows. Upholstered life-size furniture with textile pattern digitally printed on fabric.

Figure 7 (left)

Chair from Jamil Hellu, *Be My Guest,* (2016)
Installation: mirror, ottoman, 2 chairs, 2 pillows.
Upholstered life-size furniture with textile pattern digitally printed on fabric.

Figure 8 (below left) and
Figure 9 (below right)

Details from Jamil Hellu, *Be My Guest,* (2016) Installation: mirror, ottoman, 2 chairs, 2 pillows. Upholstered life-size furniture with textile pattern digitally printed on fabric.

Images for Chapter Four:

Queering Archives of Photography:
Linking a Colonial History to a Diasporic Present

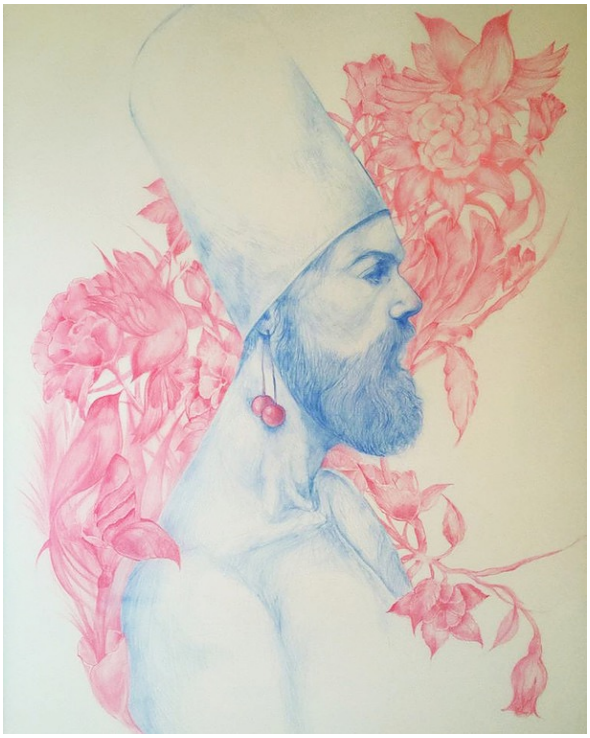

Figure 10

Bagheri, Ebrin. (2015) *Untitled,* from "Eastern Desires" series. Pencil Crayon and Ballpoint pen on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11

Bagheri, Ebrin. (2016) *Untitled [I],* from "Someone Who Is Like No-One" series. Pencil Crayon and Ballpoint pen on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

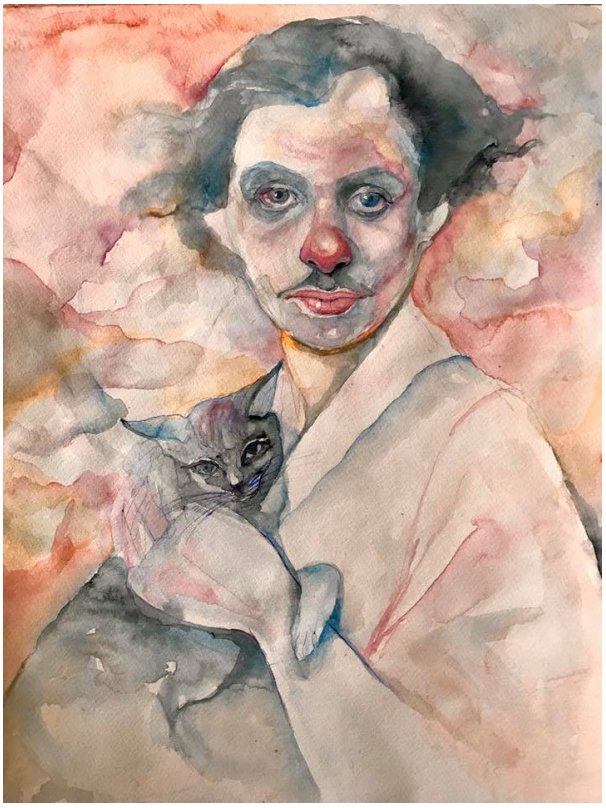

Figure 12

Bagheri, Ebrin. (2016) *Untitled [II],* from “Someone Who Is Like No-One” series. Watercolour paint & Ballpoint pen on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

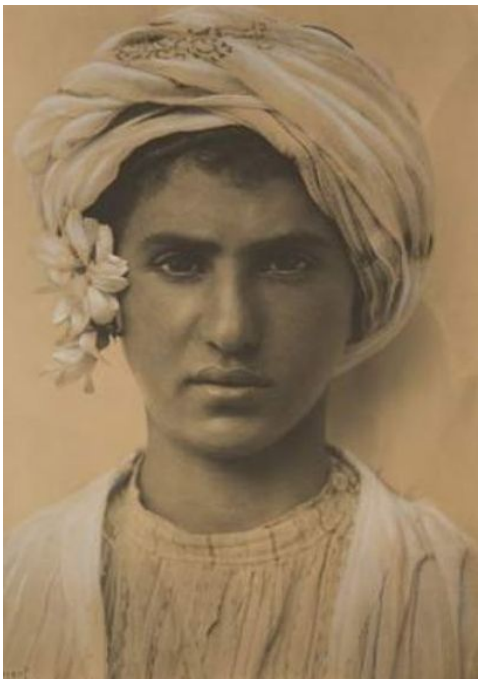

Figure 13

Lenhert, Rudolf. & Landrock, Ernst. (1932). *Jeune Kayble en Algerie*. Gelatin print. Courtesy of the Musée de l'Élysée, Lausanne, Switzerland and Edouard Lamblet.

Figure 14

Bagheri, Ebrin. (2015). *Untitled,* from Eastern Desires series. Pencil Crayon and Ballpoint pen on paper.

Figure 15

Henri Délié & Émile Béchard (1870s). *Au Jardin de l'Esbekieh (Cairo).* Cartes-de-visite photograph. Courtesy of the Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Figure 16

Lehnert, Rudolf. (c.1910). *Jeunes Arabes, Tunis*. Colourized postcard. Courtesy of Dr. Joseph Allen Boone. Private Collection.

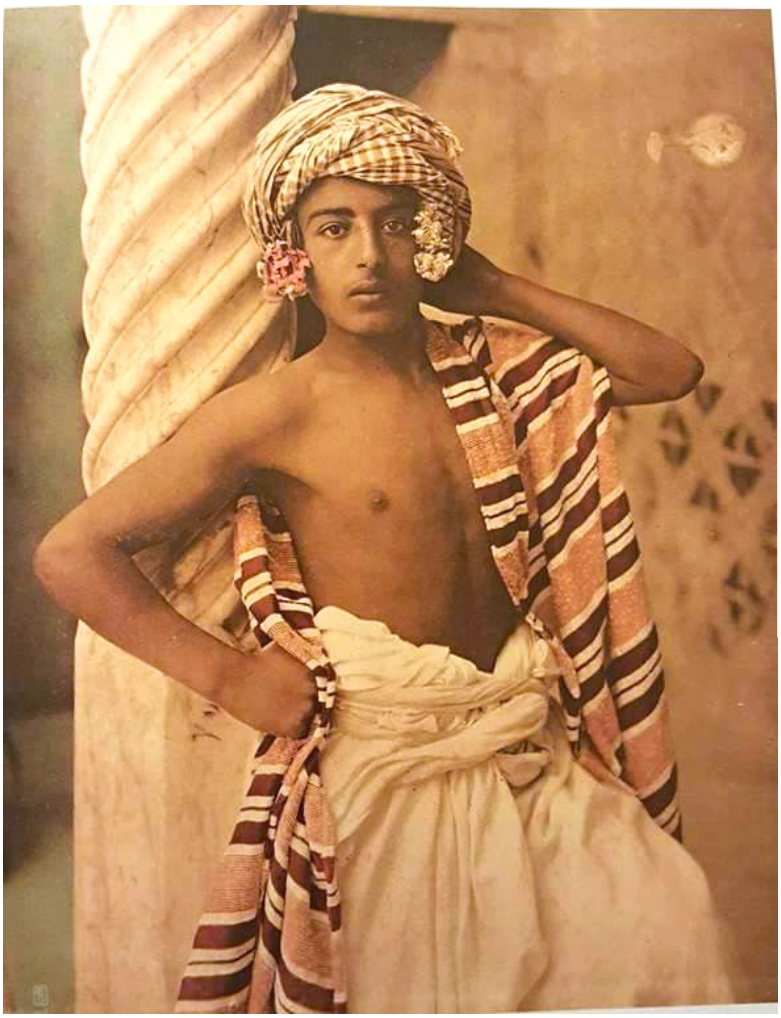

Figure 17

Lenhert, Rudolf & Landrock, Ernst. (1904). *Ahmed, Tunisie.* Coloured gelatin print/glass-plate negative and hand-colored photogravure. Courtesy of the Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

IMAGES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

Coming Out à l'Oriental: Diasporic Art and Colonial Wounds

Figure 18
2Fik, *Arabesque*, 2006. Digital collage and photograph.

Figure 19
2Fik, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 2010 (based on Édouard Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*,1863).

Figure 20. 2Fik, *La leçon de folie de Ludmilla-Mary*, 2012 (based on Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632)

Figure 21. 2Fik, *The Marriage of Abdel and Fatima*, 2014 (based on Daniel Maclise, *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife*, 1854)

Figure 22. 2Fik, *The Death of Dishonest Abdel*, 2017 (based on Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770)

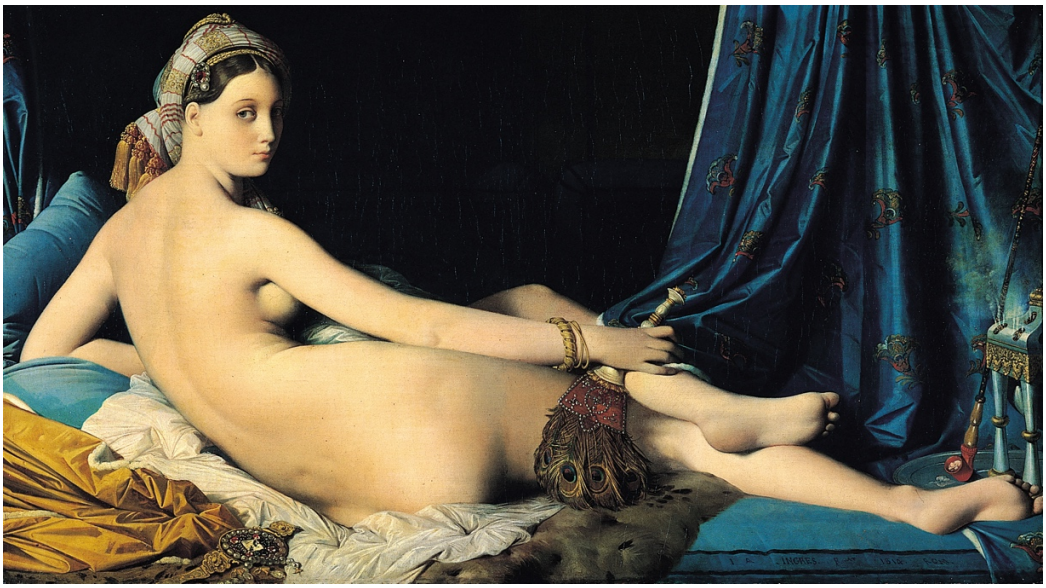

Figure 23. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*. Oil on canvas, 1814

Figure 24
2Fik, *La Grande Intendante*, 2012 (based on Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*, 1814)

Figure 25. Gentile Bellini,
The Sultan Mehmet II.
Oil on Canvas, 1480

Figure 26. 2Fik, *Le Sultan Abdel*,
Digital Photograph. 2012.

Figure 27. 2Fik, family portraits.

Figure 28 (Abdel)

Figure 29 (Sofiane)

Figure 30 (Ludmilla-Mary)

Figure 31 (Kathryn)

Figure 32 (Marco)

Figure 33 (2Fik)

FIGURE 34. 2Fik, *Huit Facettes*. Digital collage and photograph.

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