(UN)PRIVILEGED EMBODIMENTS OF FEMININITY,
(UN)HEGEMONIC ARTICULATIONS OF DESIRE: THE SHIFTING
GROUNDS OF THE NEW VEILING TREND IN JORDAN

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the new veiling trend as it is embodied by Jordanian Muslim women. It approaches veiling in terms of being an experience of femininity and desire and unpacks its complex bodily implications. I place the emphasis on one of the trend's increasingly popular manifestations in particular; namely, the fashionable veiling. By accentuating their bodies and actively engaging the male gaze, fashionably veiled women negotiate the Quranic and cultural limits of the practice and turn it into a fashion-based and desire affirming body project. In addition to engaging the embodiment of the practice, the dissertation explores its shifting conceptualization and the discourses that shape the different forms of Muslim femininity in the country. Alongside Muslim veiling, the dissertation examines Muslim non-veiling as another important constituent of the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan. By exploring Muslim veiling and non-veiling simultaneously, the research draws attention to the interconnectedness of these body projects and underscores the stakes and contingent privileges that accompany a woman's decision to embody one but not the other.

To explore these aspects, I used the theoretical frameworks of Smith, Foucault, Butler, and Mahmood among others and conducted one-to-one semi-structured in-depth interviews with fifteen veiled and non-veiled Jordanian Muslim women. Starting from the participants' narratives, I argue that the forms of veiling that are gaining hold in Jordan challenge the Quranic conceptualization of the practice as well as the hegemonic expressions of desire in Islam, but only to a limited extent. While transgressive, these forms reinforce the structures that stand behind the practice and do not disrupt the sexual politics embedded in it.

To all the women who want to shape Islam, rather than consume its hegemonic forms.

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Introduction: On the New Fashionable Veiling

1- Overview

Feminist scholarship on veiling tends to place much of its emphasis on unpacking the religious and political bases of the practice or alternatively on investigating its potential as a "choice" and its limitations as a coerced imposition (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; Bullock, 2002; El-Guindi, 1999; Joppke, 2009; Lazreg, 2009; MacLeod, 1991; Mahmood, 2005; Mernissi, 1975, 1991; Scott, 2007; Stowasser, 1997; Zuhur, 1992). My doctoral dissertation research tries to complement and complicate this rich literature by exploring yet another aspect of the practice that is often less discussed; namely, its bodily implications as a hybrid and complex articulation of femininity and desire.

More precisely, I explore the new veiling trend as it is negotiated and embodied by Muslim women in Jordan. The study examines the potential and limitations of one of the trend's manifestations that I call the fashionable veiling. This is a type of veiling that is heavily informed by fashion and that works to beautify the female body and entice the male gaze instead of toning down a woman's sexual appeal. Unlike much of the feminist scholarship on the trend, my work is focused on the particularity of living femininity and desire through a veiled body that navigates the ideals of concealment and fashionability. My research simultaneously examines the trend in terms of being part of Jordanian women's attempts to re-think the culturally and religiously viable ways in which they can experience their bodies as Muslim women, and in terms of being part of their attempts to re-think the very structure of the practice of veiling so that it becomes a fashion-based and desire affirming body project.

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Starting from the participants' narratives, my research sheds light on the experience of veiling as it is owned and lived by adherents. It steers clear from producing an abstract, universalized, or exotic veiled body that is posited against a more "liberated" non-veiled one. I seek to complicate the lenses that reduce veiling to a desexualized and/or disembodied experience as well as those that orientalize or romanticize it. My dissertation works in fact to establish a new reading of the practice that acknowledges the sexuality and femininity of its adherents without either fetishizing them or turning a blind eye to the limits of constructing a gender-conscious Muslim sexuality through a practice that seeks to centre the male gaze and contain open articulations of desire.

By engaging the new veiling and Muslim femininity at large as body projects I start from Shillings' understanding of the body and his outlook on the active process of inhabiting it (1993, p. 5). I use his concept to emphasize how Jordanian Muslim women approach their non/veiled bodies as endeavors on which they constantly work and through which they express particular beliefs, needs, and desires.

The new veiling as a term refers to a particular change that started to affect women's attires in many Middle Eastern countries in the 1970s. The emerging trend involved taking up a variety of forms of veiling that were materially and conceptually different from the traditional ones already prevalent in the region (Duval, 1998; MacLeod, 1991; Zuhur, 1992). For instance, on the sartorial level the trend involved discarding the local traditional veils for newly devised ones that ranged from trendy headscarves worn over western-style clothes, to more conservative headscarves that covered women's shoulders, bust, and/or face, and that were accompanied by special full-length gowns -called *jilbabs* (overcoats) in Jordanian colloquial Arabic.

On the conceptual level, the trend marked a shift in women's understanding of the practice and in the very purpose that it served. The attire's primarily traditional and/or religious meaning started to get infused with a political one. The 70s were in fact a time of rapid change in many Middle Eastern countries marked by the rise of political Islam and many truncated modernization projects. Women's newly devised forms of veiling mirrored their enmeshment in this changing context. For instance, through their new dress codes women expressed either their political adherence to the surging religious movements, or their attempts to establish a religious-based modernity and navigate the contradicting effects of the modernization projects that simultaneously enhanced and bracketed their access to the public job market (Ahmed, 1992; El-Guindi, 1999; MacLeod, 1991). Interestingly, the motivations behind the trend have shifted significantly since the 70s. For instance, as this research illustrates, the trend as it is practiced in Jordan today has little (if any) political connotations and is rather primarily cultural and fashion oriented.

My research does not seek to construct a meta-narrative on veiling in Jordan or an exhaustive "representation" of all its forms. Rather, it places the emphasis on a set of particular experiences and examines the forms of veiling that are gaining popularity in the country at this point in time -and that may not include all of the above-mentioned styles. For instance, my research sample included women who wear the more conventional type of veiling known as the *jilbab* -a full-length gown accompanied by a headscarf- as well as women who wear elaborate fashionable headscarves with trendy western style clothes. Other types of veiling that include covering the face and/or bust and that may be popular in certain countries where the new veiling trend is flourishing

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are less frequent in Jordan and did not fall subsequently within the scope of the body projects that I examined.

While my dissertation research places its emphasis on the new veiling trend, it simultaneously investigates Jordanian Muslim women's non-veiling as another important body project that is prevalent in the country. Reading veiling along side Muslim non-veiling serves to place it in context and sheds light on the multiplicity of ways through which Muslim femininity is embodied in Jordan. Moreover, it helps draw attention to the interconnectedness of these projects and how they inform, shape, constraint, and disrupt each other. As this research illustrates, the different articulations of Muslim femininity are in fact structured hierarchically in the Jordanian imaginary and there are non/material stakes in a woman's decision to adopt one but not the other. Veiling for instance brings about many advantages, or unearned contingent privileges as I theorize them, for its adherents –such as status and respect among others as will be thoroughly explained in chapter four.

In addition to exploring Jordanian Muslim women's (disruptive) conceptualization of the practice of veiling and their experiences of their (non)veiled bodies, my research examines the discourses that shape the hegemonic forms of Muslim femininity in the country. Moreover, it questions the potential that the fashionable forms of veiling hold for re-thinking the hegemonic conceptualization of Muslim femininity and desire and desirability in Islam more generally. After all, Jordanian women's embodiment of veiling challenges the modesty and privacy-based Quranic vision of femininity and desire. However, as this research illustrates, the nascent forms of veiling continue to have their limits in terms of the extent to which they can disrupt the hegemonic organization of

sexual politics embedded in the practice in the first place.

2- The Theoretical Framework of the Research

The study starts from Bordo's and Ussher's understanding of the concept of femininity and draws on Smith's theorization of it as a discourse. For Bordo and Ussher, femininity is the experience of living as a woman under patriarchies -with all that this entails in terms of "properly" enacting hegemonic gender and beauty standards and learning to anticipate and accommodate the male gaze (2000, p. 117; 1997, p. 47). Smith additionally holds that understanding the discourse of femininity entails more than examining the ideals that women are induced to emulate (1990, pp. 160, 162). Equally important are the relationships and industries that reinforce the ideals in question (Smith, 1990, pp. 160, 162).

As will be discussed in chapter one, the ideals of Muslim femininity as they are lived by Jordanian women today are often difficult to pinpoint since they are informed by a number of mediated frames of reference -the Quran being only one of them. Moreover, the contexts in which they are lived also affect their scope and rigidity. As chapters four, five, and six illustrate, the participants' relationships and their different responses to the growing veil fashion industry shape their embodiment of the discourse of Muslim femininity and simultaneously determine its very parameters.

In order to theorize the participants' embodiment of veiling and non-veiling, I draw on Foucault's, Mauss', and Butler's theoretical frameworks. By placing the emphasis on the power of discourses and the process of subjectivation through subjugation (1979, 1982) Foucault's framework opens a space for understanding the participants' necessary enmeshment in the disciplinary discourses that regulate their

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experiences of their bodies as Muslim women. Moreover, as will be explained in chapter one, Foucault's notion of the "technologies of the self" (1988a, p. 18) and the role that they play in establishing individuals' coveted "modes of being" (1985, p. 28) sheds light on the participants' personal investment in the body projects that they endorse and on the work that they do on their bodies and conduct in order to materialize these modes of being.

Mauss' concept of the "techniques of the body" through which individuals learn to make their bodies culturally viable (1973, pp. 70, 74) further compliments my outlook on the embodiment of the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan. Veiling proves to be in fact one of the techniques of the body that Jordanian women have a stake in learning in order to construct and maintain their cultural intelligibility and avoid cultural disciplining. While the experience of living the body is thus inherently personalized and individual, it is also necessarily relational and interactive (Lyon & Barbalet, 1994, p. 55) and informed by the contexts that the participants navigate.

Butler's theoretical framework provides in turn important grounds for unpacking the shifting performativity of the practice of veiling in Jordan. As mentioned earlier, Jordanian Muslim women devise a particularly fashionable rendition of the practice and reiterate it in femininity enhancing and desire affirming ways that go against its mainstream understanding. By placing the emphasis on how norms are materialized through a process of ritualized repetitions that are never quite stable or complete (Butler, 1993, pp. x, 2), Butler's outlook on performativity opens a space for reading the contingency of the practice of veiling and the particularity of the ways in which it is consolidated in Jordan. Moreover, by shedding light on the need to approach the spaces

that lie between the mandates of a discourse and their actual embodiment as potential sites of resistance (Butler, 1993, pp. 2, 7, 12, 231), Butler's framework opens a space for unpacking the discrepancy between the ideals of Muslim femininity and Jordanian women's materialization of them.

My research is also grounded in the existing literature on the topic and deploys it to read the particularity of the new veiling trend in Jordan. Much of the feminist literature written on veiling traces its Quranic, *hadith*, and general religious basis (Ahmed, 1992; Bullock, 2002; El-Guindi, 1999; Mernissi, 1975, 1991; Stowasser, 1997; Zuhur, 1992) and often seeks to problematize its prescription altogether (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; El-Guindi, 1999; Hoodfar, 2001; Mahmood, 2005; Stowasser, 1997). Moreover, many feminists examine the current manifestations of the practice and unpack the agency embedded in it, either in the spirit of emphasizing its particularity (Bullock, 2002; MacLeod, 1991; Mahmood, 2005) or drawing attention to its coerced political, cultural, and religious nature (Joppke, 2009; Lazreg, 2009; Moghissi, 1999).

As mentioned earlier, my research does not concern itself with these aspects in particular but focuses on the shifting conceptualization of the practice of veiling in the Jordanian imaginary and on its particularity as a bodily experience of femininity. My work uses the existing literature as a ground for problematizing both the apologetic frameworks that turn a blind eye to the limiting implications of the practice and those that foreclose the possibility of seeing its potential. Moreover, it problematizes its presumed necessary religiosity -and complicates in this sense Mahmood's work in particular by placing the emphasis on the practice's non-pious manifestations and its limitations as a form of non-autonomous self-actualization (2005, p. 41).

As will be explained in the upcoming chapters, I seek to examine the potential that the practice may hold in terms of problematizing the rigid conceptualizations of agency and desirability, but I simultaneously mean to emphasize the limitations of focusing on its cultural, agentic, and bodily exceptionalism. For instance, while Butler (1993) and Mahmood (2005) rightly draw attention to the need to acknowledge women's agency beyond the parameters of subversion, my research seeks to explicate the necessary limiting implications of such an approach and how it may end up reinforcing the hegemonic structures that it addresses in the first place.

3- The Methodological Grounds of the Research and the Organization of the Chapters

My research is grounded in feminist standpoint epistemology and feminist qualitative research. It takes women's knowledges and their multi-faceted standpoints as its starting point, and places its emphasis on analyzing the particularity, rather than the mere frequency, of the experiences of non/veiling. It starts in fact from Haraway's understanding of knowledge as situated, partial, and produced through multiple standpoints (1988, p. 196) and follows Simth's approach to knowers as necessarily situated in relations of power (1992, p. 91). Haraway and Smith opened a space for me to theorize non/veiling in Jordan while being attentive to the multiplicity and partiality of the participants' perspectives and while simultaneously problematizing the power dynamics that inform my own insight into their experiences.

The feminist underpinnings of the research similarly alerted me to my biases and to the baggage that I bring to my research. My work is shaped in fact by the feminist critiques of positivism and its claims of objectivity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 14-

15) and by the feminist commitment to the process of self reflexivity (Hertz, 1997; Reinharz, 1997).

As will be explained in chapter two, reflecting upon my positionality illuminated the ways in which my baggage facilitated and complicated my understanding of the research topic in general and my interaction with the participants in particular. As a Jordanian Muslim woman born and raised in Jordan my positionality gave me a unique ability to understand and probe the different facets of the project of Muslim femininity in the country and to interact easily with the participants in their native language. However, my understanding of Islam and my Jordanianness remain necessarily particular and are shaped by my family, class, and feminist affiliations which complicate the common grounds that I share with the participants. The feminist underpinnings of my research worked to mitigate the limiting effects of my positionality and to enhance its many strengths by emphasizing the multiplicity of knowledges and the partiality of any reality in the first place. Moreover, the methodological grounds of my research pushed me to implement various measures that kept my biases in check during the interviewing and data interpretation processes.

I used one-to-one semi-structured in-depth interviews as the main methodological tool for conducting the research. Loosely organized around general themes rather than particular questions, semi-structured interviews mirror the feminist structure of my research since they prioritize the participants' insights into the topic and disrupt the conventional power dynamics of the interviewing process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 125-126). In order to locate the participants of the study I used snowballing or chain sampling technique (Lee, 1993, p. 65). The research sample consisted of fifteen veiled

and non-veiled women distributed as follows: five conventionally veiled women wearing different trendy forms of the *jilbab* (a gown worn over a woman's clothes), five fashionably veiled women wearing the headscarf along with western style clothes, and five non-veiled Muslim women who varied in their dress code.

The participants were in their 20s and 30s at the time of the interviews and were either in the process of getting an (under)graduate degree or already had one. Most of them were middle class, with only a few coming from working class backgrounds and only one coming from the upper class. As will be explained in chapter two, despite its particularity the sample served the goals of the research as it provided insight into a variety of experiences of veiling in Jordan and placed the trend in the context of Muslim non-veiling. As explained earlier, my research does not claim to be representative of all veiling experiences in Jordan after all, and the particularity of its sample does not limit its ability to achieve its goals in this sense.

In terms of its organization, the dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one establishes the theoretical framework of the research. It explicates Smith's theoretical perspective on the discourse of femininity, Foucault's and Mauss' understanding of the process of embodiment and its personal and relational implications, and Butler's understanding of performativity and its disruptive potential. The chapter uses these theoretical debates on femininity, embodiment, and performativity as a starting point for unpacking the discourse of Muslim femininity in Jordan and the multiple facets of the experiences of non/veiling as they are lived by the participants.

Chapter two discusses the methodological underpinnings of the study and the different aspects of the research design. In this chapter I explain the data collection

methods that I used as well as the data analysis techniques and the validity and accountability measures. Moreover, the chapter sheds light on my fieldwork experience and the questions of access and power that structured it. Additionally, the chapter engages reflexivity as a process and explores how the multiple layers of my identity and my personal and conceptual baggage influenced the research process and its findings.

Chapter three establishes the conceptual framework of the study. In this chapter I map out the feminist literature on veiling and I situate my doctoral dissertation research in it. By examining the different feminist analyses of the religious aspect of veiling, the agency embedded in it, and the fashion industry growing around it, I provide the necessary grounds for understanding the concepts and threads that run through the participants narratives discussed in the following three chapters, and I place the emphasis on the implications of the existing literature for my work.

Chapter four is the first of three chapters that discuss the findings of the study. This chapter explicates the participants' conceptualization of veiling and the challenge that it poses for mainstream Islam and Jordanian culture. The chapter also examines the discourses that shape Jordanian Muslim women's experience of the practice. Additionally, it unpacks the hierarchy that structures the projects of veiling and non-veiling in the Jordanian imaginary and explores the non/privileges that each embodiment of femininity brings about for its adherents in the country.

Chapter five elaborates on the theme of embodiment and discusses the personal and relational aspects of the process as the participants live it. It explores the particularities of the ethical work that the participants conduct on their non/veiled bodies in order to materialize Muslim femininity as well as the relationships that shape their personal bodily

investment in the project. The chapter also sheds light on the pleasure that the participants derive from their non/veiled bodies and explores the potential embedded in constructing veiling as a pleasurable bodily experience.

Chapter six discusses the themes of desire and desirability and examines the constraining effects that veiling has on the participants' experiences with this regard. In this sense, the chapter works to complicate the pleasure-enhancing aspect of the practice discussed in chapter five and underscores the tensions that permeate the participants' experiences of their bodies and that characterize their challenge to the hegemonic conceptualization of desire in Islam.

Chapter seven recapitulates the major findings of the study and provides some suggestions for the directions that future research on the topic may take. The chapter re-examines the potential and the limitations that the fashionable veiling holds as an alternative construction of Muslim femininity and desire, and problematizes the disruptive space that non-veiled Muslim femininity opens with this regard.

The dissertation critically engages the alternative that the new veiling trend offers for Jordanian Muslim women and examines whether or not it is able to disrupt the structures that privilege certain embodiments of femininity over others in the country. I have worked to establish a feminist reading of the practice that acknowledges the potentials of the fashionable veiling while trying to steer clear from orientalism, cultural relativism, and Islamic exceptionalism. As the following chapters illustrate, the main challenge that continues to face the emerging alternative articulations of femininity and desire in Jordan lies in taking the female body out of the limits of being perceived as a chaotic policeable entity. Non-drastic forms of change such as the fashionable veiling

have significant strategic benefits that should be indeed acknowledged and appreciated, but their particularity and use should not cover over their precarious implications.

Chapter 1

Laying the Theoretical Grounds: The New Veiling as a Project of Femininity

1- Introduction

The different articulations of Muslim femininity prevalent in Jordan today highlight Jordanian Muslim women's ongoing negotiations of Islam and their shifting embodiments of femininity and desire. The concept of Muslim femininity as I use it in this research does not invoke a rigid monolithic category. Rather, it points to a malleable paradigm with loose tenets and shifting manifestations. By placing the emphasis on the embodiment of this paradigm, chapter one seeks to unpack the experience of inhabiting the body and living it in social space (Turner, 1996, p. xiii).

The chapter articulates in fact three particular aspects of the theoretical debates on femininity; namely, the elements of the discourse, its embodiment, and the performativity of its norms. The debates in question do not invoke veiled femininity per se or the particularity of articulating femininity and desire through a constrained experience of embodiment such as veiling. However, I use them as a starting point to lay the grounds for a theoretical framework that approaches veiling as a site for living femininity. As the following sections illustrate, the debates in question become a ground for theorizing Jordanian Muslim women's construction and experience of their non/veiled bodies and set the stage for engaging with their narratives in chapters four, five, and six.

2- Setting the Parameters of the Analysis: Engaging the Debates on Femininity

2.1 Theorizing the First Layer of the Discourse: The Ideals of Femininity

The ideals of the discourse of femininity figure as one of its basic layers that work to shape women's experiences and their very sense of self. Working in consort with the elements of other discourses, these ideals seem to subjectivate women by shaping their subject positions and to simultaneously subjugate them by determining their knowledge and experiences of their bodies.

My understanding of the concept of discourse goes along the lines of Foucault's and Smith's theorization of it. While Foucault highlights the textual aspect of a discourse, Smith underscores its relational dimension. In his Archeology, Foucault defines the concept in terms of being a set of statements that give place to certain subject positions (2002, p. 108). Smith on the other hand emphasizes that a discourse does not designate a simple set of texts or rules, but additionally entails the social relations and activities that are informed by the texts and organized and lived by people (1990, pp.162, 160).

In order to understand the discourse of Muslim femininity as it is played out in Jordan it is important to explore the enmeshment of the textual ideals of Muslim femininity with the material conditions and relationships that Jordanian women embody then. While the new veiling figures as an increasingly popular articulation of Muslim femininity in Jordan, the textual ideals of the discourse cannot be reduced to veiling exclusively. For instance, the Quran, Islam's major and least mediated source and one of the frames of reference that inform Muslim femininity, seems to establish loose tenets for the discourse. In fact, it seems to conceptualize Muslim femininity primarily in terms of observing general modesty rather than wearing the veil per se. One of the main verses

that speak to women's "proper" appearance contends for instance that women should "lower their gaze and guard their modesty", and that they "should not display their beauty and ornaments[1] except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof" (*The Meaning of the Qur'an* 24. 31). The verse asks women accordingly to "draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty[2]" except to their husbands and certain immediate kin (24. 31). In other words, the verse's wording and structure seem to steer clear from specificities.

The questions of mediation and interpretation (Spivak, 1988), as well as those of the historicity of the Quranic text and the context of the revelation of its verses (Barlas, 2002, p. 9), all complicate the process of deriving rigid tenets from such a textual induction. However, as will be further explained in chapter three, Sunni "mainstream Islam" -which includes a myriad of schools of thought that derive heavily from the prophet's narratives and the *Shari'a* law and jurisprudence- has long taken such a verse to designate veiling per se. And it has used it moreover to instate veiling as the only "appropriate" articulation of Muslim femininity. On the experiential level, Muslim women seem to embody both the Quran and its canonized interpretations in varying ways that negotiate the demands of the religious text and the institutions that speak in its name

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[1] In the Arabic original, the actual word used in the verse is *zeena* – transliterated as zīna(tahunna) with a long-dashed "i" (*Transliteration.org*). The translation of the word *zeena* is debatable. Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-Arab* explains that *zeena* can be anything that is used for the purpose of beautifying the appearance and that contributes to a person's existing beauty (*Library.islamweb.net*). However, in *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, *zeena* is translated as "beauty and ornaments" in its first occurrence in verse 24.31 and as "beauty" in its second occurrence in the same verse. For the purposes of this research, I use the word to mean beautification and adornment and I write it using double "e" to convey the sound captured by the transliteration symbol "ī".

[2] Ibid.

however. This discrepancy between the text, its interpretation, and its embodiment produces a malleable Muslim femininity that is in a constant process of becoming.

The discourse of femininity in its "western" articulation seems to harbor equally malleable ideals. For instance, while the western media may promote certain textual images as ideals of femininity, the ideals in question do not fix femininity or reify it as a rigid entity. Rather, they work to associate being a woman in western contexts with a set of gendered behaviors and practices that are constantly changing (Holland, 2004, p. 8). In this sense, while based in ideals, femininity can be understood to be a shifting mode of embodiment that is produced and materialized through changing disciplinary images (Barkty, 1990, p. 65).

At the risk of being read as selective and decontextualizing, my analysis of the discourse of Muslim femininity privileges its visual embodiment over its other aspects and draws moreover on what can be described as a set of "western" conceptualizations of femininity. The line of reasoning that informs my choice of lenses is twofold. While living Muslim femininity necessarily involves embodying a set of gender requirements that go beyond the question of appearance, the new veiling project seems to be organized around this aspect in particular. After all, it is a project that defines women primarily in terms of their body image and one that determines their mobility and relationships in terms of the male gaze.

Moreover, while femininity is necessarily a contextualized experience whose scripts and performativity differ across cultures, my rationale for reading a non-western experience of femininity such as the new veiling in Jordan through western-based theoretical frameworks such as Smith's, Foucault's, and Butler's is as follows. On the

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one hand, endorsing this approach places my own theorization of the discourse of Muslim femininity within what Mohanty frames as reading the particular within the "universal" (2003). Necessarily contextualized and informed by local cultural, religious, and political particularities, the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan is also informed by what I understand to be an overarching transnational heterosexist gender matrix. And while the particularities and enactment of the patriarchal matrix in question necessarily vary across and within cultures, its general tenets seem to taint femininity across a variety of contexts. For instance, the concept of sexual objectification is one such tenet that seems to run through western and non-western scripts of femininity (Jeffreys, 2005, p. 44). The theoretical framework that I establish does not take western femininity to be one homogeneous entity, nor does it reify it as a yardstick against which to read the project of Muslim femininity. More importantly, it does not intend to turn a blind eye to the differences between the varying contexts in which experiences of womanhood are lived. Rather, I am starting from the premises that the two paradigms of femininity in question are not antithetical parts of a dichotomy, but are different reiterations of similar patriarchal tenets.

The connections between Muslim and western articulations of femininity are constructed in practice through a variety of venues that include the media. The pervasive outreach of western media allows western ideals of femininity to have increasing influence on women's sense of femininity in many non-western cultural contexts (Calogero, Boroughs, & Thompson, 2007, p. 277). This influence is in fact apparent in the different manifestations of the fashionable veiling that draw on western ideals of femininity as will be explained in chapter four.

2.2 Beyond the Ideals: Feminist Debates on the Relationships and Industries that Structure the Discourse of Femininity

Smith explains that femininity cannot be understood as a mere set of textual ideals that women emulate. For her, the discourse entails complex relationships that are organized through shifting texts that women experience in different ways (Smith, 1990, pp. 160-163). When the discourse is reduced to a mere descriptive category the normalization and reiteration of its textual ideals are actually lost from sight (Smith, 1990, pp. 164-166). To place the emphasis on these aspects, the textual images should be read through the material relationships and industries that induce women into embodying particular traits in the first place (Smith, 1990, pp. 2-6, 164). And such analyses should start moreover from women's very standpoints and experiences (Smith, 1990, p. 6).

The discourse of femininity works by instating a code of conduct against which women measure themselves as well as other women and reifies in this sense particular gender structures as exclusively appropriate and morally superior to others (Smith, 1990, pp. 167-168, 171, 173). This hierarchical structuring seems to permeate both Muslim and western discourses of femininity -albeit to promote slightly different ideals. For instance, in the case of western femininity, the textually privileged code of conduct often organizes gender relations along the lines of women's determination from without (Smith, 1990, p. 171). A woman's appearance often determines her worth, her relationships, and her valuation over other women, and is often assessed through the exposure of her body for the benefit of the male gaze. The discourse of Muslim femininity seems to implement this same tenet albeit by promoting the concealment rather than the exposure of the female body. After all, by advocating modesty (or veiling per se in the case of mainstream Sunni

Islam) as a coveted ideal, the discourse of Muslim femininity instates a set of gender relationships that emphasize and moralize appearance. The promoted appearance in this case is one that does not imply an "un-contained" female sexuality and desire.

In the context of such a code of conduct, Jordanian Muslim women's relationships with men and with other women are often structured along the lines of ranking, competition, and judgment. And the market figures as a significant venue that facilitates and determines the embodiment and management of these relationships. Smith argues that the fashion industry and its markets provide in fact the site where the ideals and requirements of the discourse are translated into a demand for commodities (Smith, 1990, p. 173). While this industry defines women and their relationships through a set of ideals that do not necessarily represent their realities, it induces them to actively identify with it (Barkty, 1990, p. 40; Kaschak, 1992, p. 103).

Women's relationship to the fashion industry that grows out of the discourse of femininity is thus interesting in terms of what it reveals about their agency. On the one hand, the textual images of the discourse of femininity inform women's relationship to the market so that they end up embodying their femininity as the market defines and sells it. But on the other hand, women are not only consumers in this context but are rather agents who actively engage, negotiate, and manage the discourse (Smith, 1990, p. 161). As Smith explains, women are both subjects-in-the discourse of femininity and members of it (1990, pp. 192-193). Being a subject-in-the discourse entails being situated in it as a mere desirable object for the consumption of the male gaze. Being a member of the discourse on the other hand indicates practicing its principles and acquiring the skills needed for its enactment (Smith, 1990, pp. 192-193). While these positions go hand in

hand on the experiential level, differentiating them on the theoretical level underscores the nature and effects of women's complicity in reinforcing the ideals of the discourse of femininity.

The fashionably veiled women are both subjects-in-the discourse of Muslim femininity and active members in it. For instance, they heavily influence the development of the veil fashion industry in Jordan while simultaneously consuming its hegemonic ideals. As the fashionable veiling started gaining hold in the country, the fashion industry started responding to veiled women's needs and moved from being primarily oriented towards conventional forms of veiling and western-based articulations of femininity to targeting fashionably veiled women by providing a market that is tailored for their growing numbers. At the same time, the industry started constructing new venues for living the veiling experience such as veil accessories, "veil-dos" (i.e. services whereby women go to special salons to have their veils wrapped nicely by professionals), etc. In this sense, the market seemed both to respond to and shape women's embodiment of femininity. It elaborated in practice on the "alternative" fashion-based forms of veiling that these women established and took them to extents that were not necessarily initially intended or endorsed by the fashionably veiled women. Such co-optation and "commoditization" of subversive practices is in fact one precarious aspect of using fashion as a means for instating alterity (Jeffreys, 2005, pp. 113-114).

While often limited, such an active management of the body makes women agents within the discourse of femininity especially that the discourse itself does not approach them as desiring assertive subjects but intends them to be mere desirable sexual objects within it (Smith, 1990, pp. 175, 191). Butler argues that the discrepancy between the

intentions of the discourse and its actual enactment challenges the limited conceptualization of agency and highlights its different nuances (1993, p. 122). Women's agency is not limited to transforming power structures after all (Niranjana, 2001, p. 88) but may actually entail resisting the limits of femininity by using its very normative categories (Edut, 1998, p. xxi; Holland, 2004, p. 35; Lockford, 2004, p. 3; Ussher, 1997, pp. 363-364) -as is the case indeed in the context of the fashionable veiling.

Another nuanced aspect of women's engagement with the discourse of femininity concerns the way they "rectify" their bodies so that they match the hegemonic standards of desirability (Smith, 1990, pp. 184, 186). In the case of the discourse of Muslim femininity, the non-veiled Jordanian Muslim women and the fashionably veiled ones engage the gap that exists between their conceptualizations of femininity and the actual ideals promoted by mainstream Islam and the fashion industry in an interesting way. The multiplicity of the frames of reference informing these women's projects of femininity induces them to simultaneously minimize and underscore their difference from the ideals of the discourse. In the process, they seem to redefine the very parameters of what counts as viable articulations of Muslim femininity. For instance, by refusing to conceal or veil their bodies yet continuing to endorse modesty as an ideal, non-veiled Jordanian Muslim women construct an interesting femininity that uses both the Muslim and western frames of reference. By arguing that theirs is a valid embodiment of Muslim femininity they seem to negotiate the hegemonic discourse of Muslim femininity so that it validates non-veiled articulations of Islam and of femininity. At the same time they seem to reinforce one of its hegemonic aspects by insisting that modesty should be one of its necessary components.

The in-between space that the fashionable veil crafts seems to similarly reinforce and disrupt the ideals of both discourses of femininity. On the one hand the fashionably veiled participants measure their bodies and dress against the textual ideals of mainstream Islam and don the veil accordingly. On the other, they simultaneously measure themselves against the ideals of the discourse of western femininity as it is portrayed in the media, and wear fashionable clothes that accentuate and flaunt, rather than conceal, their bodies. By crafting such a hybrid type of veiling that emphasizes the body and entices the gaze, the fashionably veiled women challenge the intentions of the discourse of Muslim femininity especially with regard to women's position within it and their ability to openly manage their desires. In fact, the gaze-enticing veiling that they construct posits them as desiring subjects who work to express, rather than simply neutralize, their sexuality. What is all the more interesting is that this particular style of adornment does not articulate desire neither along the lines of the exposure of the body nor along those of its concealment. Rather, the fashionable veiling brings to the fore a desire to seek the male gaze and hide from it simultaneously. The former constituent is Islamically problematic at best since the Quran instructs Muslim women not to entice the gaze or pronounce their desires publicly as the above-cited verse illustrates and as will be further discussed in chapter three. And the latter part underscores a desire that goes against the hegemonic organization of gender relations in many western contexts whereby women are induced to flaunt their bodies for the immediate benefit of the male gaze.

Despite the subversive potential of the fashionable veiling, I would argue that it remains difficult to read it as an "alternative" articulation of Muslim femininity. As will

be further explained in chapters three, four, five, and six, this type of veiling harbors important nuances of resistance that may pave the way for structural changes in the discourse of Muslim femininity, however, it simultaneously engenders precarious stakes. For instance, while the fashionable veiling may negotiate the viable articulations of desire in Islam as explained earlier, it does not question the authority of the heterosexist gaze in practice nor does it disrupt the contexts that limit the nature and venues of female desire in the first place.

As will be discussed in further detail in the upcoming chapters, there might not be a ready answer to whether emphasizing such in-between articulations of agency overvalues the potential of nuanced change, or if it instates a much-needed recognition of a method of change that many Muslim women seem to opt for -and whereby they simultaneously disrupt and re-affirm certain politics. After all, while Smith underscores the importance of acknowledging women's active engagement with the discourse in cases such as the ones discussed above, she also explains that this type of agency works to deny women's very presence as subjects in practice (1990, p. 193). In any case, even if the emerging articulations of Muslim femininity in Jordan do not bespeak a drastically subversive "alternative" culture of womanhood in the country, they remain significant for what they indicate about the shifting organization of the Jordanian society. Dress trends are one medium that expresses the beliefs and desires circulating in a society after all (Wilson, 1985, p. 9), and exploring their prevalent and emerging styles is key for understanding the standards of this society (Thesander, 1997, p. 35). This is all the more important in women's case since their clothes are often conflated with their very persons and morality (Craik, 1994, p. 2; Gaines, 1990, p. 1). The fashionable veiling that is

increasingly adopted by Jordanian women underscores a new aesthetic ideal and a new set of ideas about morality and desire that are gaining hold in the country. As will be explained in chapters four and six, this style of dress is often acquiesced or frowned upon for instance precisely because of what it is presumed to indicate about the morality of its wearer and the "appropriateness" of her articulation of desire. The valuation of the excessively fashionable forms of veiling over Muslim non-veiling for example indicates a particular moral stance that is gaining hold in the country whereby modesty per se is not necessarily valued as much as a particular wrapping of femininity and Islam.

The lens of fashion and appearance draws attention to the fact that femininity is not only a moralized experience but is also often anchored in a sense of alienation. Feminist debates on femininity emphasize in fact that the social and cultural constructions that shape women's sense of the self are often determined by men's fears and fantasies (Ussher, 1997, p. 346). Women's own experiences of their bodies are relegated in this sense to secondary importance (Kaschak, 1992, pp. 112, 100). Moreover, women are often socialized to think of masquerade, or naturalizing and maintaining such a "disparity between [their] inner feelings and outward appearance", as being an integral part of embodying femininity and an empowering "choice" (Ussher, 1997, p. 22). In practice however, it is constrained by a system of power relations that mandates beauty rituals and conflates women's very viability and success with their appearance (Jeffreys, 2005, pp. 113, 118; Ussher, 1997, pp. 42, 44).

I would argue that the new veiling project is anchored in such a masquerade logic. For one thing, veiling naturalizes the concealment of women's bodies and desire and posits this disparity moreover as an expression of women's control over their bodies. In

practice however, the project can hardly claim to empower women as it does not allow them any significant control over their bodies beyond the decision of guarding them from the gaze or for its benefit.

Women's investment in this aspect of the experience becomes easier to understand when the privileges that are often enmeshed with masquerade and beautification are taken into account. Many women feel anxious to meet the social standards of femininity and actively work to live through masquerade precisely because of the ensuing social privileges that the experience brings about -especially those related to intimacy and love (Barkty, 1990, p. 76; Bordo, 2000, p. 146; Brownmiller, 1984, p. 16; Ussher, 1997, p. 74). Moreover, since overt challenges of the beauty industry and its ideals often results in women's marginalization (Walker, 1998, pp. xiii, xv; Edut, 1998, pp. xix, xviii), many women actively resist dismantling the patriarchal understanding of femininity and its ideals because this can engender a sense of desexualization and even social annihilation in practice (Barkty, 1990, p. 77).

Feminist debates on the structure of femininity in patriarchal cultures draw attention to the important role played by the male gaze in this context. For instance, theorists explain that attractiveness and love are often conceptualized in heterosexual terms and that this in turn induces women to internalize the male gaze and to derive pleasure from being its object (Berger, 1972, p. 47; Bordo, 2000, p. 117). As women learn to approach themselves in terms of being a spectacle (Beauvoir, 1974, p. 300; Bordo, 2000, p. 117; Tseëlon, 1995, p. 76), living femininity becomes akin to having "a panoptical male connoisseur resid[e] within [their] consciousness" (Barkty, 1990, p. 72). This means that in the process of learning femininity, women establish a sense of self that

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is not simply relational but that is rather dependent on and determined by men's unilateral demands from women. After all, being feminine mandates only particular types of display, like being an object of beauty according to the male gaze standards, but not being sexually assertive at will or any such manifestation of relationality (Perlmutter, 2000, pp. 160, 162).

In order to disrupt such ideals and relationships that structure the discourse of femininity it is important to examine its connection to other discourses. After all, many women learn the normative scripts of femininity and their "proper" embodiment through the media for example (Ussher, 1997, p. 42). As will be explained in chapter four, the veiling project in its different manifestations is heavily influenced by the media discourse and the non/religious and aesthetics ideals that it spreads. Jordanian women are exposed to Arabic and non-Arabic forms of media that play into the increasing popularity of veiling as a body project and that shape the parameters of the fashionable veiling project in particular.

2.3 Femininity and the Body: Theorizing the Embodiment of the Discourse

As explained at the beginning of the chapter, embodiment as a term refers to the experience of becoming a body in social space (Turner, 1996, p. xiii). The process involves individualizing particular collective behaviors and beliefs prevalent in one's society and living them on the level of the body (Noland, 2009, p. 9). While personal, the process is also highly interactive, informed by contexts, and best understood in relational terms (Csordas, 1994, p. 10; Lyon & Barbalet, 1994, p. 55). The intensity and the particularities of the relational aspect of the process depend on the cultural ideals

prevalent in the context of its enactment. For instance, in cultures that define personhood through individuals' group affiliations, the cultivation of the body becomes a tool for and an expression of the community's hold over the body and not just an articulation of the individual's personal beliefs and prestige (Becker, 1994, pp. 100, 104).

Embodying the project of Muslim femininity is both an individual and relational experience. While Muslim non/veiling often derives from individual beliefs and is enacted in personalized ways on the level of individual bodies, its motives and enactment are also necessarily determined by contexts. For instance, by endorsing veiling or non-veiling, Jordanian Muslim women reflect and shape their relationships with their families and friends who simultaneously inform, support, or challenge their articulations of femininity. The Jordanian culture provides in fact one example of Becker's above-mentioned argument with regard to relationality. Group-oriented, it takes individuality and group affiliations to be mutually constitutive. In this context, Jordanian Muslim women's embodiment of femininity becomes informed by the expectations of their communities and is often closely monitored since it can harm the communities' social standing.

Mauss' notion of the "techniques of the body" further highlights the question of the cultural articulation of the body. Mauss argues that individuals learn to use their bodies in certain ways that reflect their social and cultural conditioning (1973, p. 70). Enacting the "techniques of the body" in question helps them to inhabit their cultures properly and determines accordingly the social privileges that they get (Mauss, 1973, pp. 70, 74).

Increasingly socially valued, the new veiling figures as one important technique of the body that Jordanian Muslim women seem to have vested interest in learning. In practice, embodying this project entails inducing the body to enact a set of culturally informed techniques; a particular disposition of the body, a certain attire, etc. As will be further explained in chapters four, five, and six, endorsing this technique of the body constructs certain women as more modest than others in the Jordanian imaginary. The implied moral validation along with the prospects of reduced harassment and reduced mobility restrictions for instance often stand behind Jordanian women's increasing endorsement of the practice.

The anticipated and experienced privileges that accompany veiling as a technique of the body seem to be contingent however. As will be explained in chapter four, they are at best temporary in terms of their effect since the project does not address the structures that make harassment for instance part of women's experience in the first place. Moreover, such privileges are highly unstable too. Since the beautified and beautifying fashionable veiling uses a culturally coveted technique of the body in a way that challenges its actual purpose it elicits in fact both privileges and condemnations.

The particularities of the embodiment of the fashionable veiling also expose the structure of relations of desire in Jordan. Every society endorses a set of relations of desire (Turner, 1996, p. 232) and works to implement them through a particular organization of the way bodies inhabit space. Relations of desire designate the interactions that regulate individuals' sexual and sensual experiences in a particular society and that are necessarily closely connected to that society's relations of production (Turner, 1996, pp. 47, 232). For instance, the "liberation" of desire in certain societies

goes hand in hand with the flourishing of certain industries (such as pornography for example) that work to instate a set of relationships that may objectify women in the goal of making profit (Turner, 1996, p. 54).

As will be discussed in chapters four, five, and six, the emerging articulations of Muslim femininity in Jordan work to disrupt the conventional organization of relations of desire in the country. For instance, by opening a space for veiled women to articulate a pronounced desire for a feminine sexualized look, the fashionable veiling allows them to express their desire for engaging the male gaze from within the confines of a desire restricting technique such as veiling. Non-veiling on the other hand allows women to express this desire from without the conventional technique of the body altogether and to establish it moreover as viably Muslim.

The subversive potential that the fashionable veiling and Muslim non-veiling hold in this context remains limited primarily because of their enmeshment with the fashion industry and their centring of the male gaze. After all, the "alternative" articulations of desire that these projects bring about do not question the pattern of social relationships that define women's desire primarily through heterosexuality, nor do they disrupt the fashion industry that heavily shapes the parameters of femininity and desire. However, as I argue in chapter six, it is important to examine such projects in terms of being articulations of desire and not mere prohibitions on sexuality nevertheless in order to shed light on an important aspect of their embodiment that is little discussed.

Foucault's theoretical framework complements those of Mauss and Turner by explicating the particularities of living cultural and social beliefs through the body especially in terms of embodying constrained/constraining desires. For one thing,

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Foucault places the emphasis on the power of discourses and on the subject's inevitable enmeshment in them. For another, his work also underscores the subject's active self-constitution within disciplinary discourses, especially through what he calls the "technologies of the self" (Foucault, 1988a, p. 18). Rather than a tension, this is part of Foucault's developing theoretical framework and can be used productively (McLaren, 2002, pp. 83, 106).

Foucault's perspectives open a space for exploring the multiple layers of the project of Muslim femininity especially in terms of its being constrained yet not entirely determined. Foucault argues that enacting any moral code, whether in the sense of obeying, transgressing, or resisting it, frames individuals as "ethical subjects" who actively constitute themselves in the process of their subjugation (1985, pp. 25-26). Understanding the process of self-formation entails discerning its "ethical substance"- the aspect of the self that makes "the prime material of (...) moral conduct"- (Foucault, 1985, p. 26), its "mode of subjection" or the type of law that induces the engagement of the moral code in the first place, and the actual "ethical work" that the individual performs on herself in order to change her body, thoughts, and conduct (Foucault, 1985, p. 27). Additionally, understanding the process involves exploring the "telos of the ethical subject" or the "mode of being" that characterizes the ethical subject and that she seeks to materialize (Foucault, 1985, p. 28).

Working on the "mosques' movement" in Egypt, Mahmood (2005) uses Foucault's understanding of the process of self-formation in order to illustrate how the Egyptian Muslim women involved in this movement live their religiosity. Through her work, the new veiling project figures as part of the ethical work that these women

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undertake in order to establish a coveted Islamic mode of being. Similarly to Mahmood, my study approaches Muslim women's enactment of the new veiling project through Foucault's understanding of self-formation. However, I will be deploying Foucault's theoretical outlook from a different perspective and with a different goal in mind. Mahmood addresses the particularities of Egyptian women's enactment of religiosity in the context of exploring the mosques' movement, and she explores veiling in terms of being only one part of these women's materialization of a coveted religious self. My research on the other hand is not concerned with explicating Jordanian Muslim women's religiosity per se. Rather, I am interested in exploring the embodiment of the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan and in explicating what the enactment of this project, whether through veiling or non-veiling, indicates about women's understanding of femininity and desire. Religiosity may be part of what induces the different manifestations of the project, but it is not the primary or the only lens that I am using to read the project. In fact, my work places its emphasis on the feminine body as the ethical substance of the process and investigates the desire that fuels the required ethical work and the pleasure derived from the established mode of being -which may or may not be religious for that matter. So while Mahmood's work explicates how religiosity informs other aspects of one's life and shapes one's mode of being, my work explores how certain modes of being may incorporate, negotiate, or even appropriate a religious symbol such as veiling in order to express other ends that are enmeshed with religiosity, but that are not solely religious.

Foucault's notion of the "technologies of the self" proves to be particularly important for my research. Elaborating on the ethical work involved in the process of

subject-formation, Foucault explains that it requires endorsing certain "modes of subjectivation" and a set of "practices of the self" that support them (1985, p. 28). What Foucault calls "practices of the self" or "technologies of the self" are techniques through which individuals work on their bodies, thoughts, and conduct in order to attain a coveted state (1988a, p. 18). As will be illustrated in chapter five, considering the different articulations of the project of Muslim femininity in terms of being technologies of the self that Jordanian Muslim women use in order to materialize different modes of being draws attention to the particularities of the enactment of the project on the level of the body. Moreover, it sheds light on the "embodied agency" of the women in question - to use Lyon and Barbalet's term (1994, p. 50). After all, by veiling or not veiling, Jordanian Muslim women actively work on molding their bodies and conduct in ways that match and materialize their sense of themselves as ethical subjects.

Foucault's framework also underscores the policing process that necessarily shapes any expression of Muslim femininity. Foucault invokes the notion of policing in the context of exploring the power of discourses and how they heavily influence the formation of the subject. For him, policing is the process of disciplining human affairs through public agencies (Foucault, 1980c, pp. 170-171). It is a process that reduces human activities to a set of dichotomous legitimate and illegitimate behaviors (Finas, 1980, p. 185; Hutton, 1988, p. 126). However, as constraining as it is, the process can be simultaneously productive because the enforcement of prohibitions necessarily goes hand in hand with resistances (Foucault, 1980a, p. 142; Hutton, 1988, pp. 126-127). The subject is constituted through power relations but she is never simply a by-product of the policing processes after all (Foucault, 1988b, p. 156). Rather, the subject is both an effect

of power and "the element of its articulation" (Foucault, 1980d, p. 98). This becomes all the more apparent when power is not reduced to a system of domination that a group "has" or exercises exclusively but is understood in its full complexity as a "multiplicity of force relations" that form their own ever changing system (Foucault, 1987, pp. 93, 92, 99). Instead of looking for a single place of power or resistance one should investigate the "plurality of resistances" that emerge in the context of power relations, and investigate the patterns and modifications of the power relations that permeate any discourse (Foucault, 1987, pp. 96, 99).

Through their particular engagement of the norms of Muslim femininity, Jordanian Muslim women work to reproduce and negotiate the power relations in which they take part. While these women may be in fact induced to embody a hegemonic matrix of power relations through certain policing structures, their particular reiteration of the norms in question makes them more than mere "by-products" of any disciplinary discourse. Following Foucault, I understand the ongoing negotiations of the "proper" embodiment of the project of Muslim femininity in the country to be potential sites of resistance. To appreciate the nuances of such negotiations of power however it is important to go beyond Foucault's sense of it. Negotiating power is a complex process that goes beyond the simple power/resistance dichotomy that Foucault seems to endorse after all (Noland, 2009, p. 3). The fashionably veiled women for instance try indeed to negotiate the norms of mainstream Islam but they tread both the lines of resistance and compliance in practice as chapters four, five, and six will illustrate.

In the context of theorizing policing and subjects' enmeshment in disciplinary discourses, Foucault invokes the Panopticon tower and unpacks its role as a disciplinary

technique. This symbol can be particularly illuminating in the context of understanding the embodiment of the new veiling project. Foucault reads the Panopticon tower as a symbol of a new concept of justice that sought to "immerse people in a field of total visibility" in order to stop them from wrongdoing (1980b, p. 153). It introduced "the formula of 'power through transparency', [and] subjection by 'illumination'" (Foucault, 1980b, p. 155). The project of the new veiling seems to share this stated goal of the Panopticon tower since it seems to police gender relations and to stop any sexual "wrongdoing" by immersing women in a "field of total visibility". What is particularly interesting in the case of veiling however is that this field of visibility is materialized through the very enforcement of a "guarded" or "constrained" "visibility" (if not invisibility). Women's bodies and their sexuality are made constantly visible and "police-able" precisely through their very veiling. Moreover, the Panopticon tower introduced a form of surveillance whose effectiveness depended on people interiorizing the inspecting gaze to the extent of becoming their own inspectors in a diffuse, yet inegalitarian, exercise of power (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 155-156). In the same sense, veiling also seems to induce women to embody the very machine that supervises them as they become their own overseers as well as the inspectors of other women's docility as will be illustrated when engaging the participants' narratives.

2.4 Reiterating the Norms of the Discourse: A Feminist Perspective on Femininity and Performativity

Butler's understanding of the concept of performativity provides grounds for examining another important aspect of the project of Muslim femininity. For Butler, regulatory norms are only materialized through their ritualized repetitive performativity (1993, p. x). Performativity is a reiterative citational process that entails more than carrying out a simple singular act (Butler, 1993, p. 2). It is an ongoing process that is never quite stable or quite complete (Butler, 1993, p. 2). And while this process is initiated by and enforced through the power of interpellating laws and discourses it is not entirely deterministic but is carried out to varying degrees of negotiations and dis/obediences (Butler, 1993, pp. 2, 7, 12, 231). Prohibitions and threats do shape the production of the subject but they cannot fully determine her in advance after all (Butler 95). Butler argues that it is important to examine the "slippages" that ensue between what interpellation intends and what it actually creates in practice because these are spaces that harbor varying forms of resistance and dis-identification with the regulatory norms (1993, p. 122).

By embodying varying shifting manifestations of the project of Muslim femininity, Jordanian Muslim women draw attention to the different ways of reiterating the norms of Muslim femininity in the country. As will be discussed in chapters four and five, their actual enactment of the norms illustrates a "slippage" between the norms of modest femininity as articulated by the Quran and mainstream Islam and as they are actually lived.

Butler's outlook also serves to highlight the simultaneous antagonism and mutual constitution of the different articulations of Muslim femininity in Jordan. As will be explained in chapter four, each of the manifestations of the project of Muslim femininity produces itself by reiterating and approximating its own ideal and also by repudiating its "other"; i.e. the forms of Muslim femininity that are different from it and that are constructed as "less viable" than it is. Butler illuminates this aspect by explaining that gender norms function by positing "intelligible" bodies along side a domain of "abject" bodies that are denied the possibility of cultural articulation (1993, pp. xi, 3, 8). While the unintelligible bodies are abjected, they are necessarily part of the intelligible ones that repudiate them, and form in practice the "constitutive outside" against which the former are measured (Butler, 1993, p. 8). In other words, we can only understand the bodies that "matter" by bringing to the fore the bodies that fail to materialize and that form the "outside" that is necessary for others to qualify as viable (Butler, 1993, p. 16).

This outlook illuminates the dynamics of the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan. As will be explained in chapter four, the different articulations of Muslim femininity seem to be structured hierarchically in the Jordanian imaginary so that some are valued more than others. While such different forms of Muslim femininity occupy different positions on the social and religious ranks in the country, they are mutually constitutive. Veiling becomes indeed a privileged articulation of Muslim femininity precisely by "othering" or at least questioning the viability of other forms of Muslim femininity, but in practice these forms continue to form the constitutive outside through which veiling is materialized and against which it is measured.

Butler's emphasis on the subversive potential that lies in collective dis-identification with the regulatory norms underscores a possible venue for disrupting the rigidity of the project of Muslim femininity as it is lived in Jordan. Fashionable veiling and Muslim non-veiling can be read as two potential forms of dis-identification with the norms of Muslim femininity as defined by mainstream Islam. Muslim non-veiled women clearly disrupt the principle of a Muslim femininity that is based on covering the hair and the entire body for instance, while the fashionably veiled ones try to disrupt the norm from within its very folds. The potential that each form of Muslim femininity holds is complex however. For instance, as will be further explained in the upcoming chapters, in the case of the fashionable veiling the participants seem to dis-identify with the hegemonic embodiment of Muslim femininity but not with the logic of veiling per se, and this in turn makes the change that they instate significant in terms of the resistance that it bespeaks but truncated at best in terms of its effects.

Another important point to keep in mind when assessing the subversive potential in question is that dis-identification may work to disrupt the parameters of un/intelligibility but it does not necessarily change the structure of the demands made by the regulatory law (Butler, 1993, pp. 105-106). For instance, refusing to "properly" reiterate the norms of Muslim femininity can allow a certain re-conceptualization of viable Muslim femininities but it does not stop the demanding patriarchal heterosexual regulations in practice. As will be further discussed in chapter seven, this aspect significantly limits the potential embedded in Jordanian Muslim women's performativity of the project, and indicates the need for different venues for change.

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Chapter one has worked to articulate the debates on the discourse of femininity, its embodiment, and performativity, and has used them as a ground for drawing the general parameters of my own theorization of Muslim femininity in Jordan. Chapters four, five, and six will open a space for engaging these aspects further and for grounding my theoretical stance in the participants' actual narratives. In what follows, chapter two will introduce the methodological aspect of the study.

Chapter 2

Methodology

1- Introduction

Informed by a feminist approach to qualitative research, the research design and methodological underpinnings of this study prioritize women's embodied knowledges and experiences and engage with the questions of reflexivity, positionality, and power. As a concept, research design refers to data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and measures of validity (Yin, 1994, pp. 18-20). Methodology in turn designates the theoretical outlook embedded in the researcher's choice of methods and in her analysis of the research material (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 19, 21).

To explicate these aspects, the chapter will unpack the epistemological underpinning of the research and its technical particularities. Subsequently, it will engage with the question of reflexivity and examine the implications of my positionality and biases as a researcher.

2- Stepping into the Field: Implementing a Feminist Epistemology and a Feminist Research Design

2.1 The Epistemological Grounds of the Research

The design of my doctoral research was firmly grounded in feminist standpoint epistemology; a framework that approaches knowledge production in terms of being a process that stems from, and that is shaped by, women's standpoints and experiences. Feminist standpoint epistemology encompasses a myriad of approaches that differ in their understanding of the centrality of women's experiences however. For instance, some

standpoint theorists claim an essentialized standpoint for women and/or assert their epistemic privilege (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, pp. 60-75). I take such a stance to be problematic and endorse a standpoint epistemology that values the knowledge produced from women's standpoints while underscoring its partiality, diversity, particularity, and intersectional grounds (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, pp. 60-75). Following Haraway, I hold that there is not one privileged knowledge, or one single standpoint that can ground our vision for that matter, because our "maps" require and involve too many dimensions in practice (1988, p. 196).

Theorists like Haraway aim to produce an epistemology of "engaged, accountable positioning" (1988, p. 196). They engage the politics of knowledge production and examine the ways in which power and political investment influence a woman's multiple standpoints, knowledges, and experiences (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 65). As Smith explains, a "knower" is never "abstract" after all but is always located in a set of power relationships that determine her "knowing" (1992, p. 91). Subsequently, to understand any standpoint and its politics it is important to start from "the actual site of the body" in which a woman is located and through which she gets involved in relationships, rather than from discourses (Smith, 1992, p. 91, 1997, pp. 394-395).

The design of my research derives from Smith and Haraway's understandings of standpoint and knowledge production. As will be explained in this chapter, I was primarily concerned with selecting research methods and measures that could bring to the fore the multilayered intersectional positionings of the research participants for instance. Moreover, I was also focused on using research practices that would underscore the embodied nature of the participants' knowledge production. In other words, I worked to

engage veiling in terms of being a project that is produced through dominant discourses yet lived and negotiated on the level of the body in different relational ways by subjects who have particular multidimensional standpoints.

A feminist approach to epistemology stands in sharp contrast to positivism which argues for a singular "objective" reality produced by a value-free researcher (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 14-15). From a feminist perspective, knowledge is necessarily multiple, contextualized, partial, constructed in nature, and produced by invested researchers (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 26; Reinharz, 1992, p. 46). Feminist "objectivity" means being accountable for (rather than denying) one's "limited location", "situated knowledge", and investment in the research (Haraway, 1988, p. 538). Any claims of transcendental "objectivity" only work to mask the power relations that frame the process of knowledge production in practice (Naples, 1997, p. 74).

My research design is heavily informed by this feminist understanding of the constructedness and multiplicity of knowledges. For instance, as will be explained in the following section, the data analysis techniques that I used prioritize checking the data for multiple possible readings. The process of coding for one opens a space for discerning multiple themes and meanings in the data, while systematically looking for "negative cases" (cases that complicate or contradict the researcher's hypothesis) (Kvale, 1996, p. 241) works to problematize any predetermined singular interpretations that the researcher may advance.

The terminology that I use in the research is similarly informed by a feminist outlook. I deploy the term "participants" to refer to the women who took part in the study for instance. Unlike terms such as "interviewees" or "respondents" that might be

objectifying in their implications, the term "participants" frames the research process as being primarily joint, and places the emphasis on women's active contribution to it (Reinharz, 1992, p. 22). More importantly, while underscoring agency, the term does not deny the power differences that necessarily permeate the research. By placing the emphasis on participation the term draws attention to the dynamics of the process whereby not all involved parties "participate" in the same way (Birch, 1998, p. 177).

Starting with the data collection methods, I will explicate in what follows the different technical aspects of the research process in order to unpack the entangled yet disproportionate roles that the participants and I played in its construction.

2.2 The Research Design

The Structure of the Interviews

My research used one-to-one, semi-structured, in-depth interviews as its main empirical method. As it generates "personalized accounts" about the participants' contexts, identities, and appearances (Holland, 2004, p. 184), this data collection method places the emphasis on the participants' partial localized knowledges and takes their embodied experiences to be the starting point for knowledge production. Accordingly, it helped me to articulate the epistemological underpinnings of my research and address its objective. Its flexible and localized nature allowed me to engage the participants' personal construction of their (non)veiling experiences, and made it possible to tease out their embodiment of the discursive and institutional underpinnings of the body projects that they performed.

Semi-structured in-depth interviewing prioritizes the participants' understanding of any particular topic over producing standardized interviews (Wengraf, 2001, p. 62). In this type of interviewing the researcher covers a broad set of topics instead of a set of particular questions, and approaches them differently according to each participant's interests and priorities (Bell, 1999, p. 138; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 125). The loose structure of the interviews does not jeopardize the systematic exploration of the topic at hand but works in fact to prioritize and encourage the participants' role in organizing its exploration (Laslett & Rapoport, 1975, p. 968). In this sense, this type of interviewing works to problematize the researcher's conventional unilateral control over the interviewing process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 126). After all, it opens a space for the participants to shape the direction of the interviews, challenge the researcher's definition of the situation, and refuse to answer some of her questions (Brenner, 1978). It is important to keep in mind that despite its advantage over other forms of interviewing, there is a limit to this method's ability to completely disrupt the power discrepancy between the researcher and the participants however. In practice, the researcher can still control the end form and content of the interviews by listening only selectively to the participants' cues for instance (Lee, 1993, p. 110). Moreover, she continues to hold the participants in a disproportionately vulnerable position by eliciting confidential and potentially damaging information from them (Brenner, 1987).

Thinking through the question of power and its nuances constituted an initial step in organizing the interviews that I conducted. My main concern was to structure the interviews around the participants' understanding of Muslim femininity. I was interested in evoking what they took to be the salient aspects of Muslim femininity in a way that

would still address my research questions. Accordingly, the interviews that I conducted had a very loose structure and varied in terms of the number, content, and order of their questions -as these depended in fact on the participants' preferences and the leads they gave me.

I had a list of four broad topics that I was interested in discussing with the participants, namely: 1) their conceptualizations and experiences of femininity and desire; 2) the discourses that influence women's (non)veiling in Jordan; 3) the possibilities that the new veiling trend opens up/forecloses; 4) (non)veiling as an experience fraught with social (non)privileges. The questions that I asked in order to explore these four areas varied across interviews as each of the participants felt the need to emphasize or to de-emphasize particular aspects of her experience with (non)veiling. Structuring the interviews around the points that the participants felt were most relevant to their experiences allowed me to get a broader understanding of the new veiling trend in Jordan and to engage some of its aspects that I had not initially considered. Moreover, this flexible approach allowed me to deal more effectively with the cases where the participants refused to answer particular questions. For instance, since desire and bodily experiences are culturally sensitive topics in Jordan, many participants felt uneasy about my questions with this regard and a couple even refused to answer some of them. In such cases, working from within a flexible approach allowed me to keep the interviews going as I was focused on hearing the participants' thoughts on (non)veiling and Muslim femininity and probing what they identified as problematic with this regard more than getting them to answer a particular set of questions.

As the interviews varied in content they subsequently varied in duration. The average length of the interviews was of two hours, but the duration of each varied according to its flow, the questions addressed, the willingness of the participants to elaborate, and of course, their time constraints. So while some interviews did not exceed one and a half hours, others took as long as three to four hours.

As the interviews were focused, long, and flexible enough to approach multiple aspects of the participants' experiences with (non)veiling, I conducted only one interview with each participant. As Lee points out, if handled carefully, a single interview can cover the points of interest of the research, especially if trust has already been established between the researcher and the participant through a trusted intermediary (1993, p. 113). In the few cases where I did in fact need more clarifications on particular points after the interviews had ended, I contacted the concerned participants by phone or by email to ask for elaborations.

My decision to limit the number of interviews conducted with each participant was also informed by some ethical concerns. In research on sensitive topics, limiting the number of interviews to one allows the participants to maintain a sense of anonymity and makes taking part in the research less demanding (Lee, 1993, p. 114). I was in fact especially concerned with the emotionally demanding nature of my questions. As the topics that the interviews covered concerned the participants' views on veiling, the emotions that (non)veiling evoked in them, as well as its effects on their experiences of their bodies and their relationships, our encounters often provoked complex emotions and elicited culturally problematic viewpoints. Accordingly, I was reluctant to ask the

participants to commit to additional interviews that would place them again in the vulnerable position of explicating such emotionally complex feelings and opinions.

The Sample

In total, I conducted fifteen semi-structured interviews with veiled and non-veiled Jordanian Muslim women aged twenty or more. Initially, I had intended to limit the research sample to women in their twenties. The rationale behind my limited focus was my initial assumption that Jordanian Muslim women witness most complications with regard to the questions of beauty, Islam, and femininity at this age. However, as my research progressed, I realized that the age category that I had chosen was actually limiting, rather than enriching, the insight that I was getting into the new veiling trend in Jordan. As I worked my way through the field, I understood that Jordanian Muslim women continue to experience heightened complications in terms of their body image and social realities throughout their thirties and beyond. Accordingly, I decided to broaden the scope of my sample in order to examine the different nuances and effects of the new veiling trend. This was all the more important as some women in their thirties and one forty year old woman showed interest in participating in the research. This was a valuable opportunity that I clearly could not decline.

Determining the size and nature of the research sample was informed by my concern to locate participants who could provide insights into the different forms and experiences of Muslim femininity in Jordan, and who can shed light on its significance as a method for establishing change in society. While my research focuses on one particular articulation of Muslim femininity; namely the new veiling in its fashionable renditions, the sample is not restricted to veiled women. In order to understand the different aspects

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of the increasingly popular veiling trend and how it can or cannot be a method for change, I decided to study it in the context of the wider project of Muslim femininity as it is played out in Jordan. Accordingly, I designed my research sample so that it encompassed varying Muslim body projects; namely, Muslim non-veiling, conventional veiling, and the more fashionable forms of veiling. However, it is important to point out that while my research sample includes participants who wear different types of veiling, my work does not aim at providing a meta-narrative or a comprehensive overview of all the veiling styles present in Jordan. Rather, it places the emphasis on the veiling styles that are currently gaining popularity there. For instance, while face-covering is practiced in some of the countries where the new veiling trend is flourishing, it is not very common in Jordan and did not fall subsequently within the scope of the body projects that I examined.

The size of my research sample was directly informed by the structural constraints surrounding my research and by its epistemological underpinnings. Given the cultural sensitivity of the topic, locating fifteen women who were willing to openly discuss their opinions with regards to (non)veiling and to share the feelings they experienced by embodying it was a challenging task. While seemingly small, the sample allowed me to meet the methodological and epistemological goals of my research. My work is anchored in a feminist qualitative approach to research after all, and my goal is to understand the particularity of each explored experience rather than to make claims of "representativeness". Qualitative research opts in fact for small size samples precisely because it aims at exploring the social construction of a reality rather than counting its frequency (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 70). What I hope to accomplish by analyzing

the participants' experiences is to provide a focused insight into the particularity and diversity of performing the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan and to engage its implications for feminist research on veiling.

In sartorial terms, the fifteen women who took part in the research were distributed along the lines of veiling and non-veiling. More precisely, the sample included five women wearing the more conventional forms of veiling that comprise the *jilbab* or the *abaya* as will be explained momentarily, five veiled women wearing more fashionable renditions of the veil comprising western style clothes, and five non-veiled Muslim women whose dress code varied in terms of how "non/revealing" it was.

The conventionally veiled participants all donned the *jilbab* (a long gown worn over everyday clothes and taken to bespeak a rather conservative approach to religion) along with plain or colorful headscarves simply wrapped over their hair. Their *jilbabs* were different however in terms of their styles and connotations. Some of the participants wore fashionable close-fitting *jilbabs* that emphasized their figures and that were loosely fastened at the front in a way that revealed parts of the pants they wore underneath them. Others wore more conservative yet similarly trendy *jilbabs*; extremely loose with no openings at the front at all. And yet others wore a variant of the *jilbab* called the *abaya* which is a loose-fitting decorated gown that is usually black and that is very common in the gulf countries and only recently becoming popular in Jordan.

The fashionably veiled participants similarly sported different styles of veiling that varied in terms of de/emphasizing their figures. For instance, some of the participants wore fashionable yet loose-fitting pants and shirts along with fashionable headscarves; i.e. headscarves whose patterns, texture, and wrapping styles followed the trends

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promoted by the veil market in the country. Others wore close-fitting shirts and tight pants that accentuated their bodies along with similar fashionable headscarves. Some within this latter group had very elaborate headscarf wrapping styles that depended on using multiple colorful layers of scarves, tying them into big mock flowers or the like, and adorning them with big flashing accessories and so on.

The attires of the non-veiled participants also varied. Some wore loose-fitting clothes that covered all of their bodies except for their hair, while others wore loose-fitting clothes that revealed some parts of their bodies like their arms or parts of their legs for instance, and some wore even more revealing clothes that exposed and placed extra emphasis on their figures.

In terms of their social positioning, the participants were distributed along the lines of class, education, and religiosity, albeit disproportionately. For instance, ten out of the fifteen participants came from the middle class. However, the sample encompassed some veiled and non-veiled participants from working class backgrounds too, and one veiled participant from the upper class. The limited number of non-middle class participants will be further examined in the latter part of this section along with the question of access. Despite their different class backgrounds, all the participants either held an (under)graduate university degree or were in the process of getting one at the time of the interviews. While this interplay of class and educational backgrounds may be taken to expose a pitfall in the structure of the research sample, it actually bespeaks the particular composition and mindset of the Jordanian society. Post-secondary education is increasingly "socially mandated" in Jordan; not only is it considered to be a tool for social and economic mobility, it is also gaining a growing cultural value. In this context,

most families from different classes go to extreme lengths to ensure that their offspring get a post-secondary degree of some sort. Clearly, this does not speak to the realities of all Jordanian women, least of all those from poorer classes where the bias towards educating male offspring may be still rampant. However, it serves to put the educational level of the research participants in context especially that my research can hardly make any claims with regard to women from poorer classes in the first place since my privileged positioning severely limited my access to them.

Four of the participants were full time undergraduate students at the time of the interviews, and two were graduate students who worked in addition to pursuing their degrees. The other participants worked full time, with only one being a full-time stay-at-home-mom. In fact, only one of the participants was married at the time of the interviews, one was divorced, two were in relationships, while the rest of them were single.

In terms of their areas of specialization, the participants came from different academic disciplines, namely, Languages, Literature, IT, Engineering, American Studies, International Relations, Business, Marketing, and Research and Development. For those of them who worked at the time, some were elementary school teachers, others worked in IT, business, and marketing companies, and some held research positions in governmental and non-governmental institutions.

The participants also varied in terms of their levels of religiosity. Six of the veiled participants and one of the non-veiled participants came from very strict practicing families that imposed religious beliefs on them, while the rest came from practicing yet significantly more moderate backgrounds. The participants' personal religious beliefs and the extent to which they were practicing varied as well -with those coming from the most

religious families holding the more strict beliefs. However, veiling per se did not always express religiosity. In fact, some of the veiled participants explained that they did not practice basic Islamic rituals such as praying, while some of the non-veiled ones argued they did. This in turn complicates the conventional understanding of religiosity whereby it is assumed to correspond directly with a religious look.

All the participants were residents of Amman, the capital of Jordan, at the time of the interviews. Only one came from another part of the country and had settled in Amman a few years ago in order to study and work. The others had lived in Amman all their lives. Within the city, the participants were distributed along the lines of Eastern and Western Amman. The city is in fact roughly divided into a privileged Western part and an under-privileged Eastern one; a division which distributes Jordanians across class lines. However, neither part of the city is of course a homogeneous entity but each has in fact its own internal privilege hierarchies.

In addition to highlighting class privileges, the geographical location of the participants underscores the different cultural baggages that they have. For instance, the participants often expressed different understandings of the interplay of Muslim femininity, attire, and respectability according to where they came from. Their location exposed a spatialized Jordanianness in this sense whereby the geographic location one inhabited produced different conceptualizations of what constituted culturally (in)appropriate feminine bodies.

I located the participants through snowball or chain sampling. This method is a purposive sampling technique that depends on networking; the researcher starts from a set of contacts who introduce her to some participants who then put her in touch with

others and so on (Lee, 1993, p. 65; Patton, 1990, pp. 168-169). Given the taboos that my research tackled, snowballing proved to be the most-suited sampling method because it allowed me to locate participants through trusted intermediaries and facilitated in this sense both my "physical" and "social" access (Cassell, 1988). Ensuring physical access to the participants is in fact only the first step in any fieldwork experience. Obtaining social access is much more difficult and depends on establishing interpersonal trust, and this is usually achieved through the help of an intermediary person whom the participants already know (Lee, 1993, p. 123; Reinharz, 1997, p. 8). In my fieldwork experience, the participants were introduced to me by friends, relatives, and former work colleagues. Being always associated with such intermediary trusted persons mitigated most participants' skepticism of me. However, one problem that arises through snowball sampling is that the diversity obtained remains limited despite the wide range of the researcher's connections (Holland, 2004, p. 182). For one thing, the "referral chain" through which snowballing functions is often homogeneous in terms of its characteristics (Lee, 1993, p. 67). Moreover, the social networks to which the researcher belongs and which she uses to locate participants are necessarily constrained by her own education, interests, and class affiliation. For instance, being born and raised in an upper-middle class family in Amman and having been educated in and employed by institutions affiliated with this class certainly determine my social networks and limited the range of participants that I was able to locate in practice. Moreover, even in the cases where the participants introduced me to women to whom my own networks would not have given me access, my social positioning and privileges constrained my social access to them.

For instance, women from the working class were often skeptical of me and of my research even when I was introduced to them by a trusted intermediary person. This skepticism was even more pronounced during my interaction with women from the poorer classes who refused in fact to take part in the research altogether. My privileged positionality as a single woman living on my own in a western country where I pursue a PhD "for a living", along with the fact that I am both non-veiled and asking taboo questions about veiling, severely limited these women's willingness to talk to me. In fact, in the one case where a woman from a poorer class gave me her "formal consent" to take part in the research, she was very hesitant to talk to me during the interview and eventually discontinued it.

However, my research does not claim to be representative of all Jordanian women or of all stances on (non)veiling in the first place. Moreover, I worked on addressing the structural limitations of the research sample by focusing on enhancing its diversity where possible. For instance, while I could not indeed get access to women from poorer classes, I tried to explore the points of view of women from different positions within the classes to which I had access.

In addition to the question of class, the type of veiling that women wore played into their willingness to take part in the research. For instance, most of the women who refused to be interviewed (from different classes) were actually fashionably veiled women. This aspect of my fieldwork experience became easier to understand as I worked my way through the data analysis stage. For instance, the thoughts that many (non)veiled participants disclosed with regard to the fashionable veiling illustrate its being one articulation of femininity that is already under a lot of scrutiny. It could be that concerns

over being subject to further scrutiny may have partially stood behind some fashionably veiled women's unwillingness to be interviewed.

Before stepping into the field, I had conducted two pilot interviews with a veiled and a non-veiled woman in order to test the effectiveness of my questions and redefine my research accordingly (Foddy, 1993, p. 185; Weiss, 1994; Yin, 1994, p. 74). This initial testing helped me re-word and tone down the questions that the pilot participants indicated as particularly problematic.

Representation and Interpretation

I followed Silverman's notation system to transcribe the interviews and record linguistic and paralinguistic details to the extent possible (1993, p. 118). Paralinguistic notations record the particularities' of a word's tone and pronunciation and nonverbal communication cues such as laughter (Wengraf, 2001, p. 47). Transcripts should produce all such details in addition to silences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 345; Wengraf, 2001, p. 213) and any emotions that the participants cannot express in words (James, 1986) in order to underscore the multiple levels of meaning that construct the interview.

Despite such attention to details, a transcript remains a transformation of the participants' words however (Birch, 1998, pp. 178-179). For one thing, it is only a "textual representation" of the interview which leaves out aspects such as the way the interview felt, the relationship that developed between the researcher and the participant, and so on (Birch, 1998, pp. 178-179). Moreover, the process of transcribing entails distorting the flow of the participants' speech as their words are rearranged into a set of paragraphs that can fit into a text format (Mishler, 1986, p. 48). This textual mediation is further complicated by the fact that what the researcher transcribes is actually her story of

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the participants' accounts (Birch, 1998, p. 182). As a mere representation of the interview (Mishler, 1986, p. 48), the transcript is necessarily mediated by the researcher's impressions on and understanding of the participants' accounts. The researcher is never merely a transparent medium through which words pass after all (Spivak, 1988, p. 257). Her subjectivity and baggage necessarily mediate the way she listens to the participants' cues during the transcription and analysis. As a matter of fact, while the researcher starts indeed from the transcript, she does not use the interview as a source that provides direct information about the participants' realities in practice (Wengraf, 2001, p. 1). Rather, the interview material is often processed, intentionally or unintentionally, through "assertions about extra-interview realities" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 1). Misinformation, contextual knowledges, and prior experiences necessarily influence the data in this sense (Wengraf, 2001, pp. 10-11).

I tried to remain faithful to the participants' accounts to the best of my ability. After examining my baggage, I proceeded to record the paralinguistic aspects of the interviews alongside the participants' actual words, which I transcribed using the same register that they used: Jordanian colloquial Arabic. Colloquial Arabic is primarily an oral form of the language. It encompasses different dialects that vary within and across Arab countries and it is not "officially" recognized as a valid written form of Arabic. Formal or classic Arabic is the standard viable written form of the language, but is hardly ever used in oral everyday communications. Such an interplay, or "diglossia" to use Ferguson's term, whereby there is a dialect used for daily conversation and a more codified grammatically "correct" form of the language used for writing, is in fact common to many societies (1972, p. 345). While my decision to transcribe the colloquial

Jordanian Arabic that the participants used may have breached the code of the written and oral registers of Arabic, it was necessary for the structure of my research. It allowed me to avoid adding another level of mediation to the participants' accounts, and made my analysis closely informed by the participants' choice of words -which reflect in fact their social and educational backgrounds.

Paying attention to the linguistic particularities also made me aware of the moments where the participants tried to distance themselves from some of the topics we discussed. In approaching desire for example the participants hardly uttered the Arabic word and almost always used its English equivalent. Choosing to invoke this concept in a different language is possibly a technique that the participants used in order to distance themselves from the word and its taboo-laden ramifications. As Bassiouney argues, bilingual people often take recourse in the "other" language to articulate what they cannot express in their own (2009, p. 29).

Data Analysis

In terms of the technicalities of data analysis, the process as I implemented it entailed breaking the data apart in order to understand the codes and themes that construct it, then putting it back together by relating the emerging concepts to each other in order to understand the overarching picture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 198). I started by unpacking the data through an "open coding" process (Charmaz 2004, p. 507; Wengraf, 2001, p. 275) which entailed checking the data bits for similarities and differences, discerning patterns, developing concepts and themes, and arranging the data into categories (Bell, 1999, p. 173; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 349). I worked on refining the initial codes by developing sub-codes that I related back eventually to the

overarching themes that had emerged in order to develop a nuanced theoretical view (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 349, 325).

The analysis process does not simply "reveal" latent meanings embedded in the data. Since meanings are multiple and constructed, it is the researcher who actually makes the data speak. To ensure the validity of any claim that she makes in this context, the researcher should constantly check the viability of her interpretation of any data bit by positing it against other possible counter interpretations (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, pp. 160-161; Wengraf, 2001, p. 227). This is done by systematically looking for "negative cases"; that is, for instances in the data that do not match a certain claim or a pattern for which the researcher argues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 84; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 63; Kvale, 1996, p. 241). Additionally, the validity of interpretations can be enhanced through the "triangulation" of the data collection methods (Yin, 1994, p. 33) and the theoretical frameworks used (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 65-66) in order to minimize bias to any one source of information (Yin, 1994, pp. 90, 92).

I was careful to implement such measures in order to enhance the validity of my analysis. For example, in addition to checking potential patterns that emerged from the data against negative cases, my analysis also depended on using more than one source of information both on the levels of theory and data collection. For instance, while the sensitive nature of the information that my research participants disclosed made complementing interviews by another data collection method like focus groups impractical, the empirical part of my research was informed by rich nuanced resources. For one thing, the interviews were supplemented by an ongoing personal communication with most of the participants, and this provided invaluable checks on emerging

interpretations. For another, the analytical part of the research depended on a thorough examination of relevant literature, which served to place the interviews' material in context. For instance, I used both scholarly and non-scholarly material to gather sufficient information on my research topic. In addition to books, journal articles, and studies, I consulted popular pamphlets and booklets on veiling, as well as weblogs, youtube videos, and facebook groups that the participants mentioned or recommended. Moreover, I relied on direct observation in the field. Informal gatherings also proved to be invaluable to start discussions with members of the community about their concerns with regard to my research and to get insights into their experiences away from the context of the interviews.

I also resorted to theoretical triangulation as another validity measure. As was explained in chapter one, I use Foucault's theoretical framework for instance to illuminate the construction of the self through power discourses and self-induced techniques, and I use Butler's to engage the subversive potential of veiling and its constitution through the repudiation of other forms of Muslim femininity. In other words, I deploy complementing theoretical views on power and embodiment in order to avoid producing a uni-dimensional analysis of non/veiling.

3- Engaging in Reflexivity and Managing the Fieldwork Experience: Working through a Multilayered Self and a Multifaceted Terrain

As a feminist research measure, reflexivity underscores the necessary parallels between feminist methodology and feminist epistemology. As explained earlier, a feminist approach to epistemology takes the knowledge obtained and produced in the

field to be necessarily shaped by the researcher's and the participants' multilayered identities and complex relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 187; Reinharz, 1997, p. 4). Consequently, it advocates practicing "strong objectivity"; i.e. reflecting upon and being accountable for the implications of one's identities, emotions, politics, and standpoints as a researcher (Harding, 1993, pp. 49-82). The conceptual, emotional, and political baggage that the researcher brings into the research constitutes her lens onto the realities that she examines after all (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 148). Neither the researcher nor the participant can leave their past, blind-spots, or positions behind when they come to the interview (Wengraf, 2001, pp. 4-5). Rather, each is a "situated actor" who speaks from a particular location and who should unpack the identities that she brings into the field (Hertz, 1997, p. viii; Reinharz, 1997, p. 3).

Practicing reflexivity also opens a space for problematizing the limitations of the research process. For instance, by unpacking the role that she plays, the researcher underscores the power discrepancy between her and the participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 27; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 118) as well as the limitations of her critical consciousness (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002, p. 119).

My fieldwork experience was necessarily shaped by each layer of my identity as a Jordanian, Muslim, unveiled woman, who is also a middle-class feminist, positioned in the "west" and affiliated with the academia. These multiple, multilayered, and intersecting positionings produce my particular cultural knowledge and my understanding of Islam. They also determine my investment in the research, its relationship, and the limits of my reflexivity.

Growing up in a middle class Muslim family whose members embraced ambivalent stances towards veiling provided me early on with a space to dismantle the practice. For one thing, my positioning allowed me to profit from an intellectual space where deconstructing religious practices was an acquiesced activity exempt from scrutiny and guilt. This was a possibility that was foreclosed to many of my peers given the structure of the Jordanian society whereby critical analysis of religious practices is condemned. Moreover, as my family harbored approving and disapproving stances on veiling, my positioning allowed me to be exposed to different understandings of the practice without being entirely limited by any.

However, while my class positioning and the structure of my family sheltered me and informed my intellectual engagement of the practice, they clearly did not shield or remove me from the wider society and its understanding of "modest" femininity. The social pressure to conform to the rigid cultural and religious conceptualization of "modesty" also shaped my approach to veiling in this sense. My Islam and my Jordanianness were produced in fact through the interplay of the intellectual privileges that my family space provided and the sense of alienation that I endured as I grew to scrutinize prevalent "truths" and hegemonic practices. My feminism further complicated the "authenticity" of my Islam and Jordanianness as it was often taken to bespeak a presumably "westernized" ideology, or at best, a culturally problematic one.

Thinking through the baggage that I bring into the research illustrates how the religious and feminist aspects of my identity enhance, as much as they limit, my understanding of veiling. For instance, the religious backdrop of my socialization provides the necessary grounds for understanding the parameters of the new veiling trend

in Jordan. However, it simultaneously exposes my personal investment in problematizing the sartorial and conceptual normalization and moralization of modesty in the country. This was clear in some of the interview questions I asked and that exposed my attempts to place my own non-conformity to veiling in context and to explore similar non-conforming articulations of Muslim femininity for instance. Moreover, my research questions expose my own wish to claim a space for Muslim women to shape, rather than consume, Islam.

My feminist outlook further complicates my reading of veiling. On the one hand, working from within a feminist framework induces me to acknowledge the agency of veiled women who may endorse the practice as a means of claiming control over their bodies and redefining femininity. However, it simultaneously informs my skepticism of such arguments. For one thing, placing the emphasis on veiled women's "choice" can be problematic because it often abstracts their agency from the relational and institutional underpinnings that necessarily constrain it. Moreover, veiling as a project can hardly claim to redefine femininity because it works to re-instate the very objectification and sexualization of women's bodies that it seeks to disrupt by continuing to define women primarily through their bodies. The practice serves ultimately to construct the female body through the male gaze and through a masculine-based conceptualization of space.

While this feminist outlook necessarily mediates my interpretation of the participants' viewpoints, the feminist underpinnings of my research simultaneously provide a basis for effectively working through my biases. For one thing, reflecting upon my personal baggage and problematizing its implications increased my scrutiny of my reading of the interviews and pushed me to strictly implement validity measures. For

another, my research is anchored in a feminist epistemological framework that emphasizes the multiplicity of realities, and subsequently, the multiplicity of feminisms. In this sense, the epistemological grounds of my research prompted me to "listen" closely to the participants' construction of their realities instead of reifying my own. More importantly, this epistemological framework sensitized me to the participants' varying conceptualizations of feminism and to the need to respect their non-feminist stances as well.

The mutually constitutive feminist, religious, and cultural aspects of my identity drew the parameters of my fluid status as an "insider-outsider" within the research setting. More often than not, my intersectional identity worked to make me an "outsider" in the eyes of the participants, or served at best to problematize my credentials as an "authentic" Jordanian and Muslim. For instance, given my class, feminism, and residency in Canada, one working class participant was particularly suspicious of my cultural competence. She underscored her sense of my "outsiderness" by offering to translate her slang into my presumably sanitized vocabulary. Other participants seemed to take these aspects of my identity to bespeak limited integrity and expressed concerns that I would use their narratives to reinforce western feminist biases against Islam. In this sense, they identified me through what they perceived to be an alienating "western" feminism, and relegated me consequently to the side of the Islamophobic conspiring "other".

My relegation to the status of an outsider did constrain my relationship with some of the participants and necessarily mediated my reading of their points of view. However, I do not take its effects on the research to be solely limiting. Being an outsider is a fluid, multifaceted positioning after all, and through some of its layers it can enrich, rather than

restrict, the research. For instance, treading the lines of outsiderness as an "outsider within" whose membership in the group is questioned yet not completely dis-validated opens a space for examining social paradigms that are otherwise little salient (Collins, 1986). The researcher is often blinded by the familiarity of her culture when studying home settings after all (Bolak, 1997, p. 97). In this context, juggling a dual "insider-outsider" position allows her enough space to distance herself from hegemonic cultural views and to rethink the familiar (Reinharz, 1994).

Moreover, the relative outsiderness of the researcher can also provide her with a certain affinity with those who feel alienated within the community (Naples, 1997, p. 71). For instance, my outsiderness enhanced the non-veiled participants' trust of me and relegated me to the side of an "insider" in their eyes so that they often felt comfortable sharing their own "non-conforming" views on veiling with me. Views that they otherwise rarely voiced out loud.

In this sense, both insiderness and outsiderness are fluid positions that the researcher can hold simultaneously at any one moment in the research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 140) and yet never quite fully have for that matter (Naples, 1997, p. 71). The researcher "constantly drifts in and out" of these statuses (Trinh, 1998, p. 418) as the differences between her and the participants make her neither "a proper self [n]or a proper outsider" (Ghorashi, 2003, p. 40). In fact, the fluidity of one's insiderness and outsiderness brings to the fore the limits of any common grounds structuring the research. Since intersectionality necessarily makes each person's experience of "the inside" different, it is difficult to assume any one shared conceptualization of what constitutes "the inside" or "the outside" as such. Jordanian culture and Islam may constitute a ground

that I share with the participants, but they are far from being homogeneous entities. The participants and I constitute and experience this inside space that we share very differently. However, while limited, these grounds remain important. If I had not shared general cultural and religious affinities with the participants, obtaining physical and social access in the field would have been more difficult. This was especially the case when the participants invoked issues that required a particular cultural and religious background to make sense. Had I lacked this background, they would have avoided discussing certain particularities that needed complex explanations (Farahani, 2007, pp. 49, 48).

In addition to problematizing the effects of her identities, the researcher should reflect upon the implications of her "non identities" (Reinharz, 1997, p. 5). I was aware in fact that the absence of certain characteristics from my identity provided me with better access to certain settings but significantly complicated it in others. When approaching non-veiled participants my non-veiling was an asset for example and facilitated my social access. However, the absence of this very trait made veiled women skeptical of me. In both cases, my non-veiling was taken to indicate that conventional religiosity was one of my "non identities". This subsequently constituted me as an insider for some and an outsider for others.

Despite being an asset, I remain ambivalent about the role that my non identity played in my encounter with non-veiled participants, mainly because of the ethical stakes it engendered. In many cases, the self-disclosure of such participants was fueled by their presumptions about our shared understanding of Islam. This in turn increased my concern over the prospect of deceiving and "using" them. While I often tried to disrupt their

presumptions, I was aware that my self-disclosures remained subtle in comparison to theirs.

Another ethical concern that shaped my fieldwork experience was managing the intrusive nature of my research. I was often concerned that my questions were pushing the participants to invoke and re-live emotionally complex experiences with regard to their (non)veiling, femininity, beauty, and relationships. I take triggering such emotions and subsequently using the participants' vulnerabilities for research purposes to be, at best, ethically problematic. This concern is in fact paramount in any research that tackles sensitive topics laden with taboos and emotions (Farberow, 1963). Working through this kind of research is often a stressful experience for the researcher as much as it is for the participant (Brannen, 1988, p. 553) primarily because she has to struggle with the ethical dilemma of being the provocateur and witness of intense emotions (Reinharz, 1992, p. 36) and eliciting potentially "stigmatizing" disclosures (Lee, 1993, p. 4). Often times, the anxiety of the researcher in such cases is rationalized by placing the emphasis on the participants' "consent" to take part in the research (Holland, 2004, p. 192). However, the limits of the informed consent in question only worked to further complicate my concerns over having "consumed" the participants' emotions. For one thing, the participants only consent to the general terms of the interview in practice -not to its actual proceedings nor to the emotions that it may invoke since these are necessarily only apparent after the interview is well under its way. Moreover, obtaining the formal consent of the participants should not mask the question of power discrepancy since they exercise little power beyond giving or withholding it in practice.

In order to mitigate these ethically problematic aspects of the process to the extent possible I approached the participants' consent in terms of being a constrained ongoing process. During the interviews, I often reminded the participants that their initial consent to take part in the interviews did not imply their obligation to answer all questions nor to continue the interviews for that matter. I also stressed that they had the right to ask for the transcripts of their interviews to be completely destroyed even days after our encounters. While I was aware that this certainly did not ease the emotional stress that many participants may have endured during the interviews, I thought that it worked at least to mitigate the anxiety that they might have felt over disclosing such emotional experiences and over the prospect of having them published.

Another measure that I used in order to manage the emotionally intrusive nature of the research was to prioritize the participants' feelings over getting my questions answered. For instance, I often refrained from further probing particular topics that seemed to offend or distress the participants, such as the interplay of veiling and articulating desires for instance. Given the taboos surrounding desire and its conflation with dis-respectability in Jordanian culture, some participants were offended by the mere fact of being asked such questions. For other participants, discussing the impact of (un)veiling on other people's perception of their femininity seemed to invoke complex distressing emotions. In such cases, I prioritized my ethical commitment to the well being of the participants over further exploring my questions.

The risks of social stigma that my research generated for some of the participants further complicated its enactment. In handling these risks, I was very careful with regards to using measures that ensured the security of the data and the anonymity of the

participants. This included keeping the data in a safe place where no one except me had access to it and destroying all the interviews' recordings after the research process was over. Moreover, I used pseudonyms only to refer to the participants in all written records of the research to ensure their anonymity.

The relationships that developed between the participants and I were often complex as they were over-determined by our power discrepancy. By being the witness of intimate disclosures, having control over potentially damaging material, and over the interpretation of the data, I was aware of often exercising disproportionate power over the research process. As mentioned earlier, one approach that I used in order to address this discrepancy was to deploy methods that enhanced the participants' roles within the research. While this clearly did not neutralize the power differences between us, it did bring to the fore the fluid nature of the power dynamics that shape the interviews as both the participants and I oscillated between experiencing moments of relative "powerfulness" and "powerlessness". For instance, sometimes the researcher may have to listen to "offensive" disclosures that she may otherwise not tolerate and this makes her feel relatively "powerless" (Lee, 1993, p. 110; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 75). In discussing (non)veiling and femininity with some of the participants for example I often had to listen to what I consider to be misogynist offensive remarks about the unruly "nature" of women's sexuality and men's "right" to control it. However, as I felt the need to give the participants a space to disclose their full opinions on such topics, I had to refrain from challenging their logic.

The sense of "powerlessness" that the researcher experiences in such cases can be further intensified by her feelings of exposure and vulnerability as she discloses her own

experiences to the participants (Reinharz, 1992, p. 34). As a matter of fact, in the cases where I did not readily disclose my opinions on veiling to the participants, they almost always explicitly asked me about my stance. At such points during the interviews the power dynamics and roles shifted as I was pressured to disclose views and emotions that I was uneasy about discussing. This aspect of my relationship with the participants was both illuminating and challenging. My sense of vulnerability and "powerlessness" in such cases intensified my awareness of the invasive nature of the interviewing process. As I struggled to formulate honest answers that would ensure some rapport between me and the participants and that would however not offend them or discredit me as a "modest" and "authentic" Muslim, I became especially aware of the complex feelings that my own questions probably engendered for them. My own concern over being scrutinized gave me a better insight into the reasons that may have pushed certain participants to maneuver or reject some of my questions. In this sense, my relative "powerlessness" in such cases made me handle the participants' (lack of) answers in a more productive way.

Reciprocity in the context of interviews is important for fostering rapport and trust between the researcher and the participants (Johnson, 1975; Lee, 1993, p. 138; Oakley, 1985, p. 49; Reinharz, 1992, p. 34). However, independently from other measures, it can disrupt the hierarchical dynamics of the research relationships only to a limited extent (Oakley, 1981, pp. 36-37; Reinharz, 1992, p. 34). I often relied accordingly on pre and post-interview encounters to enhance rapport and trust with the participants. While not all participants were willing to or interested in pursuing our relationship beyond the field, many fostered these relationships through subsequent personal communication. This in

turn provided an invaluable space to continue to get feedback and problematize my "authority" over their accounts.

In addition to the question of power, my relationship with the participants was also shaped by our differences. For instance, I had to tone down my appearance during my encounters with the veiled participants so that they would not find it "offensive". Clearly, I never donned the veil in such cases because I never intended to deceive the participants or neutralize the sartorial and ideological differences between us. However, by dressing "modestly" yet not veiling, I tried to put them at ease by respecting their sense of "propriety" all while stressing our differences.

The methodological and epistemological grounds discussed in this chapter shed light on the structure of my research and my fieldwork experience. The chapter engaged the technical aspect of the methods of the study; the significance of non/veiling itself as a method that the participants use for constructing their modes of being and for making claims in society will be examined through their narratives in chapters four, five, and six, and will be also closely assessed in the conclusions' chapter. In what follows, chapter three will engage the feminist literature on veiling and will provide a preliminary ground for reading the research questions through it.

Chapter 3

Veiling, Islam, and Femininity: Feminist Readings

1- Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on veiling and as such it complements the theoretical framework established in chapter one. Chapter one engaged the general theoretical debates on femininity and embodiment and used them as a ground for reading the practice of veiling. Chapter three places the emphasis on the current debates on veiling and their implications for my research. Moreover, by engaging with the feminist analyses of the history and the various aspects of the practice, the chapter provides a general context for understanding the participants' outlooks that will be discussed in the following three chapters.

Much of the existing literature on the subject of veiling seems to focus on the religious and agentic aspects of the practice, but not on its particularity as an experience of femininity. Even the more recent studies that tackle the question of veiling and fashionability do not seem to engage with the implications of the growing fashion industry for women's bodily experiences of the veil –a question that I work to answer through this chapter and the following one.

2- Veiling as an Islamic Practice: The Quran and The Hadith as Contested Grounds

The shifting historical and social grounds that frame the embodiment of the practice of veiling are often left out when engaging its religious dimension (Gabriel & Hannan, 2011, p. 2). The hegemonic religious discourses often fail to understand the

social aspect of Islam (Abu-Zayd, 2007a, p. 123) and take the contextualization of its inductions to be a violation of the religion's sanctity. Observing the sanctity of the divine word is not necessarily antithetical to its historicization however. The Quranic principles do not exist independent from material conditions after all, nor do they function separately from the changing mindsets of those who interpret and live them.

In order to understand the rigidity that seems to surround the practice of veiling today, it is important to read it in the context of the history of its theorization. With the advent of the Abbasid period (8th century CE), a body of exegesis constructed by mainstream Muslim scholars of the time had been canonized and reified as exclusively viable and immutable (MacDonald, 1903, pp. 91-116). A set of equally transhistorical and categorical rules regulating Muslim women's "proper" dress and behavior was also established in the process (Stowasser, 1997, p. 95). Different existing constructions of Muslim femininity were dis-validated accordingly, and the possibility of imagining new ones was foreclosed in practice since the Quran's very nature as a living document was revoked.

The Quran itself does not seem to be as rigid as the religious discourses however. The contingent character of the verses that inform the mainstream theorization of veiling highlights the space that the Quran opens up for canvassing potential "alternative" articulations of Muslim femininity. The possibility of locating such a space becomes all the more plausible if we consider how "underdeveloped" the themes concerning women's dress and their bodily disposition are in the scripture. For instance, only six out of over six thousand verses address this question (Hasan, 2011, p. 65). Not only does this leave a considerable space for subversive theorizations of "proper" Muslim dress, it also

indicates that this area does not seem to be one of the primary tenets of the Muslimhood that the Quran establishes with more rigorous detail.

The limited theorization of dress in the Quran may express the text's intent to instate a Muslimhood that can integrate its worldview into any bodily disposition. For example, in the few instances where the Quran does address the issue it does not link Muslimhood to veiling or to any one uniform dress. Rather, it invokes certain garments in the context of promoting modesty and privacy as coveted Islamic values. Even the items of clothing that the Quran refers to in this context do not include the *hijab* per se -or the veil as I refer to it in this study. The *hijab*, in the sense and form that it takes today, seems to be primarily projected on the religious text. The Quran never invokes the concept of *hijab* in the sense of a headscarf, nor does it enjoin covering the hair in particular as part of Muslim women's recommended bodily disposition for that matter (Hasan, 2011, p. 65). The word *hijab* appears only seven times in the Quran and is always used to connote a (meta)physical barrier that is neither sartorial nor exclusively feminized (Mernissi, 1991, pp. 96-97; Stowasser, 1997, p. 88). Moreover, the items of clothing that the Quran does mention are the *khimar* and the *jilbab*; both of which are forms of outer garments invoked in the context of covering the body (Hasan, 2011, p. 65).

There are two sets of verses that mainstream religious discourses use in order to argue for a Quranic basis for veiling; namely, verses 24.30-31 and 33.53, 59 (Barlas, 2002). In practice, many of the words used in these verses are open to different linguistic interpretations –and all the more so when translation is involved. Moreover, discerning any clear sartorial inductions from these verses is further complicated by the interpreters' baggages. These aspects emphasize the necessary contingency and multiplicity of any

constructions of "proper" dress that can ensue from the Quran. However, mainstream Islam often ignores the necessary malleability and mediation of processes of interpretation and reifies rigid molds for Muslim women's dress code.

One example of the Quran's malleable approach can be found in verse 24.31. The verse deploys the elastic term *zeena* in order to denounce exhibitionism and promote modesty as a coveted ideal. Often translated as beautification and adornments, the term is open to multiple interpretations even in Arabic as explained in chapter one[3]. The verse seems to use it in the context of recommending a general modest code of ethics for both sexes. Verses 24.30-31 do not single out women in fact, but discuss the question of conduct for both men and women. However, they do seem to elaborate on women's modest behavior more than that of men. For instance, women are specifically asked "not [to] display their beauty and ornaments [*zeena* in the Arabic original] except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof", and are instructed to "draw their veils [*khimars* in the Arabic original] over their bosoms and not display their beauty and ornaments [*zeena* in original]", except to their husbands and men not sexually interested in them (24.31). Men on the other hand are only told to "guard their modesty" (24.30).

It could be argued that the verses' disproportionate concern with women bespeaks a gender hierarchy that privileges the male gaze. However, some scholars hold that this is only part of the Quran's attempts to emphasize modesty through the example of the dress code prevalent at the time. Verse 24.31 enjoins women to avoid an exhibitionist style of dress that exposed their cleavage and that they seemed to practice in pre-Islamic Arabia (Gabriel, 2011, p. 14). It is in this context that it asks them to cover their bosoms using

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[3] For more on this point see footnote one in chapter one.

their *khimars* –an item of dress they already used. In fact, some argue that verses 24.30-31 illustrate that modesty in Islam is primarily a question of behavior, rather than dress, and that it is moreover relevant to both sexes (Barlas, 2002, p. 159; Hassan, 2011, pp. 116-117). What Islam seems to condemn is the public flaunting of sexuality and drawing attention to the body, not a particular dress code (El-Guindi, 1999, p. 137). And it is in this spirit that the verse defines what should be covered using an elastic term such as *zeena* (Al-Banna, 2002, p. 97; El-Guindi, 1999, p. 136). This approach leaves enough room for accommodating the cultural and historically contingent conceptualizations of beautification and modesty (Abu-Zayd, 2007a, p. 237).

Classic exegetes instate a very rigid interpretation of verse 24.31 however. For example, Al-Tabari, one of the most influential exegetes of the Quran (9th-10th century CE), considers verse 24.31 to mandate the full concealment the female body (1992, pp. 303-307). For him, the only "ornaments" that the verse exempts from covering are solely the hands and face (Al-Tabari, 1992, pp. 303-307). Far from being an anomaly, Al-Tabari's interpretation resonates with that of many other classic exegesis (El-Guindi, 1999, p. 136). Some exegetes even find his interpretation to be rather "flexible" and hold that a woman's face and hands should be covered too since the female body is all pudendal and is inherently corrupted and corrupting for that matter (Barlas, 2002, pp. 54-55).

The second set of verses that fuel the debates over the Quranic basis of veiling are 33.53 and 33.59. Interestingly, while often invoked in this context, verse 33.53 is not even primarily concerned with the question of dress code. The verse asks believers to address the prophet's wives from behind a *hijab* (33.53). The context of the revelation of

this verse illustrates that the enjoined *hijab* is indeed spatial rather than sartorial (Mernissi, 1991, p. 92; Stowasser, 1997, p. 94). Verse 33.53 was revealed during the prophet's wedding; as some guests lingered in his nuptial chamber the verse was revealed to instate a literal screen or curtain between him and another man present in the room in order to preserve the privacy of his wives and their living quarters (Al-Banna, 2002, p. 103; El-Guindi, 1999, p. 135, Mernissi, 1991, pp. 85-86; Stowasser, 1997, p. 89). In this sense, even the spatial *hijab* in question was a measure that concerned the wives of the prophet exclusively rather than all Muslim women (Barlas, 2002, p. 55; El-Guindi, 1999, p. 139).

Verse 33.59 on the other hand addresses all Muslim women and asks them to "cast their outer garments [*jilbabs* in the Arabic original] over their persons" so that "they should be known (as such) and not molested". This induction can only be understood in the context of the structure of the nascent Muslim society that it addressed and the particular challenges facing it at the time. Verse 33.59 was revealed at a time of military defeats, social disorder, and increasing incidents of sexual harassment (Mernissi, 1991, pp. 173-183). In order to restore social order, the verse asked women to pull their *jilbabs* (outer garments) over themselves so that they would not be mistaken for sexually available slaves and molested (Mernissi, 1991, p. 180). This context underscores two important points. For one thing, the invocation of the *jilbab* was specific to the structure of a slave-owning society where the sexual abuse of female slaves was condoned and pervasive (Barlas, 2002, p. 55). For another, the Quran seemed to invoke this item of clothing as part of devising a means for protecting women and not in the intent of instating any one mandatory dress code (Al-Banna, 2002, p. 103; Barlas, 2002, pp. 53-54;

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El-Guindi, 1999, p. 139; Stowasser, 1997, pp. 93-104). The *jilbab* was in fact already part of women's wardrobe at the time; the Quran did not prescribe its endorsement per se but attached a sense of privacy to its already prevalent use (Barlas, 2002, p. 55; El-Guindi, 1999, pp. 139-140).

In this sense, the *jilbab* should not be read as specifically Islamic, nor as particularly relevant today when women should have legal, rather than sartorial, protection against harassment (Barlas, 2002, p. 56). In fact, mere religious prohibitions prove to be highly ineffective in remedying sexual harassment in contemporary societies (Lazreg, 2009, p. 44). Moreover, problematizing the *jilbab* question is all the more important if we are to construct more egalitarian gender-sensitive Islams. Restoring social order in the first Muslim community through a means such as the *jilbab* violated in fact Islam's initial concern with equality. Not only did the recommended deployment of the garment divide Muslim women along class lines and sanction the harassment of some, it also located the problem in the female body, and regulated public space accordingly as best accommodated men's "uncontrollable" desires instead of addressing the actual structural problems that caused harassment (Mernissi, 1991, pp. 179, 182-187, 1975, p. 84).

If the Quran is approached as a living document that is articulated through and adapted to changing contexts and needs, and if Islam's general concern with disrupting problematic pre-Islamic structures is kept in mind, it becomes possible to argue for suspending the induction concerning the *jilbab* in verse 33.59. This becomes even more plausible if we consider that 33.59 may be among the older abrogated verses. The abrogation of older verses by chronologically more recent ones was in fact part and

parcel of the establishment of Quranic rules (Abdullah, 2005, pp. 77-78); an aspect that underscores the inherent malleability of the construction of Islam. However, as important as this lens is its deployment remains highly impractical because it is difficult to determine abrogated verses with certainty. After all, the version of the Quran that we read today does not follow the chronology of revelation but is rather constructed according to an order that the religious scholars at the era of 'Uthman (6th-7th century CE) established in order to meet what they determined to be the "pedagogical" needs of Muslims (Abdullah, 2005, pp. 73-81; Mernissi, 1991, pp. 164-165). While this fact makes it difficult to determine the status of verse 33.59, it underscores the politicized nature of the canonized Quran and problematizes any argument for a definitive Quranic grounds for veiling.

It is important to keep in mind that mainstream religious discourses are not constructed exclusively through the Quran however. Many Muslims who defend the practice of veiling do not derive their arguments from the Quran as much as from the prophet's sayings and teachings; the *hadiths* (Al-Banna, 2002, p. 77). While the *hadiths* may provide an insightful understanding of Islam, using them as an episteme for constructing any one Islam in particular is problematic. For one thing, the first attempt to compile the *hadiths* started one century after the prophet's death and was completed 300 years later (Barlas, 2002, p. 42). This means that what we take today to be the prophet's worldview is necessarily mediated by the voices of those who transmitted it across generations. Moreover, taking recourse in the *hadiths* sanctifies the prophet's worldview and transforms his personal understanding and practice of Islam from being one contextualized historicized articulation among others, to being a transhistorical fixed

version of the religious framework inherently and necessarily more viable than any other. Such an approach is problematic since the prophet himself never meant for his teachings to acquire any fixity or sanctity and took strict measures to forbid his companions from recording them (Al-Banna, 2002, p. 75).

One of the key *hadiths* used to enforce veiling holds that the prophet presumably told his sister in-law, Asma', that starting puberty a woman should cover up all her body except for her hands and face (Hasan, 2011, p. 72). This *hadith*, while widely accepted and cited, is highly disputable. Its one and only narrator, Khalid bin Durayk, claims to have heard it from Aisha, the prophet's wife. This seems to be practically impossible however since Durayk never lived in the same historical period as Aisha (Al-Albani, 1985, p. 24; Al-Banna, 2002, p. 132). The widespread acceptance of this *hadith* despite its inauthenticity flags a major problem with the collection and transmission of the prophet's sayings. Collectors often determined the authenticity of a *hadith* through the reputation of each person in its chain of narration, regardless of how logical or historically accurate the content of the *hadith* was (Barlas, 2002, p. 48). As a result, many fabricated and misogynist *hadiths* made their way to the canon of authentic ones (Barlas, 2002, p. 48; Mernissi, 1991, pp. 65-66).

Taking this aspect of the *hadiths* into account illustrates the necessary conflation of religion and culture in the context of veiling. Many Muslim cultures happen to be misogynist and their enmeshment with religion only works to sanctify their patriarchal values. For example, the practice of veiling is sometimes mandated as part of reifying a patriarchal culture of femininity rather than as part of instating an Islamic worldview. Oftentimes, links are established between misogynist cultural understandings of female

sexuality and some disputed *hadiths* in order to give both power. Disputable religious inductions that portray women as simultaneously vulnerable and threatening are in fact used in order to posit the female body as necessarily in need of being controlled through practices such as veiling (Mernissi, 1975, pp. 4, 11-12). To construct "alternative" articulations of Muslim femininity in this context it is important to shift the debates around veiling from an exclusive focus on the religious grounds of the practice to an analysis of the current cultures of Muslim femininity where the practice seems to flourish. While mainstream religious discourses capitalize on these cultures and try to present their values as religious, they are only partially constructed through religion in practice.

3- Veiling and Agency: Putting the Threads of the New Veiling Together

The contingency of the culture of veiling and its changing forms does not solely derive from its religious basis. It is also largely shaped by women's enactment of the practice and their complex attempts to re-think its tenets and negotiate the contexts that determine it. Veiled women's nuanced agency is oftentimes mis-captured however. It is taken to be either a "liberating" "choice" or an "oppressive" coerced action (Contractor, 2011, p. 129), or it is alternatively relativized to the extent of being void of any substantial meaning. To avoid such pitfalls, it is important to read the practice of veiling on its own terms and to situate it simultaneously in the wider moment that frames its enactment. This entails problematizing the universal (read western) models of agency (Hirschman, 1998, p. 347), but more importantly, the local ones based on exceptionalism. A major challenge lies in fact in acknowledging how the intelligibility of agency

materializes through specific subjects and histories (Hirschman, 1998, p. 347) without turning particularity into a guise that makes local forms of "oppression more intellectually acceptable" (Lazreg, 2009, p. 6).

When agency and "choice" are conflated, modes of subjugation end up being relativized rather than examined. Acknowledging the particularity of the agency embedded in the act of veiling does not mean exempting the practice from scrutiny under the guise of its being a cultural-based, context-specific "choice". Taking up the veil is never just a personal "choice" whose intelligibility becomes apparent when the Islamic logic and context are taken into account (Lazreg, 2009, p. 36). In fact, analyzing the particularity of the Islamic context illustrates how veiling is actually structurally constructed and often endorsed because of social conventions and regulatory norms (Lazreg, 2009, p. 36). Moreover, even when the practice is endorsed willfully, it is difficult to approach it as a strictly voluntary action (Lazreg, 2009, p. 36). When the alternatives that Muslim women have are limited, taking recourse in the "choice" trope becomes problematic. For instance, when non-veiled articulations of modesty are frowned upon, and when the authenticity and viability of a woman's cultural identity is dependent on veiling, and when non-veiling is equated with promiscuity and even punished (Göle, 1996, p. 53; Lazreg, 2009, p. 60; MacLeod, 1991, p. 42), approaching the practice in terms of being a mere "choice" becomes both problematic and analytically unproductive (Lazreg, 2009, p. 60). The act of choosing is not sufficient to invoke any substantive "choice" in this case because what is equally important is women's "ability to *formulate choices* [emphasis in original]" and construct alternative contexts altogether (Hirschman, 1998, p. 361).

The "choice" rhetoric is often used to maneuver the fact that women may deliberately take up the veil for strategic reasons; be it to please family members, gain voice, access public spaces, or minimize risks of sexual harassment (Çinar, 2005, p. 76; Gabriel, 2011, p. 16; Lazreg, 2009, pp. 70-74). The veiling that ensues in this context may be indeed interesting on the level of disrupting the grounds of the practice so that it is not primarily or exclusively religious. However, its effectiveness in achieving its intended goals seems to be limited. For instance, taking up the veil in order to get a job or to access public spaces safely does not disrupt the gendered logic that produces women's subjugation or their limited opportunities in such contexts in the first place. By covering up to access the work place or the street, women learn to apologize for or contain their presence in what continues to be male spaces (Lazreg, 2009, p. 109). Moreover, they reinforce the hegemonic molding of their bodies as inherently sexualized and in need of regulation (Lazreg, 2009, p. 109). The veil fails in fact to protect women from harassment in such contexts precisely because it conceptualizes them primarily in terms of being objects of male desire (Abu-Odeh, 2005, p. 95; Çinar, 2005, p. 77). By turning the primacy and power accorded to men and their gaze in such cases into a mere "natural" arrangement (Çinar, 2005, p. 77; Göle, 1996, p. 136), the practice fails to target the structures that construct masculinity through the dominance of men and the appropriation of women, and thus fails to induce any tangible change.

Dismissing women's agency altogether in such cases is equally unproductive on the analytical level however. In addition to reducing women to victims, this lens draws the attention away from the need to theorize the particularity of women's limiting interaction with structures of subordination (Mahmood, 2005). The limits of women's

agency within these contexts can be in fact read through what Foucault refers to as the paradox of subjectivation. For Foucault, subjects are constructed through processes that ultimately subordinate them (1982). Social control depends on colonizing individuals' wills and desires so that they become the very tools of their oppression (Foucault, 1979). In the context of veiling, women's subjectivities and desires are produced through constraining social structures that make them actively implicated in producing the very practices that seem to subordinate them (Hirschman, 1998, p. 347). In this sense, women who actively enact the religious inductions that mandate veiling have a complex agency and do not perpetuate hegemonic structures because of a presumably innate desire for subordination (Mahmood, 2005, p. 15). Rather, their actions illustrate how they actively embody the "authoritative discursive traditions" that enable them as Muslim subjects and that constrain their subjectivity simultaneously (Mahmood, 2005, p. 32). Accounting for their agency in such cases entails unpacking their embodiment of the constrained and constraining desires in question, in addition to examining the discourses that produce these desires in the first place (Mahmood, 2005, p. 15) –points that will be indeed examined through the participants' narratives in the upcoming three chapters.

For Mahmood, agency does not necessarily entail challenging oppressive social norms but rather indicates inhabiting them in a myriad of different ways (2005, pp. 5, 14). As explained in chapter one, it is difficult indeed to look at veiling through a rigid dichotomy of "choice" or coercion as neither can capture the complexity of the participants' engagement of the practice. For instance, as will be discussed in chapters four, five, and six, the fashionably veiled women inhabit the norms of femininity in a way that does not fall neatly neither in the category of conformity nor in that of subversion.

On the one hand, they seem to deliberately conform to the requirement of concealing the body, but on the other, they do that in a non-conventional way that accommodates a complex set of relationships that they have or seek to have. Many of these women adorn and sexualize their veiled bodies under the influence of the fashion market while simultaneously holding to the premises that their appeal should be indeed controlled through patriarchal measures such as veiling. In this sense, their non-normative embodiment of veiling may be transgressive in style, but it does not necessarily bespeak a dis-identification with the logic embedded in the practice, nor does it express a desire for dis-avowing this logic for that matter as will be further explained in chapters four, five, and six. The effectiveness of the non-drastic change that ensues will be problematized in these chapters and its potential and limitations further assessed in the conclusions chapter.

The upcoming chapters will also engage the motivations behind the participants' agentic veiling. While embodying the practice of veiling can be often part and parcel of constructing a primarily pious self (Mahmood, 2005, p. 147), it seems that the culture of Muslim femininity that the fashionably veiled women in Jordan establish seeks to emphasize their femininity first and foremost. Clearly, I do not intend to dichotomize or hierarchize the feminine-religious aspects of the self. Rather, I mean to differentiate the desires that underlie the materialization of veiling in this context. As will be explained in the following chapters, the fashionably veiled participants try to re-think the motivations behind the practice in addition to disrupting it in sartorial terms. By making the accentuation of femininity a goal, the re-devised practice works to displace the limits of

"propriety" especially in its religious sense, and achieves this by continuing to use a medium that enforces these very limits in practice.

This aspect of the practice brings to the fore the need to question the effectiveness of injecting an alternative signification into a religious signifier such as the veil -already imbued as it is with a particular traditional and religious sense. For Butler, the signifier and its meaning cannot be essentialized; rather, their form and content can only materialize through their reiteration. A non-conventional reiteration of a norm for instance is what makes it possible to disrupt its intended meaning and instate a different one (Butler, 1993, pp. 105-106). In this sense, the fashionable reiteration of veiling should be able to take the veil as a signifier out of the limits of its religious signification. However, it is important to keep in mind that while a parodic reiteration of a norm can redefine it in theory, it does not always ensure the actual disruption of the norm's signification in practice -especially that no one has monopoly over the ways in which the parodic reiteration is decoded by the intended audience (Butler, 1993, pp. 105-106). Reading the fashionable veiling through this framework exposes its limits as a signifier of alterity then, and opens a space for considering the limits of theorizing it in terms of being a parody to begin with.

The *abaya*, a loose-fitting decorated (black) gown worn with a headscarf, provides an example of a signifier that is undergoing a change similar to the one happening to the veil in Jordan. This style of veiling, predominant in Gulf countries, is currently being re-defined through a fashionable rendition of its conventional style (Al-Qasimi, 2010, p. 63). Waisted and accentuating the contours of the body, the fashionable *abaya* seems to be worn to reveal rather than to conceal, and openly challenges in this

sense what many Islamic schools of thought take to be basic principles of "proper" modest Islamic dress (Al-Qasimi, 2010, pp. 63, 59, 66). Al-Qasimi reads this form of veiling through Butler's understanding of parody and underscores consequently its limits as a form of dissent. While the fashionable *abaya* does displace modesty as a concept that is primarily dependent on concealing the body, it continues to uphold its hegemonic visual signifier nonetheless (Al-Qasimi, 2010, p. 63). In other words, modesty continues to be necessarily dependent on wearing one visual signifier in particular: the *abaya*. And in this context, any new signification of the *abaya* is, at best, both articulated and interpreted through its conventional sense. In practice, the dissent that veiled women express through their parodic fashionable *abayas* only restores the very patriarchal logic inherent in veiling; namely, the need to cover up the female body in order to accommodate an omnipresent male audience (Al-Qasimi, 2010, pp. 64, 66).

On the one hand, Al-Qasimi's analysis may be very insightful in terms of understanding the limits of displacing the norm of modesty through the fashionable veiling in Jordan. Similarly to the case of the *abaya,* the fashionable veiling in Jordan does challenge the limits of bodily modesty, but it does not challenge its being primarily achieved through one mode; namely, wearing a veil. On the other hand however, it is important to keep in mind that engaging veiling in terms of parody can be problematic in the case of Jordan. Unlike Al-Qasimi, I do not read the emergent forms of veiling as a parody of more conventional ones. As will be further discussed in chapters four, five, and six, many of the women who practice the fashionable veiling in Jordan do not seek to disrupt the logic of veiling through their non-conventional dress, nor do they mimic or mock the practice in the spirit of exposing its problematic aspects. If parody is primarily

an imitation that seeks to trivialize, mock, or simply question a practice, then what fuels the actions of the fashionably veiled women in Jordan is not a desire for parody. In fact, most of these women do not consider their veiling to be subversive or even immodest in the first place. Rather, they believe in the logic of veiling and argue that as long as their bodies and hair are covered then their styles of veiling continue to fall within the conventions of the practice as prescribed by orthodox Islam.

In this sense, rather than a parody of Islam, I would argue that theirs is a nascent Islam that is not willing to compromise a dogmatic convention such as the need to contain the threatening female sexuality, but that is willing to negotiate its embodiment at best. In practice, this produces a form of veiling that combines multiple problematic understandings of gender. On the one hand, the fashionable veiling bespeaks an Islamic gender hierarchy whereby the sexualized female body has to be concealed in order to accommodate the male gaze. And on the other, it simultaneously expresses a western-based capitalist form of sexualization whereby the female body is adorned and put on display for the benefit of this gaze.

In addition to highlighting the contradictions that necessarily frame the fashionable veiling, this aspect of the practice problematizes the analyses that claim that veiling is often endorsed for its ability to "liberate" women from the beauty ideals of consumer capitalist cultures (Bullock, 2002, p. viii). As chapters four, five, and six illustrate, most of the veiled participants emphasized that they felt both the desire and the need to take care of their looks on a daily basis. In fact, their accounts with regard to choosing and co-coordinating their veils and outfits underscore the way in which they too tried to live up to beauty standards. Some of these beauty ideals are actually constructed

and promoted by an emerging capitalist Islamic fashion industry that has its politics, competing poles, advertising systems, and seasonal and specialty lines of clothing (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 122). In addition to flagging the necessary enmeshment of religious and capitalist values in the structure of today's forms of veiling, the Islamic fashion industry underscores the complexity of women's agency in the context of constructing and enacting the new veiling trend.

Veiled women inhabit the norms promoted by the Islamic fashion industry in different ways. Clearly, they do not all follow the veiling seasonal trends, and those who do engage them in subjective ways. But even in the cases where women reject the veiling fashion ideals altogether, their very understanding and embodiment of Muslim femininity remains shaped to a big extent through their interaction with these ideals that permeate daily life. Their desires, as well as their non-desires, are often constructed in this sense against the backdrop of the Islamic fashion industry.

One of the important features of the growing Islamic fashion industry is its ability to cross borders and construct a global Muslim audience (Akou, 2007, p. 405). The Internet plays a key role in reifying the transnational aspect of this nascent culture of Muslim femininity. Islamic fashion websites spread the constantly changing ideals of this culture (Akou, 2007, p. 412), and youtube videos teach Muslim women everywhere how to wrap and accessorize their veils according to these ideals (Lazreg, 2009, p. 84). In fact, when asked about the resources that fueled their styles of veiling, many of the fashionably veiled participants that I interviewed indicated facebook groups and youtube channels that were not necessarily nor exclusively Jordanian or Arabic for that matter. The Turkish Islamic fashion industry in particular seems to be among the ones gaining

increasing popularity among Muslim women in Jordan. The styles emanating from this industry are far from being monolithic however but interestingly have their internal class and status differences. For instance, one of the popular strands of the Turkish Islamic fashion industry is the "Islamic haute couture"; an industry that seems to be primarily directed to "elite" audiences, and that interestingly challenges both the secularist and Islamist understandings of veiling (Çinar, 2005, p. 89). Deriving from the culture and logic of western fashion as its name indicates, the "Islamic haute couture" turns veiling into a class-based fashion, and challenges both its western conceptualization as necessarily backward and traditional and its restrictive Islamist format whereby modeling and runways are the degenerative anti-thesis of Islamic understandings of dress (Çinar, 2005, p. 89). Next to this strand figures the "tesettür" industry which is more oriented towards daily outfits (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 119). The name of this industry seems to place much emphasis on the norm of modesty in its conventional sense, but its styles are predominantly tight and bright and do not always facilitate the implementation of this ideal however (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 118).

Leaders of the Islamic fashion industry often argue that they do not commodify Islam through their products (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 119). However, companies feed in practice on Islamic values in order to make profit. Many of the suppliers of the Islamic fashion industry in Jordan for example openly explain being more concerned with making profit than with promoting Islamic dress or ethics (Shana'a, 2011, p. 2). In fact, many of them point out that they personally take much of the Islamic fashion they sell to be "Islamically incorrect" (Shana'a, 2011, p. 2). In this sense, the industry feeds on the

concept of piety and on images of "pious femininity" in order to turn virtue into a capitalist value that can address and use consumers' desires (Jones, 2010, p. 91).

It is important to keep in mind that practicing the commodified version of Islam promoted by the Islamic fashion industry does not necessarily deny the possible religiosity of its consumers however (Jones, 2010, p. 104). Rather, as explained earlier, it places the emphasis on the shifting importance that religiosity has in constructing the practice of veiling and on the malleable Islams that veiled women are establishing. While the Islamic fashion industry may not be necessarily interested in implementing virtue in the Islamic sense, many women use its products to construct a Muslim femininity that allows them to rethink the limits of sartorial-based Islamic virtue for instance. The images promoted by the Islamic fashion industry establish certain conceptualizations of desirable appearance, and induce women in this sense to desire certain things and to express their desires in particular ways (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 129). As mentioned earlier, women inhabit these venues of desire in very subjective ways that may or may not coincide with the promoted ideals. What is important nonetheless is that through such venues women accentuate being subjects and objects of desire (Jones, 2010, p. 98). Their mere interaction with the images and styles of Islamic fashion industry gives them the possibility of redefining or at least questioning what counts as modest and Islamic, and more importantly, it gives them the possibility of instating public expressions of desire as viable. This possibility has not in fact been previously open for many Muslim women. For example, by promoting tight bright clothes the "tesettür" industry for one works on shifting the very boundaries of modest appearance (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 144). While some fashionably veiled women may contest the new

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"tesettür" ideals, the increasing normalization of the industry's fashionable renditions of veiling makes it at least possible for them to argue that Islamic dress ideals are not fixed but are necessarily articulated through personal desires and aesthetic preferences (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 145). In this sense, modesty as a concept seems to be released from its transhistorical decontextualized mold even if to a limited extent (Gökariksel & Secor, 2010, p. 145).

4- The History and Dynamics of the New Veiling Trend

Based on commodification, exhibitionism, and on the simultaneous accentuation and containment of desire, the culture of Muslim femininity that ensues through venues such as the Islamic fashion industry negotiates the hegemonic ideals of both western and Muslim femininities and holds in this sense an interesting potential as an "alternative". However, as the participants' narratives discussed in the following chapters illustrate, the "alternative" in question remains truncated because of its limited ability to disrupt the centrality of the male-gaze to the conceptualization of femininity in the first place.

The alterity that the new veiling tries to instate becomes more salient however when read in the context of the practice's history. The trend has introduced in fact new meanings into the cultures of veiling and femininity that were already prevalent in the Middle East. Spreading in many Arab Middle Eastern countries throughout the 1970s, the trend expressed a renewed interest in veiling after a significant devaluation that the practice underwent through the process of modernization (Ahmed, 2011, p. 9). The veiling styles that started gaining popularity at the time were different from the traditional ones in terms of their styles and connotations (Ahmed, 2011, p.; El-Guindi, 1999, p. 135).

They were often a form of political protest against the modernizing Arab states. Moreover, women used them as a means to express what they identified as a "modern" Islamic dress code and identity (MacLeod, 1991, p. 14). This primarily meant a dress code that signaled women's views with regard to global politics and their adherence to the resurgent Islamic movements at the time (Ahmed, 2011, p. 83; El-Guindi, 1999, pp. xi-xxi).

In other words, the new veiling introduced politics as a key component of the "modern" public expression of Muslim femininity. The trend re-articulated the "modern" so that it accommodated local religious contexts, and re-articulated local contexts so that they accommodated an assertive "modern" politicized femininity. While the current manifestations of the trend do not necessarily bespeak such a political aspect (Göle, 1996, p. 109; MacLeod, 1991, p. 111), especially not in the case of Jordan, the role that the new veiling played as a form of political protest remains particularly important. The modernization process often trapped women between a set of local traditions that they were told to regard as "non-modern" and hence as devalued, and a set of western standards that they continued to find alienating despite their promoted "modernity" (MacLeod, 1991, p. xv). One of the newly promoted values that were especially important in consolidating the new veiling trend was women's institutionalized remunerated work. While the modernization process promoted women's immersion in mixed-sex public work, the "modernity" instated in the process was truncated at best since women's autonomy continued to be threatened by notions of family honor and "proper" bodily disposition. In this context, the new veiling provided women with a much-needed venue for reconciling the contradicting demands placed on them

(MacLeod, 1991, p. xv). However, the culture of femininity that it established in the process did not normalize women's presence in public spaces, as their bodies continued to be viewed as inherently vulnerable and their public presence as only conditional (Abu-Odeh, 2005, p. 99).

Such conflicting demands that shaped the beginning of the new veiling trend continue to influence many women today and are in fact part of the "veiling regimes" at place in many Muslim societies. Secor defines the "veiling regimes" as the different rules that regulate the enactment of the practice of veiling through space -so that it is required for accessing certain spaces but not others (2002, p. 6). Divergent veiling regimes often co-exist today within the same culture and women are often induced to construct and express their Islams and femininities in ways that accommodate them. In addition to openly normalizing or challenging any one veiling regime in particular, many Muslim women seem to interact with them by flexibly catering to their demands; that is, by alternately wearing the veil and taking it off according to the spaces that they enter (Secor, 2002, pp. 8, 12). As will be explained in chapter five, one of the research participants lives this experience first hand. What is particularly interesting about her case is the malleability of the Muslim femininity that she constructs in the process. This participant's accommodation of the veiling regimes that she treads does not disrupt their hegemony but rather contributes to their normalization. However, it allows her to establish a malleable Muslim femininity. Clearly, the participant in question did not romanticize the transition implied or the conditions that required it in the first place, however, she did emphasize being convinced with the viability of the mutable

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articulations of femininity that she constructed and their equal credibility as Muslim femininities.

What may be even more interesting in this context is the way through which the fashionably veiled women interact with the regulatory veiling regimes. In the case of the fashionable veiling, the participants do not seem to change their expression of femininity as best fits the veiling regimes that they tread. Rather, they seem to construct a hybrid femininity that simultaneously derives from and challenges the prevalent veiling regimes. By mixing veiling and fashion, the femininity that the fashionably veiled participants express challenges the rules of "proper" veiling in spaces that require veiling, as well as the rules of "proper" display in spaces that require non-veiling. In this sense, the fashionable veiling exposes the limits of the femininities that each regime is willing to harbor, and opens up a space for constructing new femininities from within the margins of what is intelligible.

The ambivalent social privileging of the fashionable veiling partially derives from the way it confuses the different veiling regimes that it treads. However, much of the concern over its "propriety" as an expression of Muslim femininity seems to simultaneously stem from concerns over "Muslim masculinities". After all, veiling bespeaks a masculinist view of the world whereby the female body seems to be primarily conceptualized in terms of male desire and an omnipresent male gaze (Çinar, 2005, p. 76). The structure of most Middle Eastern cultures further complicates this worldview as they take the female body to be a measure of a man's honor (Çinar, 2005, p. 76) and a key component of his identity (Lazreg, 2009, p. 47). When the social valuation of a man's very (sexual) identity is dependent on the way other men read his female relatives'

appearance, any disruption of the veiling paradigm becomes indeed one of his primary concerns (Lazreg, 2009, p. 51)

As will be further explained when engaging the participants' narratives in chapter four, the gendered relational understanding of the self embedded in this logic is especially salient in Jordan and figures indeed as an important part of Jordanian Muslim masculinity and the veiling that it induces. It is important to point out that I do not mean to invoke a monolithic homogeneous masculinity however. As the participants' insights will illustrate, while their male guardians' reasons for pushing them to wear the veil derived indeed from a relational conceptualization of the self, these men exposed nuanced motivations nonetheless. For instance, while most of the men who pushed the women in their "guardianship" to veil were concerned with enforcing family traditions and/or protecting their families' reputation, those who were married among them were additionally concerned about the social perception of their gender dynamics as couples.

The fashionable veiling plays a limited role in disrupting the hegemonic construction of masculinity in Jordan because, while it challenges the limits of men's authority, it does not shift the masculine desire for veiling in practice. On the one hand, the fashionable veiling seems to be threatening to men's relational authority over women's bodies and personhood because it places the emphasis on women's allure, speaks openly to other men's desires, and accentuates women's own desire for male attention. However, at the same time, the very act of wearing the veil in public (even when it is transgressive) continues to assert the exclusive right of particular men to the female body, and fails to question and change the masculine desire for the practice in the first place. The hybridity of the fashionable veiling induces men to acquiesce it as a

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viable "alternative" but it does not challenge their conceptualization of femininity and desire. After all, men seem to accept this type of veiling mainly because it continues to emphasize their authority and the containment of women's sexuality, and because it is considered to be a less threatening option than complete non-veiling.

Protecting the hegemonic structure of gender dynamics (rather than instating modesty per se) is what is often at stake then. When the styles of veiling that reveal more than they conceal are considered to be modest, and when hair alone becomes the limit of the "proper" disposition of the body, the concept of modesty becomes in fact a mere ideological cover (Lazreg, 2009, pp. 32, 65).

In addition to accommodating problematic gender dynamics and a twisted sense of modesty, the forms of the fashionable veiling that are gaining popularity in Jordan expose an interesting sense of modernity. This is clear for instance through the example of the puff-based veiling style that is increasingly popular and socially acquiesced in Jordan. This is a style of veiling whereby the wearer pins a big puffy hairpiece on the crown of the head underneath the headscarf in order to give the impression of having big hair concealed by the veil, and it is often combined with wearing skinny jeans, short shirts, bright nail polish, and heavy makeup (Shana'a, 2011, p. 1). Occasionally, part of a woman's bangs may be left exposed as well (Shana'a, 2011, p. 1). This style of veiling is colloquially referred to as the "modern veil" -especially by the shop owners who sell its elements (Shana'a, 2011, p. 2). As loaded as the term is it is interesting in terms of what it reveals about local understandings of "modernity". Many find the new veiling styles confusing precisely because they combine fashion, which is a "modern" category, with a traditional custom that is often seen as "oppressive" (Balasescu, 2003, pp. 34, 48). The

garment challenges the rigid dichotomy of the non/modern in this sense, and the very conventional understanding of modernity whereby it is necessarily opposed to religion and tradition (Balasescu, 2003, p. 43; Çinar, 2005, p. 47). The limits of the modernity that the shopkeepers and the veiled women in Jordan construct by referring to the fashionable puff-veiling as modern should be kept in mind however. After all, while the modernity that this style bespeaks may reify indeed a non-conventional medium such as religion, its parameters are limited in practice to endorsing fashion and to hyper-visibility. Additionally, while this modernity may work to accentuate the individuality of the wearer and her personal style, it simultaneously defines her as being primarily a mere part of the collectivity of "Muslim women". After all, the act of taking up the veil necessarily brands any woman as primarily "visibly Muslim" regardless of her intentions (Tarlo, 2010, p. 75).

The nascent "modern" culture of Muslim femininity that Jordanian women instate is also interesting on the level of the political policing that it engenders. While the official state-based religious discourse in Jordan rarely takes any pronounced stances with regards to veiling, in an interesting move the state-based religious institution responsible for issuing religious decrees in the country (*da'erat al 'ifta'*) recently declared the puff-based-veil to be categorically *haram* (Islamically forbidden) ("Al-'Ifta'", 2011). In defense of its decision, the institution cited a *hadith* whereby the prophet presumably condemns the behavior of women whose dress code renders their bodies naked and their heads akin to "camel humps" ("Al-'Ifta'", 2011). In this sense, in order to protect the current hegemonic gender dynamics in the country, the Jordanian political religious discourse uses a narrative whose authenticity it does not even explain and taints it with a

transhistorical trans-contextual guise in order to give it primacy over women's lived experiences.

Interestingly, this attitude is not limited to the political religious discourse but is backed up by the public media discourse as well. For example, in a newspaper article on the topic, a renowned female religious public figure vehemently condemned the in-betweenness of the fashionable veiling calling it a "freak *hijab*" (Tahboob, 2012). The abject status that the writer attributed to the fashionable veiling seems to be primarily due to its ability to allow women to beautify themselves, be "seductive", and mix freely with men while using a medium that should presumably signal mere obedience to God (Tahboob, 2012).

As will be explained in chapter four, such "official" media and political stances do not seem to speak to the wider social acceptance of the fashionable forms of veiling, nor to the logic that adherents use. For instance, in defense of the Islamicity of their beautifying embodiments of the practice, the fashionably veiled participants argued that refraining from using fashion and from beautifying their veils would actually violate a key Quranic principle that enjoins Muslims to "wear [their] beautiful apparel [*zeena* in the Arabic original] at every time and place of prayer" (7.31). Moreover, they further cited a *hadith* authenticated by Imam Muslim whereby the prophet presumably says that God is beautiful and admires all forms of beauty (Al-Islam.com). For these women, if beautifying oneself is thus encouraged by the *hadith* and by the Quran and is recommended even in spaces of worship then it cannot be condemned in other contexts. The Quranic induction in question is in fact particularly interesting since it seems to be at odds with verse 24.31 discussed earlier -whereby women are asked to hide their *zeena*.

Reconciling these demands is a question of interpretation that does not lie within the scope of my research. However, one explanation could be that the Quran is concerned with emphasizing modest, rather than flagrant, displays of beauty. The *zeena* to be accentuated, displayed, or hidden would be malleable, contextual, and determined by women's discretion in this case. And the enjoined modesty would not be dependent on concealment or disembodiment per se, but rather supposed to be materialized in different subjective ways. But exegetes remain better qualified to consider these possibilities.

Chapters one, two, and three have laid the theoretical grounds of the study. The following chapters will provide a more detailed insight into the participants' experiences. Chapter four will examine their understanding of Muslim femininity in particular and will shed light on its organization. Chapters five and six will then discuss its embodiment.

Chapter 4

Constructing Muslim Femininity in the Jordanian Imaginary: Ideals, Discourses, and Hierarchies

1- Introduction

Chapter four is the first of three chapters that explore the participants' insights into Muslim femininity and that articulate in this sense the necessary connections between theory and empirics as co-constitutive complementing parts of the dissertation. The chapter engages the particularity of the participants' construction of the concept of Muslim femininity. More precisely, it will shed light on the way the participants dispute the centrality of veiling to Muslim femininity and on the way they establish *zeena* (beautification and adornment) as one of its viable constituents. The chapter will subsequently proceed to examine the discourses that regulate Muslim femininity and will lastly probe its hierarchal structuring.

It is important to re-emphasize at the outset that the insights explored in the following pages are necessarily particular to certain contexts and certain experiences. Most of the research participants come from the middle class and are moreover well educated as explained in chapter two. However, their experiences remain eye opening in terms of the aspects they illuminate. As explained earlier, this research is grounded in a feminist qualitative approach after all, and it seeks to explore the particularity of certain experiences rather than construct a meta-narrative on non/veiling.

2- The Interplay of Veiling, Non-veiling, and "Satr": Re-thinking Muslim Femininity or Re-centering its Hegemonic Construction?

As explained in chapter three, the centrality of the practice of veiling to Muslim femininity is at best disputable. While the Quran seems to be concerned with advancing modesty as a general ideal, hegemonic exegeses and *hadiths* often reify veiling per se as the only viable embodiment of Muslim femininity. The participants vacillate between re-centering and re-thinking this hegemonic construction. For instance, while many identified veiling as the core feature of Muslim femininity, an even larger number disputed the very centrality of the practice to being a Muslim woman, and a few went so far as denouncing its Islamicity altogether. For most, veiling is only one of other possible manifestations of a coveted ideal that structures Muslim femininity; namely, *satr*. This outlook does not seem to be particular to one background or class position. Sama for instance, a fashionably veiled upper class participant, illustrates this line of thinking:

> Femininity in Islam doesn't necessarily involve veiling. Many will disagree but I think that sometimes you can actually not wear the scarf and live up to *satr*. I know a lot of non-veiled girls who abide by the Islamic laws and wear clothes that are more *msattara* [abide by *satr*] than those of veiled women. (Sama 2-9)

The centrality of the *satr* ideal to Muslim femininity was similarly emphasized by the participants who equated the concept with veiling exclusively. For such participants, the ideal can be only embodied through the practice of veiling. In this sense, all the participants seem to reify *satr* as one of the core constituents of Muslim femininity but they seem to differ in their understanding of its "proper" embodiment.

The word *satr* is a common noun derived from the Arabic root verb *sa-ta-ra*, which means to conceal, cover up, or screen a misdemeanor or a blemish (Almaany.com). In religious terms, the word equally implies concealment. For instance,

one of God's attributes in Islam is *as-sattar*; a derivative of the root verb *sa-ta-ra* meaning He who conceals individuals' flaws so that their public persona is not compromised. In other words, that which is subject to the act of *satr* seems to be a potential source of shame and embarrassment. Reifying *satr* as a bodily ideal exposes a problematic understanding of the female body. If the female body is understood to be in need of *satr* then this means that it is primarily approached as a source of shame or embarrassment to be covered up.

By advancing a *satr*-based Muslim femininity instead of an exclusively veiling-based one, the participants may negotiate the viable forms of Muslim femininity but they do not disrupt its mainstream conceptualization. For one thing, the "alternative" conceptualization keeps the hegemonic construction of the female body as embarrassing in place and keeps the structure that mandates its concealment intact as well. For another, while advancing the *satr* ideal over veiling per se may validate non-veiling in theory, only a non-veiling that approximates the concealment ideal can be viable in practice. As Sama's above quote illustrates, only non-veiled women who abide by the *satr* are considered to be good candidates for embodying a viable non-veiled based Muslim femininity.

Re-thinking Muslim femininity through the *satr* ideal offers a limited space for re-considering the viability of non-veiling then. However, it may hold a potential for disrupting the hegemonic embodiment of veil-based Muslim femininity. For instance, while the participants do not problematize concealment as a mandate, their malleable performativity of the *satr* ideal redefines the very sense of the required concealment.

From the veiled participants' perspective, for any form of veiling to be proper and meet the *satr* ideal it has to fulfill certain rules they call the "criteria of veiling". These are six rules disseminated by the popular literature on veiling -such as the leaflets available in the Jordanian market for instance. The criteria are introduced as credible and as presumably emanating from the four schools of thought of mainstream Sunni Islam (the Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafi'i schools). In practice however, they seem to derive from the authors' subjective interpretations of certain verses and *hadiths*. For one thing, they are not properly referenced, for another they do not make part of the official Sunni discourse on veiling that derives from these schools of thought. For example, they appear nowhere in the religious decrees on veiling published by the official *Ifta'* centres (centres for establishing religious decrees) in many Sunni Arab countries -such as the centers in Egypt (Dar al-Ifta) and Jordan (Da'erat al-Ifta' al-'Am al-Ordon) to name a couple.

The six criteria in question indicate that a veil should cover up the entire body except for the hands and feet, that it should not be transparent, accentuating of the body, fragranced, similar to men's clothes, or excessively distinctive. All the participants referred to these criteria in their narratives, but when asked to elaborate most discussed only three out of the six, arguing they were the "core" ones. These three are the criteria that mandate covering up the entire body except for the hands and face, wearing non-transparent, and non-accentuating attires. The first of these three seems to derive directly from the problematic *hadith* discussed in chapter three.

The participants' embodiment of the criteria of veiling negotiates the meaning of concealment and opens a space for alternative embodiments of veiling. For example, each

of the participants took her type of veiling to be a viable embodiment of the above-mentioned three criteria, even when it comprised a figure-hugging and alluring attire. This means that the criteria and the *satr* ideal that they presumably express are interpreted in an extremely malleable way that makes it possible to validate the different fashion-based forms of veiling -even when these forms nullify the meaning of *satr* in practice.

The Quran itself does not figure as one of the frames of reference that shape the participants' construction of Muslim femininity. For instance, the verses that are often invoked by mainstream Islam as "the veil verses" -namely verses 24.30-31 and 33.53, 59 (Barlas, 2002) - were not even mentioned by the participants when explaining the religious basis of veiling and its "proper" forms. Rather, the above-mentioned ambiguous criteria along with some *hadith* were the major frames of reference on which they drew. The participants did not only overlook the Quran's inductions against exhibitionism and against the accentuation of *zeena* (beautification and ornaments) invoked in the "veil verses", they actually worked to endorse and validate them as constituents of Muslim femininity.

3- A Zeena-based Veiling: Instating A Muslim Femininity that Challenges the Quranic Vision

The veiled participants' construction of Muslim femininity seems to go against the Quran's intentions -especially as articulated in verse 24.31. The verse induces women to keep the gaze away from their bodies by "draw[ing] their veils over their bosoms and not display[ing] their beauty [*zeena* in the Arabic original][4]" to any men who may be

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[4] For the translation of *zeena* see footnote one in chapter one.

sexually attracted to them (24.31). By accentuating their bodies and beauty rather than toning them down, the veiled participants challenge these inductions and establish a veiling that is indeed *zeena*-based. The participants argue in fact that beautification is compatible with veiling and their performativity of the practice consistent with the veiling logic. In this sense, they turn a soma-phobic, *zeena*-inhibiting conceptualization of femininity such as the one established by verse 24.31 into a soma-affirming, *zeena*-friendly one, and reify it moreover as normative and Islamically correct. This approach to the practice figures in different classes and among different veiling types. Jood for instance, a participant from a working class background who wears the *abaya* (a form of loose-fitting decorated gown taken to be rather conservative), emphasizes this point:

> The Islamic dress code is not incompatible with elegance and beautification <u>at all.</u> I don't have to wear black or ugly and unfashionable clothes to be properly veiled. [emphasis in original] (Jood 1-7)

This alternative *zeena*-affirming construction of veiling has important effects on the ontological and experiential levels of the practice. For instance, it turns the veil itself to a *zeena* article that serves the very goal of accentuating a woman's appeal. Tala, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, underscores this new sense and purpose:

> I think that the veil itself is an attractive attire. People are often attracted to me because of my veil style and this makes me feel beautiful. (Tala 10-5)

One argument that the veiled participants use in order to defend the religious viability of their *zeena*-full veils holds that Islam is not against attracting an admiring gaze per se but is against drawing a non-regulated one. For them, following the above-mentioned criteria of veiling (a subjective process in practice) is what stops a presumably "sanitized" admiring gaze from becoming "inappropriate":

Wearing an attractive veil doesn't mean that I am violating Islam's requirement of drawing the gaze away from my body. What does being elegant and attractive have to do with drawing the gaze to oneself? It's only natural that when I wear a veil I wear a decent pretty one. Being properly veiled doesn't mean being unattractive (…) the veil has to be non accentuating and non transparent. These criteria draw the line between being elegant and drawing improper attention. (Suha 12-13)

Drawing an admiring gaze to oneself is actually sometimes framed as a religious duty. For instance, some veiled participants insist that it is their responsibility as Muslim women to actively beautify their veils precisely to draw an admiring gaze to themselves and subsequently counter the stereotypical conception of Islam as oppressive and detrimental to femininity. The *zeena*-full veil becomes part of making a political statement about Muslim femininity in this sense. Interestingly, this line of reasoning is not limited to one class or to fashionably veiled participants. For example, Aya, a middle class participant wearing the *jilbab* (a long gown worn over everyday clothes and taken to be rather conservative), strongly emphasized it:

Muslim women have a responsibility to be the prettiest, otherwise they will confirm the stereotype that Islam is bad to women. Google veiling and see the bad results you get (…) Islam doesn't ask women to look ugly or to do everything to draw the gaze away from themselves. On the contrary, it asks them to look pretty so that they can show the world what Islam is [emphasis in original]. (Aya 5-27)

Drawing the admiring gaze away from the female body is then unintended and undesirable by the veiling logic as the participants understand it. The participants even argue that it is an unrealistic goal altogether because of what they take to be men's and women's "nature". As Haya, a jilbabi participant from the working class, explains:

Even when veiled from head to toe women are still attractive and draw the gaze. This is how God created us. He made us attractive to men. (Haya 3-14)

For such participants Islam mandates veiling only as a boundary marker then. They seem to argue that it is not supposed to stop men from looking admiringly at

women altogether but is only there to keep them from acting on their presumably inherent uncontrollable desire for women. This logic seems to make veiling enjoyable for the participants across different backgrounds and types of veiling because it allows them to feel desirable and to enjoy the gaze while presumably feeling in control. As Tala, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, explains:

> Attracting the gaze is part of human nature. The veil only acts as a reminder. It tells men there are limits and they cannot hurt me or have access to my body. It allows me to feel their attraction to me without being scared of them. (Tala 6-10)

The superficiality of the control embedded in this logic is discussed in further detail later in the chapter. For the purposes of this section it is important to tease out its implications for the Muslim femininity that ensues in the process however. This line of reasoning indicates that attracting and actively engaging the admiring gaze has become part of the very ontology of veiling. The participants defend the viability of this alternative construction by taking recourse in the Quran and the *hadith*. For instance, some emphasize Islam's concern with beautifying one's attire even when frequenting mosques, and others point out a *hadith* whereby beautification is an act encouraged directly by God. The first induction, whose source the participants did not mention, is in fact established by verse 7.31, while the *hadith* is authenticated by Imam Muslim (Al-Islam.com). Sama and Tala, an upper class and a middle class fashionably veiled participants, provide an example of this line of reasoning:

> Not arousing men's desire doesn't mean that women shouldn't look beautiful. The *hadith* is clear. It says that God is beautiful and loves beauty. (Sama 2-23)

> The veil doesn't have to be ugly. On the contrary, Islam tells us that we have to beautify our attires even when we go to a sacred place like a mosque. (Tala 10-5)

While the veiled participants draw on this "evidence" to validate the *zeena*-full veiling, they simultaneously construct an abject *zeena*-based veiling that they and the non-veiled participants reject. The abject veiling seems to be denounced because it involves "excessive" accessorization and/or reveals parts of the body. While the fashionably veiled participants embody some of these characteristics, they take their veiling to be different because it presumably meets the *satr* ideal and avoids "excess".

This tension in the participants' approach to the fashionable veiling and to *zeena* is important on two levels. First, it introduces the veiling hierarchy that underlies the practice. Positing certain bodies as "intelligible" and others as abject is part of how gender norms work. While the abject is the constitutive outside of the bodies that "matter", dis-identifying with it is part and parcel of constituting the self as viable (Butler, 1993, pp. xi, 3, 8, 113, 114). In other words, in order to reify their unconventional fashionable veiling as viable, the participants consider the other forms of fashionable veiling to be abject even when their performativity is not entirely unintelligible to them. Second, the participants' ambivalent approach to the fashionable veiling exposes the malleable subjective meanings of *satr* and excess. While often confusing, this malleability is not completely random but bespeaks in fact a number of elements that determine the limits of in/acceptable *zeena.* For instance, one such element concerns the extent to which the abject veiling turns the practice into a fashion project that violates *satr*. Interestingly, the participants do not see any affinities between this critique and the hyper visibility of their own fashionably clothed pseudo-concealed bodies. As Jood, a working class participant who wears a highly fashionable *abaya* explains:

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Have you ever seen the veiled women who wear accessories, dangle their earrings, expose their necks or even wear low-rise jeans? What's the point of their veiling? This is a misrepresentation of the veil. Such women may have a good potential but they turn veiling into a fashion trend. I'm not saying the Islamic dress should resemble a big bag. Not at all. I take care of my looks for example but I make sure that my clothes are still *msattareen* [abide by *satr*]. (Jood 1-4)

The abject veil is also considered to be ontologically flawed because it turns the practice into a mere piece of cloth worn to cover the hair. As Aya, a middle class participant who wears a fashionable *jilbab*, argues:

Do you know the veiling style that exposes the neck and covers the hair? This is a very bad style because in Islam a veil has to cover everything including the ears and it has to be *msattar* [abide by *satr*]. But now in Jordan you see veiled women who show their bangs or their ears and wear earrings. The veil is not just a piece of cloth worn over the head, the entire attire should be modest. (Aya 5-15)

Some of the participants' own *zeena*-full veils can of course be described as mere head covers. However, they deny this affinity because they practice a subjective sense of concealment whose threshold seems to be drawn at merely clothing all parts of the body.

The non-veiled participants across class backgrounds similarly denounce this embodiment of veiling. While such participants may prioritize fashion in their own attires and expose parts of their bodies, they reject the veiling styles that do the same because they presumably compromise the practice's meaning and the coveted *satr* ideal more than their own dress code. In other words, there seems to be limits to the malleability of *satr* even for those who actively transgress its hegemonic sense. Dana, a middle class participant who unveiled years ago, provides one example of this argument:

The excessively fashionable veil reduces Islam to a piece of cloth worn over the head. Excuse me for being blunt but if they put that cloth further down on their bodies that would better meet the *satr* requirement because that part of the body is actually more enticing of desire. I don't understand people. If you just put this piece of cloth on your head regardless of its form you get a pass. (Dana 11-13)

The abject veiling is also denounced because of its emulation of "western" femininity. As Areej, a jilbabi participant from the working class, explains:

> The women who wear excessively fashionable veils try to combine veiling and what women in the west do, like showing their bodies to everyone. But we can't mix these two things. We can't change the rules of our religion. (Areej 14-8)

In fact, the in-between status of the denounced fashionable veil is also behind its abjection. Participants across different backgrounds read this veil's lack of identification with a clear-cut category, whether Muslim or western, as offensive to Islam because it implies a deficiency in it. As Haya, a jilbabi participant from the working class, explains:

> When a woman exposes parts of her body she's neither veiled nor non-veiled. This is bad because it means that the religious rule is oppressive and the woman is making up her own liberating rule. It's also bad for her because she's simultaneously committed and uncommitted. She's neither in nor out. (Haya 3-5)

The permeable borders of the abject fashionable veiling seem to be a threat and a challenge to what the participants portray as a clear-cut set of Islamic rules (even when they live them in practice in different subjective ways). For them, in-betweeness is not a viable performativity of the practice and their veils, unlike the abject ones, escape in-betweeness because they presumably abide more by the criteria of veiling. This seems to be the case even when the participants combine veiling with western fashion and flaunt their "concealed" bodies in practice. The case of Tala, a middle class participant whose style of veiling is excessively fashionable, illustrates this tensioned aspect of the fashionable veiling. Tala's style comprises wearing figure-hugging clothes, short dresses complemented by leggings or knee-high boots, and sometimes hats instead of headscarves. Tala considers hers to be a Muslim articulation of femininity because it lives up to the criteria of veiling: a condition that, even when observed only superficially, sets

her veil apart from the denounced in-between one. Of course, Tala's family and class background facilitate her ability to take her fashionable veiling to such an extreme:

> Religion doesn't specify the form that veiling should take. It doesn't say you have to wear a *jilbab* or an ugly veil. It just says that the veil should cover up everything except for the hands and face. Now look at me I am wearing a jeans, shoes, and a top, nothing shows except my hands and face. (Tala 10-5)

At the time of the interview, Tala was wearing a figure-hugging top, layered with a strapless top, skinny jeans, and a layered scarf tied into a side bow at the lower part of her head. Tala's example illustrates the malleability of *satr* and the criteria of veiling:

> Sometimes I wear knee-long dresses with high boots in a way that allows me to feel feminine and up to date while wearing the veil. How is this wrong? As long as my clothes don't accentuate my body excessively then they live up to the *satr* and follow the religious rules. This is not an emulation of the west. (Tala 10-9)

The key then is to embody the "western" fashion ideals in Islamic conscious ways:

> I often check fashion magazines for designer styles like CK and the like. I see what the latest styles for non-veiled women are and I try to think of ways that would make them appropriate for me as a veiled woman. For example, I recently saw a backless dress that I liked in a magazine and I had it made. I asked the dressmaker to add something to cover the arms and so on. (Tala 10-6)

Context is of course another element that determines the abjection of a fashionable veil. A context-based temporary transgression may be tolerated because it has less threatening effects on "proper" Muslim femininity. Lama, a jilbabi participant who is making her way into the middle class, anchors this logic in the religious episteme:

> If you're going to a party it's absolutely ok to accessorize your veil. For instance, if you usually wear short dresses when you go to a party you may wear an excessively short one. It's the same with veiling. There are contexts where it's appropriate to go over board. For example, the prophet said that a woman should keep her voice low but one day he heard two women singing loudly but he didn't scold them, he said: let them do what they want it's *eid* [a religious festival]. Religion is flexible. It's ok if a woman makes a veil-do when she goes to a party because it's a party! But to go out on the street like that? No. (Lama 4-25)

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The participants' ambivalence towards the excessively fashionable veiling goes against its social acceptance however. In fact, all the participants explained that the excessively fashionable veil is socially acceptable when measured against non-veiling - even when it transgresses the *satr* ideal. Here too Lama provides an interesting insight:

> Society <u>accepts</u> such women [whose veiling is excessively fashionable] more than those who are not veiled (…) even when non-veiling is actually *msattar* [meets the *satr* ideal]. It's as if by veiling women become <u>more socially accepted</u> although some of them look more sexy [than non-veiled women]. For these women's <u>parents</u> all that matters is that their daughters <u>leave the house veiled!</u> <u>The form</u> doesn't matter. Even if they put <u>this much of a cloth</u> [points to her palm] on their heads <u>parents don't care!</u> [emphasis in original]. (Lama 4-5, 4-6)

The reason behind such social acceptance seems to be threefold. As Lama's quote indicates, people seem to mandate and encourage veiling per se regardless of its form – the question of the social mandate will be further discussed under the discourses section. Another reason lies in the potential that the "flawed" veiling seems to hold because it indicates that a woman is on the right track and will eventually join the ranks of the "properly" veiled. As Dalia, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, explains:

> Since she [any woman whose veil is excessively fashionable] took that step and started wearing the veil people won't hold her accountable if her veil is incorrect. At least she decided to wear it. When a woman takes such a decision people know that she has certain beliefs and will gradually improve her veiling. (Dalia 9-3)

A third reason seems to be the type of transgression that the fashionable veil expresses. Less pronounced, this transgression is considered to be less threatening to the social norms than that expressed by non-veiling. Haya, a jilbabi participant from the working class, sheds light on this point:

> People discriminate [between the excessively veiled and the non-veiled]. They often say <u>at least</u> this woman [whose veil is excessively fashionable] doesn't have her hair loose all over her shoulders, even if the veiled woman's clothes attract more attention than those of the non-veiled [emphasis in original]. (Haya 2-23)

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The sight of loose hair may be provocative because, unlike an attire that covers the hair but accentuates the body, it is a clear and direct challenge to the required social norm of concealment. It seems that the norm is then more about adhering to one particular wrapping of Muslim femininity than living up to modesty per se. The veil as a signifier seems to be the locus of attention, and obedience and conformity, rather than modesty per se, seem to be the coveted signified. This is something that non-veiled participants experience in fact first hand. For instance, Aseel, a middle class participant who wore the veil for a year, explains that non-veiling is often equated with indecency:

> When a woman is not veiled people look at her as if she's cheap. This hurts because although I am not veiled I may be much more decent than a lot of veiled women. People know that not all veiled women are decent but they don't care. Conduct doesn't matter, what matters is that a woman wears the veil. (Aseel 6-9)

Aseel's insight provides another possible explanation for the increasing appeal of veiling in Jordan: the veil as a signifier seems to provide women with a space and a cover to negotiate the limits of "proper" behavior all while enjoying respect.

4- The Discourses that Regulate Muslim Femininity and its Embodiment

In order to understand the dynamics of the discourses that structure the embodiment of Muslim femininity in Jordan it is important to look beyond their textual ideals and into the relationships and industries that disseminate and normalize them (Smith, 1990, pp. 2-6, 160-164). Equally important are the potential sites of resistance they harbor. Hegemonic ideals are never performed quite as expected after all. Rather, they are often reiterated in ways that challenge the intentions of the discourse (Butler, 1993, pp. 95, 122, 105-106).

As explained in the previous sections, the participants often take recourse in the religious discourse when assessing the propriety of their own and other women's veiling. In practice however, the participants' experiences of veiling and non-veiling are not primarily or exclusively informed by the religious discourse. Rather, the socio-cultural and the media discourses equally regulate their non/adherence to the practice. On the one hand, this illustrates the enmeshment of the religious and the cultural in the construction and the performativity of veiling in Jordan. As this section will explicate, the practice cannot be framed in dichotomous terms as solely religious or cultural. On the other, the intertwinement of the three above-mentioned discourses illustrates how the female body often ends up being a battleground where different hegemonic ideals compete.

4.1 The Religious Discourse

Only four of the ten veiled participants argued that they endorsed the practice for religious reasons. The rest explained that they undertook it for non-religious reasons but used the religious grounds of *satr* and the criteria of veiling to manage their embodiment of it however.

The four participants in question come from different class backgrounds and differ in their type of veiling. However, they all come from practicing families that pushed them to endorse the veil and its religious basis. For instance, approaching the veil in terms of being a religious mandate and part of the inherent wisdom of the divine and His measures for curbing lust are some of the reasons they listed for endorsing the practice – this was the case even for those among them who were initially forced to wear the veil. Sama for instance, an upper class fashionably veiled participant forced to take up

the practice by her mother when she was in her teens, argued that her conviction with the religious mandate and its "benefits" for her as a woman were behind her gradual acceptance of the practice and her ongoing performativity of it:

> I feel secured <u>first</u> because I am obeying God's order and second because I <u>know</u> that God picks the best for us. I really believe that since He made it mandatory to wear the scarf then this is the best thing for me and He's securing me (…) So I feel <u>content</u>. I feel that it <u>completes</u> me. But to be honest when I first wore it <u>I wasn't convinced not one bit</u> [emphasis in original]. (Sama 4-5,4-6)

This approach to veiling sets Sama apart from other participants who endorse the practice for reasons that are not exclusively religious but who depend on the religious criteria to manage their veiling nonetheless.

The ideals of the religious discourse with regard to veiling do not seem to be primarily spread through the media despite the huge proliferation of religious TV channels in Jordan. Rather, an important venue through which ideals such as the ones to which Sama holds are disseminated is the "religion lessons" that have been on the rise in Jordan since the 90s. These are short lectures or talks given by female preachers for free in the context of regular gatherings organized for this purpose at homes, mosques, and Islamic centres. All the participants emphasized the increasing popularity of these lessons, but only a few had a first hand experience of regularly attending them.

The effect of the religion lessons seems to be strong across classes and types of veiling. For instance, Jood, a participant who wears a fashionable *abaya* and who comes from a working class background, explains that she has frequented the religion lessons offered at a mosque near her house since she was in her teens, and that this played a big role in developing her religious awareness. Similarly, Suha who is a middle class fashionably veiled participant, explains that she frequents such lessons when they are

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offered in the homes of acquaintances. Interestingly, Suha points out that the community

that hosts the lessons, rather than their content per se, is what drew her to take up the veil:

> I do go to religion lessons but I've always believed in veiling, I just needed a push
> to take it up. The lessons helped me but not so much because of the topics they
> discussed. It's actually the quality of the people that I interacted with when I went
> there. This is what had the real influence on me. (Suha12-12)

Suha explains that the lessons were not primarily focused on veiling. Those who

attended them however were mostly veiled and encouraged veiling openly. In this sense,

the religious lessons seem to be one venue that enforces a set of relationships that help

disseminate and implement the ideals of the religious discourse on veiling. The

communities that offer them provide a context that normalizes veiling as an ideal by

ensuring that the attendees are involved in relationships that promote the practice.

Another space that promotes and facilitates the veil-normalizing relationships

seems to be universities. For instance, three of the participants who frequented the

University of Jordan, the biggest university in Jordan and the one that attracts students

from all parts of the country, explained that Islamic groups on campus were extremely

influential in infiltrating female students' gatherings in the goal of promoting the

practice. These three participants frequented the University of Jordan at different time

periods and majored in different disciplines yet they all indicated that there are two main

influential religious groups working on campus; one is known among students as the

"Prayer Room Girls" group, and the other is known as the "Tabba'i Girls" group. The

former is a group that takes the women's prayer room located in every faculty to be its

headquarters. The latter is a religious group named after her female founder and that

seems to be active in schools and private homes as much as it is on campuses.

Lama for example was involved with the "Prayer Room Girls" group throughout her five years studying engineering at the university of Jordan. Lama is originally from Tafileh, a small town to the southwest of Amman, and only moved to Amman at the age of 18 to attend university. During her five years at school Lama lived on campus and was completely engulfed in the circle of this religious group. As she explains, she started by attending the religion lessons that the group organized and eventually became one of its instructors. Lama explains that just being in the company of the group members pushed her to shift from wearing the fashionable veil to wearing the *jilbab*. It was her relationships within this community, not any directly preached ideals, that made her make up her mind:

> I lived on campus so I interacted with the prayer room girls a lot. These girls never tell you bluntly that you dress wrongly. They just try to befriend you and invite you to pray with them and so on. I used to attend the religion lessons they organized. I was always moved to tears by the lessons (…) Just being around them made me feel guilty and as if I was lacking something. This lasted for a year. It was my first year on campus and I was very involved in their activities, but not once did any of them talk to me directly about wearing the *jilbab*. Although many of them were surprised indeed I wasn't wearing one. (Lama 4-15)

Lama explains that the closed nature of the group and their austere type of *jilbab* made her decide to leave it after five years. She did not take off the *jilbab* after breaking with the group however, but only started wearing more fashionable versions of it.

4.2 The Socio-cultural discourse:

The socio-cultural discourse seems to have a more pronounced influence than the religious discourse on the participants' endorsement and performativity of veiling. However, as mentioned earlier, these discourses are intertwined rather than dichotomized. For instance, even when the participants endorse the practice for social and

cultural reasons they continue to manage it through the religious discourse - primarily through the criteria of veiling and the *satr* ideal. The *satr* ideal bridges in fact the two discourses as it seems to be constructed as a social mandate in addition to being a religious one. As Lama, a jilbabi participant, explains:

> When I hit puberty my mom started nagging. Everyday she'd tell me: please honey just wear the veil otherwise people won't think of us as abiding by *satr*, wear whatever you want at home but just put it on in front of people. (Lama 4-14)

There seems to be five socio-cultural tropes that run through the practice and regulate it in Jordan. Namely: the protection trope, the respect trope, the social mandate trope, the structural accommodation trope, and the marriage trope.

The Protection Trope

Veiling as a socio-cultural ideal is often promoted and endorsed under the guise of protection. Sexual harassment and the perception of veiling as a means of protection against it do not seem to be limited to one class, background, or location. As Aya, a middle class jilbabi who lives in a privileged western Amman neighborhood, explains:

> I got harassed a lot when I was unveiled. I still shake when I remember the things I went through (…) So [in the aftermath of one harassment incident] I told my mom that I wanted to wear the veil. She told me to think well because she was afraid I would take it off later. I started thinking and I read more about the practice. I honestly started wearing it <u>for protection.</u> Since the first day I put it on I felt <u>different</u>. I felt a lot of security and protection. It felt as if I was wearing a <u>shield</u> and no one could hurt me anymore [emphasis in original]. (Aya 5-2, 5-3)

The participants are aware that such protection is at best partial however. As Aya explains, the harassment incidents became less pronounced but did not stop altogether after she wore the veil. But since the participants' approach to veiling seems to be anchored in a biologically deterministic understanding of femininity and masculinity, they take this limited protection to be the best possible alternative. As Dalia, a middle

class fashionably veiled participant from western Amman asserts, since men are inherently hypersexual and women's bodies necessarily seductive, the reduction rather than the eradication of harassment is the best alternative reality women can wish for:

> Even if you're all covered up men will still see you as a woman. Guys will be guys this is their nature. As long as I don't allow them to bother me I'm fine. The veil reduces but doesn't stop their harassing looks and comments. (Dalia 9-7)

The protection trope distorts women's relationship to their bodies then so that they perceive them as the very cause of harassment and their violation as inevitable. In the context of a lack of proper and accessible legal protection, and in the context of a social framework that condones men's violation of the female body in general and of the non-veiled body in particular, women approach veiling as one of the few available options for protection against harassment – limited and ineffective as it may be. As Shatha, a non-veiled participant who comes from a working class family and who lives in an underprivileged eastern Amman neighborhood, explains:

> Veiling reduces sexual harassment. Veiled women continue to be harassed but men hesitate more before harassing them. They fear the consequences more since there is a general belief that a non-veiled woman is asking for it. (Shatha 13-3)

From my observations in the field, it is difficult to agree with Shatha since men rarely hesitate before harassing veiled women. However, she underscores an important aspect of the socio-cultural discourse; namely, a woman's contingent entitlement for social empathy. As Dalia, a middle class fashionably veiled participant, explains:

> I feel powerful because if someone said something inappropriate to me I can shut him up. But if I wasn't veiled I wouldn't be able to stand up to him. For example if I was wearing a very low cut top and a guy verbally harassed me everybody would know it's my fault since I am the one exposing my cleavage. I wouldn't have the right to say anything in this case. If I did no one would stand up for me because I am the one wearing improper clothes in the first place. But if I was veiled and I answered back everyone would agree it's his fault. (Dalia 9-7, 9-8)

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Veiling enhances a woman's social entitlement for protest then. By learning and actively implementing the ideals of this trope women act as members of the discourse and not merely as its objects (Smith, 1990, pp. 192-193). Their agency has limiting effects however because it does not negotiate the structure that distorts their sense of their bodies and their right to it, constructs them as offenders, makes their bodies violatable, and makes men entitled to police and harass them in the first place.

The Respect Trope

The protection trope seems to have a flip side intrinsic to it; namely, the respect trope. The participants explain that the veiled body is often subject to less harassment than the non-veiled body precisely because it is socially constructed as more respectable. Together, these two tropes may explain the increasing social appeal of veiling in Jordan. However, it is important to underscore the limits of respect in this context since any enhanced status that veiling may produce comes at the expense of constructing women as sexual objects whose sense of worth is determined by the male gaze. The trope distorts men's and women's relationships so that they are based on surveillance, violence, and entitlement on the part of men, and fear and defensiveness on the part of women.

The intertwinement of veiling and respect is not limited to underprivileged circles. For example, Tala, a middle class fashionably veiled participant who lives in a privileged western Amman neighborhood, explains that veiling provides her indeed with more respect than her non-veiled friends:

> I feel that people respect me more because I wear the veil. I know that if I weren't veiled people would look down on me somehow. For example, when I and my non-veiled friends walk down the street or on campus together people look at them with disrespect and say bad things to them. (Tala 10-4)

Interestingly, Tala's type of veiling is excessively fashionable and places extra emphasis on her body. In other words, it seems that respect in this context is not so much dependent on the modesty of the body but rather on the mere fact that it is covered up.

The Social Mandate Trope

Veiling seems to be increasingly socially mandated in Jordan. It is an element that is required for maintaining the hegemonic constructions of masculinity and femininity:

> The veil is becoming part of <u>our socialization</u>. You're expected to wear it. It doesn't matter if you're convinced (…) What matters is that you cover <u>your hair</u>, even the form doesn't matter [emphasis in original]. (Aseel 6-8)

The social requirement seems to be primarily focused on covering up one's skin and hair but not on observing a modest dress code per se. In the context of this mandate, the non-veiled body is taken to express a flawed masculinity that is lacking in authority in addition to a disrespectful violatable femininity. Women's bodies are constructed in fact as mere extensions of men's respectability and authority in the Jordanian imaginary, and transgressive women compromise their male guardians' reputation as much as their own. In this context, veiling ends up being promoted not so much for religious reasons but to protect masculinity. In the process of complying with this social mandate women are alienated from their bodies. Their experiences of their femininity are distorted as they learn to manage themselves as best fits men's interests. For instance, Haya, a jilbabi participant from a working class background, was forced to wear the *jilbab* partly out of concern for her father's status. For his masculinity to be asserted she had to embody a contained femininity. Her religiosity and actual wishes were simply beside the point:

> I used to wear the headscarf but then my family forced me to wear the *jilbab*. It was all out of social pressure. Even my brother who studied abroad took their side. He told me: all your sisters are jilbabis and your father is respectable and

goes to the mosque daily and now you <u>don't want to wear the *jilbab*</u>! They feared that people would say bad things about dad [emphasis in original]. (Haya 3-18)

The social mandate differs in its rigidity across contexts however. For example, Lama, who similarly comes from a working class practicing family, was only forced to wear the veil to protect her father's reputation. She was also allowed to take it off when she went to visit her mother's relatives in Amman. This illustrates that appeasing the male guardian's community, rather than modesty or religiosity per se, is what is at stake:

> At first, I used to take the veil off whenever I went to Amman with my mom (…) I wouldn't agree to go visit her relatives with my hair messed up so I would do my hair and leave without the scarf. For mom all that mattered was covering my hair in Tafeeleh [her hometown] where my dad's family lived. She used to say: the most important thing is the hair. So even in Tafeeleh she let me wear skinny jeans tight tops and so on. (Lama 14-4).

Lama's example also illustrates how situational veiling can be part of the construction of veiled femininity in its initial stages. As explained in chapter three, there are multiple "veiling regimes" that regulate the enactment of veiling through space in any society (Secor, 2002, p. 6). Lama's acquiesced non-veiling outside her community illustrates how initiating her into the practice entailed teaching her to live her body in ways that accommodated the different veiling regimes that organized the spaces she navigated.

Enforcing the social mandate seems to fall within the rights of future male guardians in addition to immediate ones. For instance, Aseel, a middle class participant who had recently unveiled at the time of the interview, was forced to wear the veil by her then fiancé. He argued that taking a non-veiled wife would compromise his masculinity. His example illustrates the concerns over the social perception of couple dynamics in

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addition to that of reputation, and emphasizes in this sense the non-static construction of

relational masculinity:

> He only cared about people. He didn't care that I stopped praying after I wore the
> veil. Initially he told me: please honey I am a man just do it to preserve my image
> in my community, I don't want to control you I just want you to show people that
> I have a say in what you do. I used to dress modestly just like I do now [she points
> to her long sleeved shirt and pants] but he just wanted me to put on the veil. We
> were engaged then and I agreed to do it [emphasis in original]. (Aseel 6-2)

The social mandate also affects non-veiled women, albeit in less pronounced

ways. Yara, a non-veiled middle class participant, argues it obliges her to tame her body:

> In our society a woman's non-veiling affects her family and how much people
> respect her father (…) Sometimes when I go to a gathering with my dad I have to
> wear something that covers my arms and avoid wearing skirts because people will
> gossip and backstab him not me [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-13, 8-14)

The construction of non/veiled Muslim femininity in the Jordanian imaginary

depends on a gendered relational conceptualization of the self that structures male-female

relationships hierarchically. If masculinity is only secured by constraining women's

disposition of their bodies then male-female relationships become ones of dominance and

subordination. Women take part in the implementation of these relationships and learn to

feel responsible for protecting the social status of their male guardians even if at the

expense of their own rights to their bodies. In this sense, women figure as agentic

members of the discourse but their agency serves to reinforce rather than disrupt the

discourse's problematic structure. While minimal, spaces of resistance necessarily

permeate the embodiment of this mandate however. For instance, while the above-

mentioned participants did comply with the social mandate, they embodied the imposed

attires in fashionable ways that negotiated social expectations even if in a minimal sense.

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The Structural Accommodation Trope

The social mandate to wear the veil is not always coerced. It is often enforced indirectly through a set of structures that accommodate the practice and promote it as part of an enjoyable lifestyle -rather than as a religious mandate. These structures include the salons that provide veil-do services (professional fashionable headscarf-wrapping), women-only swimming pools, gadgets such as the "Islamic swimming suit" (a swimming suit that covers the body and the hair), and an increasing social acceptance of veiled women in leisure spaces. In addition, there is a growing veiling fashion industry that plays a very important role in facilitating and encouraging women's adoption of the attire. Women's ability to benefit from these structures is of course influenced by their class and their type of veiling. This is clear through the example of Dalia for instance; a middle class fashionably veiled participant who lives and socializes in the privileged neighborhoods of western Amman:

> Wearing the veil didn't limit my social life at all. I still go to restaurants and cafés and the like. I still go swimming because nowadays there are women-only swimming pools for veiled women. There are even swimming pools for the ultra-orthodox veiled women who refuse to wear a swimming suit even in the presence of women only. They let them wear long shorts and shirts. (Dalia 9-10)

For middle class participants like Dalia frequenting such leisure spaces is not only financially possible but is also socially normalized to the extent of being a necessity. As Aya, a middle class jilbabi participant, explains, frequenting cafes and similar spaces is only possible for non/veiled women living in privileged neighborhoods:

> If you go to neighborhoods such as Al Manara [in eastern Amman] or any of the areas where poor people live you'll see a different reality. There's not <u>one</u> woman in cafes during the day and not anywhere out at night. But in western Amman women socialize freely with men even at night and even when they are veiled. I too did that when I used to wear the scarf without the *jilbab*. (Aya 5-23, 5-24)

Aya also explains that even women from privileged backgrounds cannot benefit fully from the accommodation trope if they wear the more conservative forms of veiling:

> I used to go with my brother to the movies all the time before I wore the *jilbab*. But after I put it on he would say: please don't embarrass me! What would people say? A jilbabi in a movie theatre with a guy! Forget it you can't come. (Aya 5-19)

In addition to exposing the spatiality of appropriate femininity in the Jordanian imaginary, Aya illustrates the limited nature of the veil-accommodating structures. Jilbabis for instance seem to be considered too conservative to be part of leisure spaces or male-female relationships –even when the *jilbab* is embodied in a fashionable non-conventional way and backed up by class privileges like in Aya's case. Interestingly, non-veiled women take part in this policing. For instance, Rana, a middle class non-veiled participant frequents clubs herself but argues that veiled women should not:

> You just can't be in a pub or club if you are veiled it's not right or appropriate (…) I can't stand veiled women who do that [emphasis in original]. (Rana 7-3)

The participants illustrate that the veiling fashion industry is another structure that facilitates their embodiment of the practice -simply by making it part of fashion. It opens a space for them to negotiate limits and come up with new veiling styles. For instance, the veiling fashion industry seems to be blurring the lines between veiling and non-veiling styles and this makes taking up the veil more feasible and affordable:

> A woman who decides to wear the veil now doesn't have to change her wardrobe entirely. She can just get some basics to modify the clothes she used to wear. Like long sleeved shirts to wear under her short-sleeved ones and so on. (Dalia 9-11)

Additionally, the emerging veiling accessories make the practice outright enjoyable. For instance, Suha, a middle class fashionably veiled participant, explains that the market is now saturated with a variety of veil-oriented fashion items:

There are so many nice styles of veiling available now. There are trendy veils, nice veil accessories and so on. Before, there were few options available but now you can make <u>each piece</u> match: the bag and the shoes and the scarf. You can focus on <u>your elegance</u> as a veiled woman [emphasis in original]. (Suha 12-12)

When read through what the participants said earlier about denouncing living the veil as a fashion project, this investment in the veil fashion industry underscores a tension between the construction of the practice and its embodiment. The veiling industry seems to use this ambivalent approach to fashion to its benefit. Jood for instance illustrates how the veiling fashion industry creates a Muslim femininity where consumerist exhibitionist values are reified -even in different classes. Jood is a jilbabi participant from the working class and one of the few who wear the veil for religious reasons. Despite financial constraints she seems to be able to stay up to date with the veil fashion. Moreover, her decision to shift from the fashionable veil to the *abaya* was dependent on the possibility of embodying a fashionable look and not just on her religiosity:

I used to look at the *jilbabs* and *abayas* and think: <u>they are just not pretty</u>. They didn't look attractive or trendy. They looked like bags (…) and I felt they would never suit me. But then there started to be more trendy and colorful *abayas* on the market (…) that were at the same time long and wide. This eventually made me make up my mind to switch to the *abaya* [emphasis in originial]. (Jood 1-10)

The type of venues that are open for the participants to act on their desire for a feminine fashionable veiled look are influenced by their class however. For instance, similarly to Jood, Lama wanted to switch from the fashionable veil to another form of veiling but was put off by its unfashionable look. Having made her way to the middle class however Lama did not have to wait until the Jordanian market changed like Jood did. Rather, she took recourse in the Turkish and British fashion industries and started buying fashionable *jilbabs* online. Her class position made this option financially possible:

I looked online for new *jilbab* designs different from the dark austere ones that were available on the market. I bought some casual colorful *jilbabs* from the UK initially (…) They were not excessively fashionable, just trendy. (Lama 4-8)

In this sense, the participants use the veiling fashion industry to negotiate the embodiment of veiling but not its being a mandate. The example of Tala, discussed under section 3, further illustrates this point. By wearing leggings and short dresses with the veil, Tala uses the ideals of the fashion industry in subversive combinations that challenge the hegemonic embodiment of veiling. However, such an alternative Muslim femininity remains limited precisely because the fashion industry that enables it re-thinks the constraints of the religious signifier but does not challenge its logic. After all, the participants who wear the fashionable *abayas*, *jilbabas*, and veils do not dis-identify with the logic behind the practice but only with the form that concealment should take. While certainly limited, this site of resistance remains important to acknowledge because it sheds light on the complexity of living the experience of veiling in subversive ways.

The Marriage Trope

It seems that veiling increases a woman's marriageability in the Jordanian social imaginary −Aseel's example discussed earlier illustrates this point for instance. The intensity of this trope varies however so that it is less prevalent in the upper class and more applicable to certain forms of veiling than others. For instance, the jilbabi participants emphasized that wearing the *jilbab* in particular increases a woman's marriageability. It could be that the *jilbab* indicates a more contained femininity (and hence a more pronounced male authority) than other forms of veiling and is thus more appealing to suitors. Interestingly, the participants explained that men do not prefer to romance jilbabis or hijabis however. As Haya, a jilbabi from the working class, explains:

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Suitors look for women who wear the *jilbab* more than they look for women who wear the headscarf only. Many suitors asked for my hand in marriage just because they were looking for a jilbabi. In everyday life men stay away from jilbabis and veiled women however and say they are old fashioned and too religious. But when they want to settle down they look precisely for such women. (Haya 3-8)

Presumed to be strict when it comes to having relationships with men, veiled and jilbabi women may be rarely coveted as girlfriends but they seem to make excellent candidates for marriage however. In the context of the gendered relational conceptualization of the self in place in Jordan the presumption that a woman has never been "owned" by another partner asserts a man's masculinity. By buying into this trope women only further the objectifying construction of femininity in place in society.

The veil-marriageiability connection may be common in the working and middle classes but not so much in the upper ones. For example, Sama, a fashionably veiled upper class participant, explains that the trope works in the exact opposite way in her entourage:

It [marriageability] depends where you're from. For example, a lot of women in my circle want to wear the scarf but don't precisely because they want to get married. So maybe in the rural areas wearing the scarf makes you get married more easily, but not in my circle. Here to attract suitors you have to look stylish, do your hair all the time and so on [emphasis in original]. (Sama 2-17)

So while the upper class may not promote the veiling-marriageability template, it seems to maintain the hegemonic construction of masculinity and femininity at play in other classes. After all, Sama indicates that women still have to shape themselves according to the needs of suitors -even if it means putting off their wish to wear the veil.

4.3 The media discourse:

Both the veiled and the non-veiled participants underscore the increasing popularity of the religious shows broadcasted on entertainment channels. These seem to

be more appealing than the conservative ones that run on religious channels because of their "modern" packaging and content, as the participants describe them. "Modernity" in this context seems to point to the preachers' westernized attires, friendly approach, and moderate teachings. As Rana, a non-veiled middle class participant, explains:

> I like Amr Khaled [a famous Egyptian TV preacher]. He speaks about religion in general and how it's about treating others well. He's not like the others who say it's either you wear the veil or you're going to hell. Besides he dresses normally. He wears suits and he's always clean shaven. (Rana 7-15)

Even if veiling per se is not always tackled in these programs, by embodying a "modern" Islam on the level of dress and lifestyle, such preachers increase the appeal of religion and allow the flourishing of forms of veiling that are equally non-conventional.

The influence of the religious shows remains minimal however when compared with that of the soap operas and movies that the participants watch more frequently. The constructions of non/veiled femininity that permeate drama seem to trigger both an antagonism toward non-veiling and a more pronounced investment in the fashionable veiling. The intensity of this influence is of course often classed. For instance, Haya, a jilbabi participant who comes from a working class background, explains that her family watches Arabic and Turkish soap operas avidly. She underscores the indirect indoctrination at work both in the Arabic drama, which often portrays non-veiled women as morally loose, and in the Turkish drama, which emphasizes women's sexual autonomy. Haya argues that such constructions of non/veiled femininity were one of the reasons that induced her parents to force her to wear the *jilbab*:

> It's also that my parents watch Arabic soap operas all the time and the plot is always something like this: a girl goes to university, falls in love, and gets herself pregnant or something just as silly! My parents never went to university and they believe this. So when I said I wanted to go to university they insisted even more that I have to wear the *jilbab* first [emphasis in original]. (Haya 3-14)

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As explained earlier, Haya's family forced her to wear the *jilbab* in the context of preserving her father's reputation. Through this excerpt of her narrative she explains how the media discourse is part of what constructs less conservative embodiments of femininity as threatening to his masculinity in the first place. From the parents' perspective, the *jilbab* can function as a substitute for their immediate policing of Haya.

In more privileged classes, the American and Turkish drama seem to breed more malleable constructions of Muslim femininity on the other hand. For instance, Aya, a middle class jilbabi, argues that girls in her entourage are so influenced by the American lifestyle they see on TV that they create types of veiling that allow them to reconcile it with the social constraints imposed on them:

> Girls here watch American movies and series all the time. They like the American lifestyle but at the same time they have to be veiled. They feel trapped (…) so they start wearing the styles they see on TV with the headscarf. (Aya 5-4)

The media may allow the emergence of new forms of veiling in this sense but it seems to have little impact in terms of disrupting the hegemonic constructions of femininity and masculinity that mandate veiling and men's authority over women. For example, as Aya further explains, men may be increasingly watching American and Turkish drama in the less privileged parts of the country, but many of them still refuse to let their wives and daughters as much as watch it.

5- The Hierarchical Construction of Muslim Femininity

As the earlier discussion of the socio-cultural discourse illustrates, there seems to be a complex hierarchy that structures the status of veiling and non-veiling in the Jordanian imaginary. Veiling seems to be generally favored over non-veiling on the

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levels of respect and bodily integrity and even popular fashions, and certain types of veiling seem to be more privileged than others. However, this hierarchal structure seems to be reversed on the level of employment so that non-veiled candidates are favored over veiled ones (except in Islamic institutions). As will be explained, while seemingly different both aspects of the hierarchy function in similar ways that determine women's worth through their sexuality.

I theorize the advantages that women get through this hierarchy in terms of being privileges -primarily to underscore their conditional and unearned nature. A privilege is an unearned benefit after all; it may be conferred systematically on individuals but it remains conditional nonetheless precisely because it is bestowed independently of any skills or assets that its recipients may possess (Bailey, 1998, p. 107). Through the hierarchy of non/veiling the participants do not experience respect, bodily integrity, and access to jobs as rights. Rather, these are constructed as privileges that are bestowed only on some women but not on others according to their embodiment of femininity.

Keeping the hegemonic hierarchical construction of Muslim femininity in place depends on gossip as a disciplining technique as much as it depends on giving veiled women privileges. While moving up the hierarchy of veiling is rewarded, moving down its ranks is actively disciplined through gossip. As Maram, a middle class fashionably veiled participant argues, gossip is what stops her from unveiling:

> <u>I don't want to wear the veil</u> but I can't take it off because in my work place the employees who took off their veils were subject to dishonoring gossip. Everyone started saying they were promiscuous (…) A woman's honor is a serious matter in our culture so I can't run such a risk [emphasis in original]. (Maram 15-1)

The participants who did take off their veils provide further insight into the defamation in question. As, Dana, a middle class participant who unveiled, explains:

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I felt guilty because men's gossip is harsh. They started asking: why did she unveil? does she want to show other men that she's pretty? why is she suddenly more in touch with her femininity? so it was not easy for my husband (…) When I first told him my decision he was furious. He tried to talk me out of it. Then he asked people for advice. So I told him: listen, this is my wish and you have a choice too, if you can't accept this then let's leave each other. (Dana 11-6, 11-7)

Dana's quote illustrates the disciplining power of gossip and how it is anchored in the relational gendered conceptualization of the self that structures masculinity and femininity. Such gossip permeates male and female circles in different classes and seems to be no less strict when a woman only moves from one form of veiling to a "lesser" one:

One of our colleagues at university just took off her *niqab* and others gossiped about her for a month. She was still a jilbabi but she was ostracized. (Aya 5-7)

This context could be another reason for the flourishing of the fashion-based veiling styles. If "regression" in the forms of embodying femininity is disciplined, a more viable alternative may lie indeed in modifying one's form of veiling so that it approximates the coveted less strict one to the extent possible.

As for the privileges that the hierarchy grants for women in order to ensure their conformity, they play out in a complex way on both the social and the economic levels:

5.1 The Social Privileges

Veiling grants women an enhanced status so that they are deferred socially and presumed to be religiously knowledgeable. This seems to be the case in fact in different classes. The intensity of this status depends in turn on a veiled woman's way of embodying the *satr* ideal. For instance, wearing the conservative *jilabab* yields more privileges than wearing the fashionable one, and wearing the fashionable *jilbab* more so than wearing the fashionable veil. The status of the different types of the fashionable veil

varies in turn according to the extent to which they expose the body but generally tops

that of non-veiling. As Haya, a jilbabi participant from the working class explains:

> Jilbabis like myself are considered very religious. I can tell from the topics people
> discuss with me. They assume I practice because of my *jilbab*. On the other hand,
> non-veiled women are stigmatized as not religious and those who wear the scarf
> with no *jilbab* are considered to be in-between. Their respect depends on what
> they wear. It's sometimes confusing however. For example, people think highly
> of my *jilbab* but the conservative ones think it isn't good enough because it is
> accessorized. (Haya 3-11)

For non-veiled women, the hierarchy is indeed harsher. As Yara, a non-veiled

middle class participant, explains:

> People are <u>surprised</u> to know I pray and fast. And my colleagues act surprised
> when I get angry with men who make advances at me. It hurts because they think
> I'm <u>easier</u> than our veiled colleagues [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-13)

As explained under the discourses section, the integrity of the female body is also

experienced hierarchically so that it is often a privilege that is granted for some bodies

only. As Aya, a middle class jilbabi, explains:

> After I wore the veil I could immediately feel the difference. I could move around
> without being harassed all the time. And when I wore the *jilbab* things got even
> better. Harassment didn't stop but I felt more shielded against it. (Aya 5-20).

This aspect of the hierarchy follows the same logic explained above so that non-

veiling engenders the biggest chances of harassment -even more so than excessively

fashionable veiling- and the *jilbab* induces the least. In this sense, the hierarchy disrupts

the hegemonic sense of modesty, exposes the emptiness of the required *satr*, and

illustrates that harassment is not induced by women's dress code but by men's

socialization. However, at the same time, the hierarchy keeps the structures that enforce

the problematic ideals intact. After all, while participants like Aya may feel "shielded", in

practice men continue to be entitled to validate or disvalidate women's disposition of

their bodies, regulate space, and dictate the norms of "propriety". Moreover, women continue to locate the problem in their own bodies and to construct some bodies as rightfully violatable.

5.2 The Job Market:

Veiling seems to reduce women's viability on the job market. The participants explain that the jilbabis are the worst off in this context followed by the fashionably veiled. This stands in sharp contrast with the socio-cultural valuation of veiling discussed earlier. The tension in question illustrates the contradicting demands placed on Jordanian women who are expected to contain their femininity to get social valuation and to flaunt it simultaneously to lure in clients and engender profit for the hiring companies.

The participants' experiences illustrate that the hierarchy in question is at work in different areas of specialization. However, their insight is limited to the private sector. Only one veiled participant had ever applied for or worked in the public sector – in fact, it was there that she eventually got a job after being repeatedly rejected by private institutions. The participants' overwhelming inclination towards the private sector despite its biases could stem from the fact that it has more and better-paid openings.

Private institutions openly favor non-veiled candidates because of the use value of their bodies, and they often state the importance of appearance in their job advertisements. As Haya, a jilbabi participant with a bachelor degree in English, argues:

> Non-veiled women stand more chances in finding a job. The *jilbab* makes things even more complicated. For example, in administrative job ads they ask for presentable female candidates. I often applied confident that I was indeed presentable. But they would always tell me: sorry you are a jilbabi. (Haya 3-22)

Such overt discrimination against certain bodies in job advertisements is not against the law in Jordan and companies run little risk of being held accountable for it. The logic at work, which assesses women primarily in terms of their bodies not their credentials, disadvantages fashionably veiled women too. As Dalia, a fashionably veiled participant with a bachelor degree in IT, explains:

> I started looking for a job right after I graduated, but my veil was a huge obstacle and got me rejected more than once. Once the HR person even told me that directly. I had applied for an IT position and passed the exam and the interviews but they never called me back although they had five openings. I called HR and they said: sorry you're veiled, this doesn't work for the company. (Dalia 9-5, 9-6)

The experience of the non-veiled participants illustrates this point. Yara, a non-veiled participant with a bachelor degree in marketing, says she is indeed advantaged:

> Being not veiled can be a privilege when it comes to finding a job, but this annoys me. Employers often make me feel as if I am hired just because my appearance will make clients approach me easily. It's <u>disgusting</u>. I make double the effort to prove that I am <u>not just a pretty girl</u> [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-11)

Being under-privileged in the job market rarely affects the veiled participants' endorsement of the practice however even when they financially need a job. This was the case of Jood for example, a participant who comes from a working class background and holds a bachelor degree in Arabic. Jood initially wore the fashionable veil, and despite the fact that she financially needed to find a job to help with family expenses, she rejected the job offers that required her to take off her veil or modify it. Through her example we see that while private companies discriminate against veiled women, private institutions with Islamic inclinations similarly consider women in terms of appearance and discriminate against the non-veiled in general and the non-jilbabis in particular:

> A lot of Islamic schools refused to hire me unless I took up the *jilbab*. I was already veiled but they said they only hired jilbabis. But I would never change my

dress code for money. At the same time newspapers and other non-Islamic institutions wouldn't hire me because I was veiled. (Jood 1-12)

Fashionably veiled women seem to be the worst off then since their type of veiling gives them less chances of being hired by Islamic and non-Islamic institutions.

Having explored the participants' conceptualization of Muslim femininity and having unpacked its structuring, chapter four laid the grounds for understanding the complexity of living Islam and femininity in Jordan. The following chapter discusses the theme of embodiment and elaborates in this sense on the participants' ethical work and on the bodily pleasure that they experience through non/veiling.

Chapter 5

Embodying Muslim Femininity: The Process and Its Implications

1- Introduction

Chapter four focused on the social-cultural aspects that regulate the project of Muslim femininity in Jordan, this chapter provides more insight into the bodily aspect of the experience. More precisely, the chapter explores the pleasure derived from veiling the body, the "ethical work" (Foucault, 1985, p. 27) that the participants undertake in order to embody it, and the integration of the garment into the body. The chapter proceeds then to complicate the non/religious modes of being that the participants instate through veiling, and examines lastly the limits of their embodied agency. As the chapter centres the participants' ethical work and explicates the individual aspects of their experiences of their bodies, it underscores the relational contexts that necessarily determine such personal investment. Moreover, it highlights the effects of the participants' ethical work on veiling as a regime or a mechanism that works to regulate women and their femininity.

The middle class affiliations of most participants influence the insights they provide into the question of embodiment. However, as explained in chapter two, this is not a limitation as the study sets to provide an in-depth examination of certain experiences of non/veiling and not an exhaustive "representation" of all.

2- Inhabiting the Veiled Body: Juggling Embodiment and Disembodiment

2.1 The Veil as a Means for Intensifying the Pleasure Taken in the Body

As explained in chapter four, most of the veiled participants seem to live Muslim femininity through the culturally and religiously mandated *satr* ideal. The examples discussed in this section illustrate that this ideal seems to be coveted as much as it is imposed. The veiled participants seem to derive pleasure from living their bodies through its constraints for instance. While this does not change the ideal's coercive nature, it complicates the participants' endorsement of it. For instance, Jood, a participant from a working class background who wears the fashionable *abaya* (a decorated loose fitting gown) explains that her desire to embody the *satr* and the pleasure derived from experiencing it on the level of the body are part of what pushed her to do the constraining ethical work required in veiling:

> I enjoy the way it feels to walk around while knowing that my body is *msattar* [meets the *satr* ideal]. Of course, I didn't feel this right away. When I first started wearing the *abaya* I was actually anxious because it was hard to give up on the attractive fashionable styles. But wearing the *abaya* turned out to be more enjoyable than I expected. The fact that I no longer had to tug at my shirt all the time to cover my body made me feel happy. The fact that I no longer feared that my top would expose some parts of my body made up for the things on which I gave up. I used to feel guilty because my dress code was not *msattar* [did not live up to *satr*]. So now I feel happier and much more confident. (Jood 1-7)

While Jood's desire for the *satr* may be based in her understanding of her body as a source of embarrassment, interestingly, it does not imply any desire for disembodiment or any lack of pleasure in living the body nonetheless. On the contrary, Jood seems to use the fashion-based and *satr*-based *abaya* as a "technology of the self" (a technique through which individuals work on their body and conduct to attain a coveted state) (Foucault, 1988a, p. 18) that enhances, rather than contains, the pleasure she derives from living her

body. For instance, as the following quote illustrates, the ethical work that Jood performs on her body is centered around beautifying and enjoying it and on accommodating a simultaneous desire to conceal it. This means that it works both to disrupt and reinforce the dominant veiling regime in place in the country:

> I like taking care of my appearance and my body. I spend a lot of time choosing my *abayas*, their styles and colors. I like trying on new styles, accessorizing them and so on. It makes me feel happy (…) What I wear has to be a bit wide and long but it still has to suit my body. The *jilbab* and the veil don't contradict being elegant or taking care of your looks at all. (Jood 1-21)

The fashionable *abaya* seems to be the means that allows Jood to embody her desire for an intensified and concealed femininity within the limits of her working class conservative family background. Suha, a middle class fashionably veiled participant who comes from a less strict family background, uses another variant of the attire for this same end. For Suha, the fashionable veiling intensified rather than limited her sense of her body. The technologies of the self that she undertook in this context similarly increased the pleasure that she derived from inhabiting her body in comparison with her previous experience of it:

> I actually started taking extra care of my looks and my body after I took up the veil because now my hair no longer shows and it is a very important part of my beauty. For example, I started wearing more makeup. I never wore makeup to school before and I just didn't care about what I wore in general. But after veiling I started paying more attention, and I actually started enjoying this. (Suha 12-7)

The notion of a disembodiment-oriented veiling is more forcefully rejected by Tala, another middle class fashionably veiled participant, who argues that using the veil to tame a woman's sense and enjoyment of her body runs against the practice's purpose. This is why she rejects the *jilbab* (a long gown similar to an overcoat) for instance:

> The *jilbab* conceals all the features of the body. This is not what veiling is about. God didn't create our bodies so that we erase them. *Satr* is required but this does

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not mean cancelling femininity, this is against human nature (…) The *jilbab* can make a woman lose her sense of femininity. It changes the way you see yourself. It's as if you're supposed to cancel your body when you step outside. (Tala 10-8)

Tala introduces a malleable sense of *satr* and veiling that challenge mainstream Islam and the dominant veiling regime it advances. While mainstream Islam advances the *jilbab* for its concealing effect, in Tala's understanding of the practice the veil should be a tool that helps a woman feel, rather than contain, the beauty of her body. This in turn disrupts the hegemonic structure of the veiling regime and brings to the fore an interesting non-conventional insight into the bodily effects of veiling:

> The veil helps me express my beauty. I am beautiful and my body is beautiful even when it is all covered up. The veil is only there to help me decide who can get closer to me. It doesn't cancel my femininity or my body. I feel that it actually accentuates them. When I cover my body I actually feel it more. (Tala 10-8)

Concealment seems to serve the goal of hyper-embodiment rather than that of disembodiment then. As the above-discussed quotes illustrate, the features of the body may be covered up indeed but only in the goal of being accentuated and enjoyed rather than in the goal of being contained and loathed. This illustrates in fact how the tensioned ethical work performed by the participants serves to simultaneously shift and reinforce the demands of the dominant veiling regime in place in Jordan.

2.2 The Veil as Part of the Body and a Substitute for the Hair

Another important aspect of embodying the practice of veiling is the garment's enmeshment with the participants' very sense of their bodies. The veil seems to be lived as a technology of the self that is continuously reiterated to the extent of becoming a key part of the participants' body image. The integration of the garment into the body image seems to be an experience that the participants share across classes, and one that they go

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through even if the attire had been initially imposed on them. For instance, Areej, a participant who comes from a working class background and who was initially forced to wear the *jilbab*, explains that after years of resisting the attire it eventually became part of her basic body image -to the extent that she feels naked without it:

> I avoided wearing the *jilbab* when possible for a long time. For example, I used to wear very long jackets instead of the *jilbab* whenever I went out for visits. I continued to do this until I graduated in 2007. Then I just stopped. I started feeling <u>naked</u> without the *jilbab*. I also started feeling that I <u>wanted</u> to wear it and that I didn't want others to see me without it [emphasis in original]. (Areej 14-4)

Clothes can change in fact an individual's sense of her body and the way she experiences it in space (Loschek, 2009, p. 17). In Areej's case, her reiteration of the practice eventually made the non-veiled state, rather than the veiled one, distorting of her body image. Her non-jilbabed body simply feels vulnerable and un-presentable of her identity.

Some veiled participants seem to relate to their veils in terms of being parts of their bodies and not just parts of their body image. Non-corporeal objects can be sometimes included indeed in one's very body-schema so that they are experienced as actual parts of the body (De Preester & Tsakiris, 2009, pp. 309-310). This, of course, affects the individual's sense of her real body parts (De Preester & Tsakiris, 2009, p. 713). For instance, Lama, a jilbabi participant who is making her way into the middle class, explains how the veil turned from a mere garment to an integral part of her body that completed her very sense of it. Lama's relationship to her actual body and her sense of its wholeness changed and became dependent on wearing the veil. Interestingly, Lama had objected to wearing the veil initially, and the attire's gradual yet intense

incorporation into her body was the result of its reiteration and internalization, rather than her religiosity:

> When I was in grade 9 or 10 I started feeling more attached to the veil. I don't know why. I wasn't getting more religious, I just started feeling that it was <u>part of me.</u> I could no longer even step into the backyard without it. After years of wearing it, I just started feeling that I was lacking something if it was not on my head [emphasis in original]. (Lama 4-15)

This seems to be similarly part of Sama's experience, an upper class fashionably veiled participant:

> The veil <u>completes</u> me (…) At this point it feels like a part of me, it feels like a part of my body [emphasis in original]. (Sama 4-7)

Sama argues that the veil "completes" her. To confer such a feeling, the veil is not experienced as a mere dispensable extension of the body. Rather, it seems to occupy a key place in the body-schema so that its presence determines the wholeness of the body.

The integration of a newly added part into an individual's body-schema is a complex process however. While the assimilation of the new part is crucial to one's sense of the body, it can be simultaneously temporary and contingent -like in the case of an artificial limb for example (Berlucchi & Aglioti, 1997, p. 561). While the case of veiling is clearly different than that of prostheses, the lived experience as the participants describe it bears interesting similarities on the level of the contingency of integration. For instance, the veil seems to be experienced as an intrinsic part of the participants' bodies in public and in the presence of men. However, in private and in men's absence its importance recedes. In such contexts, the body and its image are experienced as whole again independently from the garment. What is all the more interesting is that this shift seems to be experienced as enjoyable rather than distorting or alienating, and this seems to be the case across classes and types of veiling. Haya, a jilbabi participant from a

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working class conservative background, provides one example:

> It honestly feels great when I enter a women's party veiled and then take off my veil and show off my hair and my looks! As my mom says it's as if you're *mkhabbayeh b 'ishourek* [an expression that means that onlookers realize you are a big surprise; someone whose beauty has been unnoticed and is finally seen]! And this feels great! (Haya 3-9)

This discrepancy in the experience of the body across space is of course facilitated by the presumed de-sexualization of the female gaze intrinsic to the project of veiling. Haya's quote shows that the resulting vacillation between inhibiting and enhancing the exposure of the body intensifies, rather than negatively affects, her sense of her body.

The new objects that are incorporated into the body-schema have to fit of course into the pre-existing model of the body. The feeling of bodily ownership is only extended to the parts that come to resemble the original bodily parts and that gradually start to function as a replacement for them (De Preester & Tsakiris, 2009, pp. 317-318). For instance, the participants often indicated that they experienced the veil as a replacement for their hair. Sama, a fashionably veiled upper class participant, often invoked this association:

> You know how sometimes you get bored with your hair and you want to cut it or die it? It's the same thing with the veil. Sometimes you just feel bored and you want to change the wrap. There was a phase in my life it's crazy how many times I changed the wrap! A colleague of mine noticed and she would tell me: this one is nice, don't do this one again it doesn't suit your face, and so on! (Sama 2-22)

Sama seems to conceptualize her veil in terms of being a "surrogate" to her hair, and seems to define the pleasure she takes in adorning it along those lines. Even for her colleague the veil style had to frame Sama's face nicely just like a haircut would. The veil seems to be approached as an actual part of the body then and is also clearly

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embodied as a *zeena*-enhancing technology of the self that disrupts the presumed

disembodiment and containment grounds of the practice:

> If you have nice hair you curl it up or you straighten it and you'll be walking
> around feeling happy about it. I guess it's the same thing if you have a nice veil
> on. If it has colorful nice prints and so on you'll feel happy because you know
> you're wearing a nice scarf and you'll like it if somebody complemented you on
> how you're doing your scarf (…) I don't know if it kind of <u>replaced</u> my hair? I
> think in one way or another it did [emphasis in original]. (Sama 2-22)

The language that Sama uses is telling because it draws parallels between the

experience of living femininity through veiling and non-veiling. Sama seems to act like

any non-veiled woman who derives pleasure from sporting a look that attracts attention.

Instead of taming this desire, the veil helps her achieve it by substituting her hair.

Maram, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, sheds further light on the

particularity of living the veil-hair template by invoking the veil-salons:

> When I go to a wedding party I get a veil-do. There are special places where you
> can get one now. You go and they wrap your veil nicely for you. They wrap it in a
> bow or layer it up. I usually ask for the wraps that are elaborate on the backside of
> the head like the ones that are made to resemble a bow or a flower, but I never go
> for the wraps that expose the neck. I always make sure that my neck is covered
> (…) I do it because I too want to stand out. What you as a non-veiled woman do
> with your hair I do with my veil. (Maram 15-3)

For Maram, the veil is a surrogate hair that makes it possible to perform the

ethical work and the acts of beautification that non-veiled women do with their hair. Her

example also underscores how the feminine body is the targeted "ethical substance"

(Foucault, 1985, p. 26) in this context. The ethical work that she carries out seeks to

establish a "mode of being" (Foucault, 1985, p. 28) that accentuates femininity per se all

while using a religious symbol.

3- Looking Closer: The Technologies of the Self Used and the Modes of Being
Established

The participants seem to use veiling as a technology of the self that negotiates the modes of being conventionally associated with the practice. This entails negotiating religiosity and the reserved lifestyle that presumably accompanies wearing the garment. In other words, if veiling is considered to be one regime of knowledge and power pervasive in Jordan, the following sections illustrate that the participants' ethical work serves to negotiate the "truth" and mechanisms that this regime advances.

3.1- Negotiating the Embodiment of Religiosity

As explained in chapter four, few participants endorse veiling for exclusively or primarily religious reasons. The mode of being that most of them seek is often simultaneously or exclusively focused on femininity, fashionability, and culture. This makes the veiled participants' performativity of veiling fall in the cracks of the intentions of the religious discourse. More importantly, such a performativity of the practice seems to open a space for re-thinking what counts as a viable mode of being for Muslim women altogether. As the following examples illustrate, through the ethical work that they perform the veiled participants seem to negotiate three particular aspects of the modes of being that ensue from veiling. Namely; the role of fashion in constructing a religious mode of being, the role of religiosity in defining a Muslim mode of being, and the association of religion and a veil-based mode of being. The non-veiled participants argue in turn for a non-veiling based religious mode of being.

Jood for instance, a participant from a working class background, seeks to reconcile religiosity and fashionability through her veiling-based mode of being. To embody her increasing religiosity, she used fashion-informed technologies of the self:

> I took up the veil because I am Muslim and I have to wear it (…) At first I wore a funny veil. I used to wear tight pants and short tops and so on. But then baggy pants became the trend and this helped me a lot! They are wide so this helped me improve my veil and yet stay up to date with fashion. Then I started feeling that I wanted to improve my veil even more. I started wearing longer and longer tops until a point where I was convinced that I wanted to wear the full *shari'* dress code [a term that refers to the *jilbab* or *abaya* based veiling]. At first I was reluctant then as the fashionable *abaya* spread I made up my mind. (Jood 1-6)

By instating a mode of being that actively deploys and prioritizes fashion as a religious mode of being, Jood seems to re-define what can count as a religious mode of being altogether. The surprise that Jood's colleagues show at her embodiment of the religious mode of being in question illustrates how it challenges in fact the intentions of the social and religious discourses:

> My colleagues at school were shocked because I continued to be elegant [after wearing the *abaya*]. They were surprised that my attire was still colorful and fashionable. Some of them even told me: you encouraged us to take up the *shar'i* dress because yours is so elegant and nice unlike the conventional one. (Jood 1-6)

Participants like Jood try to negotiate the viable components of the veil-based religious mode of being. Others go so far as challenging the very primacy of religion in defining the mode of being of veiled Muslims. For such participants, religiosity does not necessarily define, and certainly does not exhaust, a veiled self-identifying Muslim woman's mode of being. For instance, Suha, a middle class fashionably veiled participant, took up the veil for religious reasons but emphasizes that religiosity in general, and veiling in particular, do not define her mode of being. Rather, her politics and other ideologies do:

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The veil is just one part of my identity and my outlook on life but it does not define who I am and how I live (…) Some women feel that they derive their sense of themselves from it. I am happy for them but this is not how I feel. I believe in other things that define my identity more than veiling and religion. (Suha 12-15)

Suha seems to argue for the ability to be religious and to use a technology of the self such as veiling without having a mode of being that is defined primarily or exclusively through religion. This in turn introduces a major challenge to the dominant regime's intentions.

Maram a fashionably veiled middle class participant, illustrates yet another nuance in this context. Her example underscores the possibility of using the veil for exclusively non-religious reasons and in the context of a non-religious mode of being. As mentioned in chapter four, Maram was made to wear the veil by her father for cultural reasons. For her, her attire does not even count as religious:

"This veil that I wear is part of traditions but it's not a real veil" (Maram 15-1)

As Maram finds herself obliged to wear the veil she uses it to materialize her desire for fashion and for an accentuated femininity and to approximate the non-veiled mode of being that she longs for but is unable to embody fully. This stands in contrast to the goals that the above-mentioned participants seek to live through their veiling and their bodies:

I had to wear the veil when I was 12 so I never got enough of short skirts, sleeveless shirts, sport caps and all that. And I love these things. I was deprived from them very early in my life and I want to try them out. So I try to make up for this through the veil as much as I can [emphasis in original]. (Maram 15-7)

The non-veiled participants' performativity of the project of Muslim femininity provides an equally interesting example of a "slippage" between the intentions of the religious discourse and its actual embodiment and of disrupting veiling as a dominant

regime. For the non-veiled participants, non-veiling, rather than veiling, is the technology of the self that is used in order to embody their mode of being as practicing Muslim women. Such a performativity of the project of Muslim femininity challenges the intentions of the religious discourse both on the level of the technology of the self that is deployed (non-veiling), and also on the level of the established mode of being that seeks to validate a non-veiling-based religiosity.

For the non-veiled participants, the experience of living what they define as a Muslim mode of being is often divided between their own sense of religiosity and others' skepticism of their authenticity. For example, Yara, a middle class non-veiled participant who self-identifies as practicing, thinks of her mode of being as Islamically valid. Others question its viability however because of the technologies of the self it combines:

> People are often surprised by what I do. More than one person asked me how come you swim in public yet pray? (...) This makes me feel that people have a confused understanding of what being Muslim and religious means. They don't see praying as part of my relationship to God or as my way of staying connected to Him. No, for them it's just a requirement. That's why they can't understand how I follow one requirement but not another [veiling] (…) I think that they reduce Islam to one practice that is not even part of it (…) I am personally at peace with God and I worship him out of love [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-6)

From a hegemonic religious and cultural perspective, the technologies of the self that Yara uses (such as flaunting her body in a swimming suit and enacting a religious ritual that entails veiling such as praying) are incompatible. More importantly, they are incompatible with a mode of being that seeks to express religiosity. For Yara on the other hand, such technologies of the self are all part of the ethical work that she does on her body and conduct in order to embody her Muslim femininity in the way she wants.

The non-veiled participants differ in their embodiment of non-veiled Muslim femininity however, and this seems to be related to their class and family backgrounds.

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For example, coming from a middle class privileged background, Yara's positionality makes her access to mixed-sex swimming pools socially and financially possible. Her family who is tolerant of her non-veiling also facilitates her ability to incorporate a technology of the self such as swimming into her non-veiled Muslim femininity:

> My dad is practicing but he doesn't impose his beliefs on me or on my brothers and sister (…) My brothers on the other hand are extremely against veiling. They don't like it and they don't agree with the logic behind it. (Yara 8-16, 8-17)

Shatha, another non-veiled participant who is equally practicing, embodies her non-veiling differently than Yara -both on the level of the beliefs and the technologies of the self deployed. Her context influences of course her mode of being. Shatha lives in an underprivileged eastern Amman neighborhood where veiling is the norm, and comes from a conservative working class family who frowns upon her non-veiling:

> Mom keeps praying that God will show me the right way and sometimes she openly scolds me about it [about being non-veiled] (…) Huda [her sister] is so upset about it that sometimes she cries. She keeps praying for me. Salma [her other sister] often gets into fights with me because I won't wear it. (Shatha 13-5)

Moreover, unlike Yara, Shatha is convinced with veiling as a practice. She may oppose her family's attempts to push it on her but she simultaneously takes up technologies of the self that help her approximate her body to the veiled state and make her conduct close to the hegemonic conduct required of practicing Muslims:

> I don't wear the veil because I don't like it not because I don't believe in it (…) I did the *'omra* [a religious ritual similar to pilgrimage] and this affected my dress code. I didn't wear the veil after the *'omra* but I decided to start wearing more conservative clothes. For example, I stopped wearing short-sleeved shirts. (Shatha 13-3)

Traditionally, performing a ritual such as the *'omra* indicates increasing religiosity. This ritual, which women perform while veiled, has tangible bodily effects on them since it comes with the social expectation of permanently wearing the veil

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afterwards. Shatha's decision to do the *'omra* and stay non-veiled bespeaks a transgressive way of living the religious mode of being then. However, her decision to dispose of her body in a more contained way limits her transgression and makes her understanding and embodiment of Muslim femininity different than a non-veiled practicing participant such as Yara for example. Shatha's experience of her temporarily veiled body is interesting in this context because it exposes the conflict between her acclaimed conviction with the practice on the one hand, and her denouncement of it on the experiential level on the other:

> I had to wear the veil while doing the *'omra* and it honestly made me feel weak. This is actually one of the reasons that made me decide not to wear it permanently upon my return. On the one hand, I was happy that I did not have to worry about my hair and how it looked but I also couldn't run or move freely with the veil on. I was constantly worried about my body (…) and I had to check every couple minutes to make sure that it was all covered properly. (Shatha 13-2)

Shatha found the experience alienating on the level of her relationship with her body. But rather than compromise her sense of her body for the religious mode of being she covets, she opts for embodying it through technologies of the self other than veiling.

3.2 Embodying an Outgoing Active Lifestyle

The veiled participants seem to perform the practice in a way that makes it part of an outgoing active mode of being that challenges the hegemonic restrictive one that is supposed to accompany veiling on the individual and relational levels. For instance, they seem to re-think what counts as proper male-female interaction in the context of veiling, and to negotiate their disposition of their bodies within these relationships and within other bodily activities such as sports. As this section will illustrate, the participants' ability to act on such transgressive ideas is complicated by their class and location.

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Haya for instance is a jilbabi participant who challenges the hegemonic mode of being intrinsic to veiling by talking freely to her male colleagues and shaking their hands. Her conduct, which she considers to be Islamically correct, is often criticized because it transgresses the limits of proper male-female interaction in the context of veiling:

> I shook hands with the president during the graduation ceremony. When my friends saw the picture later they were angry with me. One of them kept asking: but why did you shake hands with him?! I told them: come on he's the president and he's my father's age! Even if shaking hands with men is generally wrong in such a case it's ok because neither him nor I had any feelings for each other it was just a handshake! But they weren't convinced. But I don't find anything wrong with it (…) At school I also talk to my male colleagues (…) If they want something from me I have no problem talking to them. (Haya 3-19)

Such a disposition of the body is deemed improper for a jilbabi as the reaction of Haya's friends illustrates. Coming from a working class background and living in one of the less privileged and more conservative parts of Amman, Haya seems to live in a context that is rather strict in regulating her disposition of her body and its interaction with men. As explained in chapter four, part of the family's reasons for making Haya wear the *jilbab* for instance was limiting any chances of her interacting freely with men like soap operas protagonists do. Moreover, Haya explains that the need for limiting her interaction with men is something that she has been gradually taught as she was growing up, long before she donned the veil:

> When I was a kid I used to play with male kids in our neighborhood and my parents were ok with it (…) Then starting grade 7 they started to tell me that it's shameful to play with them. From the point you become a so-called grown up you have to change. For example, from then on if you see your former male friends in the street you just smile at them but you can't say hi or shake hands. When you grow up a bit more you have to cast your gaze altogether when you see them as if you've never even known them! As a Muslim girl from a conservative family it's <u>shameful</u> to interact with guys <u>regardless</u> of the fact that I've known some of them since I was a kid and they are brothers to me [emphasis in original]. (Haya 3-18)

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In this context, Haya's conduct is indeed transgressive even if she continues to understand some types of male-female interaction to be wrong as her earlier quote illustrates. Haya seems to seek an embodiment of Islam that depends on rationalizing, rather than blindly following, its presumed constraints on male-female interaction. She uses technologies of the self that allow her to materialize that and negotiate the dominant veiling regime despite the challenges imposed by her material conditions. In the process, she also negotiates the individualistic aspect of the embodiment of veiling as she exercises more control over her body.

Aya, a middle class jilbabi participant, similarly uses the veil to carve a bigger space for exercising control over her body, its interaction with men, and her embodiment of Islam. Despite class differences, her attempts are also often frowned upon:

> My friend told me you should stop shaking hands with men. But I can't! I have done this since I was a kid. It's the norm in my family. She also says that I have to stop talking to male strangers altogether. But what strangers? These are my friends! They know me better than my brothers do. I can't understand how I am supposed to define a male stranger. I know that in Islam you can only interact freely with male siblings and so on, but I am telling you these guys have known me forever they are brothers to me. (Aya 5-3)

For Aya, the religious discourse that frowns upon interacting with male "strangers", rather than her mode of being, is what should be problematized. Such attempts to negotiate the religious limits of the proper embodiment of the relational aspect of veiling seem to cut across the participants' positionality and to be simultaneously determined by it then. After all both Haya, who comes from a working class conservative background, and Aya, who comes from the middle class and lives in a more privileged neighborhood, seem to share this concern over veiled women's limited control over their bodily interaction with men. However, as the above quote illustrates,

family is what makes the difference; while Aya's family seems to condone her attempts and give her a space to befriend men, Haya's only reifies the general social constraints.

Other family and class contexts seem to enable even more pronounced transgressions. Dalia for instance, a fashionably veiled middle class participant who lives and socializes in the privileged neighborhoods of western Amman, goes beyond mere hand shakes and actually takes salsa classes at a mixed-sex gym that she frequents. Dalia is aware that the space and the activity in which she implicates her body are often considered problematic for a veiled woman. For her friends, such an activity that flaunts her body in front of men makes her embodiment of veiling questionable especially that it is easy to avoid in the context of the proliferation of female-only gyms in Jordan:

> People are often surprised when they hear that I frequent a mixed-sex gym. My friends think it's crazy because I am veiled and there are plenty of female-only gyms. But female-only gyms are always overcrowded (…) I honestly don't care what others say (…) I believe that what I am doing is right and if it's wrong only God has the right to question me (…) People are also surprised when they hear that I learn salsa at the gym because it's for couples. But at the gym we don't go as couples the instructors teach us the steps as part of our sport training. The guys and the girls know that they are there to learn not for anything else so that's why it's ok. Besides, I want to live my life! If I'm veiled it doesn't mean I can't do that. Am I supposed to just stay at home? I want to learn salsa, this is the only way to learn it and as long as I don't allow my dance partner to touch me wrong I'm fine. Besides, I am only holding his hand it's no big deal! (Dalia 9-12, 9-13)

Dalia considers her performativity of veiling to be religiously correct because she undertakes certain technologies of the self that contain, in her opinion, its problematic aspects – such as the way she limits her physical interaction with her dance partner to holding his hand and the way she polices his touch for example. By using such techniques, Dalia tries to carve a space whereby she can freely dispose of her body and accommodate its desire for dancing for example without compromising her equally strong desire for veiling and for embodying a Muslim mode of being. While such an

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attempt may go against the hegemonic embodiment of veiling and the mode of being intrinsic to it as people's reactions illustrate, Dalia's strong personality along with her class and family context may be part of what allows her to act on her desire despite social disapproval. As Dalia explains, her family was against her decision to take up the veil to begin with, which may explain their indifference to her decision to undertake activities that might breach the veil's expected embodiment:

> When I decided to wear the veil my parents were completely against it. They told me not to wear it and when I didn't listen my mom stopped talking to me for two weeks. They thought that I was going to take it off two days later. (Dalia 9-7)

The veiled participants try to negotiate the dominant veiling regime and its "proper" embodiment on the level of other leisure activities that imply another problematic deployment of the veiled body -such as its implication in active sports. The participants' ability to do this is again very much influenced by their class and backgrounds. One example is Lama's; a jilbabi participant who comes from a working class background but who made her way into the middle the class by getting a degree, a highly paid job, and moving with her brothers to a privileged western Amman neighborhood. Lama has a passion for tennis and her class positioning made acting on it financially possible. However, Lama knew that playing this sport would put her jilbabed body in what she considers to be a compromising position. To manage her sense of guilt and others' criticism, Lama deployed certain technologies of the self that allowed her to implicate her body in her coveted sport while keeping it as close as possible to the hegemonic construction of the veiled body:

> I love to play tennis but you can't play tennis in a *jilbab*. I am not saying that what I do is right but I try my best to make it right. For example, when I started learning tennis I chose a female coach not a male coach. I also made sure I never went during peak times so that I wouldn't have to encounter men on the tennis

court. And I also used to ask the coach to use the courts at the far end of the sports city. In terms of dress I used to wear very wide track pants with a sports skirt over them. I felt guilty at the time because this is not right and I know I looked bad but I am a very active person so I try to do adjustments so that I can do the activities that I like without compromising the religious rules. (Lama 4-12, 4-13)

By carefully choosing the space where her body gets more exposed than she would want it to, determining the gender of the person who gets immediate interaction with her un-jilbabed body, and clothing her body in a way that approximates the *jilbab* to the extent possible, Lama simultaneously enables and limits the dominant veiling regime and her transgressive embodiment of the practice. She seems to actively open up the limits of her disposition of her body as a jilbabi and to interact with the space that she navigates, yet she simultaneously feels guilty for doing so and actively works to situate her body in this space as an object of an omnipresent male gaze. For Lama, actively inhabiting space and deploying her body in a way that allows her to act on her passion for sports is both necessary and "not right". If it is indeed enacted, it has to be rectified to approximate the "correct" disposition of the female body in public space -which is based on its concealment.

Swimming in mixed-sex venues seems to be another part of the participants' ethical work through which they negotiate the dominant veiling regime and the hegemonic disposition of the veiled body and its navigation of space. For instance, some of the veiled participants swim in public either by wearing their full veils or the "Islamic swimming suit". Also known as the *shar'i* swimming suit (in an interesting deployment of the *shari'a* law for promulgating an anti-*shari'a* activity such as mixed-sex swimming) this suit resembles a diving suit; it covers the entire body and hair and has special added parts to further de-accentuate the body. Swimming in public venues is often frowned

upon for veiled women because of the ensuing male-female interaction and the lax disposition of the body involved. Jood, a jilbabi participant from a working class background, gives insight into the logic that stands behind such disapproval:

> From a religious point of view mixing with men is only allowed in limited specific occasions. When you go swimming your clothes will get wet and will stick to your body so what's the point of your veil at that point? I have never seen the *shar'i* swimming suit that everyone talks about but <u>I am not convinced with the very idea of swimming with men</u> (…) This is <u>not</u> one of the reasons that justify interacting with men (…) To go swimming with men all around you looking at you?! What nonsense! [emphasis in original]. (Jood 1-16)

Often times, the veiled participants who do swim in public try to promulgate their disposition of their bodies by underscoring the efficiency of the *shar'i* swimming suit in concealing them. They also often take recourse in the temporary nature of their transgressive navigation of the mixed-sex space in question. It could be that they do so in order to make mixed-sex swimming part of the limited and specific promulgated male-female interactions that Jood invoked in her quote. While resourceful, using the temporality trope works in practice to bracket the viability of such a non-conventional embodiment of veiling as much as it works to negotiate it and produces contradicting effects in terms of disrupting the dominant veiling regime. For example, Suha, a middle class fashionably veiled participant, explains that she wears the *shar'i* swimming suit when she goes to the Dead Sea. Her conduct has her family's approval and is also condoned by her friends. For Suha, using the suit functions as a technology of the self that allows her to act on her desire for swimming without compromising her veiling. It is the garment's emulation of the veil and the temporal nature of the activity that make the act justifiable from her perspective:

> I have a *shar'i* swimming suit. It's wide and it doesn't stick to the body and it's long it covers the legs and the neck and everything. And when you wear it there's

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a layer you tie over so that the suit doesn't move up your body while you swim. So when you get out of the water you untie it and it really goes down immediately so it doesn't accentuate your body. I honestly think that it is <u>a good temporary alternative</u>. It's not something to wear all the time but when I go to the Dead Sea with my friends it really helps. Before, I used to stay at the shore and watch them. I couldn't even come close to the water or cool down but now I can. But it's temporary so you have to be extremely careful when you wear it. So for example I don't wear it all the time, and the minute I get out of the water I wrap a towel around me or wear a cache maillot [emphasis in original]. (Suha 12-18)

While Suha covets the freedom that the suit gives her to dispose of her body as she wishes, the act's viability remains necessarily bracketed and "temporary" in her opinion. It is condoned only when accompanied by technologies of the self that continue to frame a veiled woman's presence in the mixed-sex space in question as necessarily minimal and conditional. In other words, despite her transgressive embodiment of the veil, she continues to think of her less inhibited presence in mixed-sex spaces as contingent and in need of containment, and this makes the Muslim femininity that ensues from her attempts to negotiate the veiling regime truncated at best as an "alternative".

Areej in turn, a jilbabi participant who comes from a more conservative working class family background, finds it more acceptable to use the *jilbab* or the *abaya* than the Islamic swimming suit to swim in public because of their enhanced concealment effects. While conservative, her family approves of this. The temporary aspect of the transgressive act is the primary reason that makes it tolerable for her and her family:

I personally wear an *abaya* or a *jilbab* and go swimming (…) I prefer them to the *shar'i* swimming suit because the swimming suit sticks to the body. When I first heard about it I thought it was *msattar* [lives up to *satr*] but it's not. When it gets wet it sticks to the body. I know that what I do may not be Islamically correct but <u>I don't do it every day</u>. It's only when I travel with my family and this doesn't happen often (…) And you know it's a *jilbab* after all it can't stick to your body it goes back down immediately [emphasis in original]. (Areej 14-9, 14-10)

While interesting in its potential, the alternative mode of being that participants like Areej and Suha try to establish remains contingent in its effects because it does not bring about a different approach to the female body altogether.

4- The Relational and Agentic Aspects of the Non/Veiled Participants' Ethical Work

As this chapter illustrates, embodying the practice of veiling is an individual process dependent on a veiled woman's desires and on the ethical work she conducts on her own body, however the process is also simultaneously determined by a woman's relationships. As explained in chapter four, the relational coercive veiling undertaken to preserve male family members' reputation is common for instance in both privileged and underprivileged classes. What seems to be also rampant is the relational veiling that happens in the context of emulating role models and pleasing the divine. This type of veiling permeates different classes and provides, more importantly, a space for re-thinking agency. To discern the agency associated with pleasing authoritative figures it is important to understand the different ways of inhabiting a norm and how they go beyond the dichotomy of submission vs. willingness (Mahmood, 2005). As I argued in chapter three and as the following examples illustrate, the participants' agency does not fall neatly into either category but treads both. For example, Dalia, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, took up the veil in the context of her relationship with a schoolteacher by whom she was influenced. While emphasizing this influence, Dalia points out that her decision was not forced but was rather informed by her own will:

> We had an amazing religion teacher at school. She taught me from grade 10 to 12 and I liked her a lot. My parents never imagined that I would ever wear the veil because I used to be the partying cool type when I was in school. But this teacher had a big influence on me (…) She motivated me to take up the veil because I

knew that taking it up had a good influence on her life and I wanted to walk in her steps. (Dalia 9-6)

While Dalia's agency may be problematic in this context it is important to acknowledge and unpack her own understanding of her action as willful. After all, Dalia was deliberately acting on her desire to emulate the teacher in question -and she was also pitting her will against that of her parents who opposed her decision to veil as the quote discussed in the previous section illustrates. In this sense, Dalia's action was indeed agentic as much as it was non autonomous. Dalia's action was not autonomous because it was very much determined by the relational context in question and did not indicate an independent will on her part in that sense. However, it was still an agentic act because it was part of the ethical work that she deliberately undertook in order to construct herself as a subject in the manner that she found desirable. Mahmood sheds light on this distinction by unpacking the particularity of the agency embedded in endeavors such as veiling. For her, it is often difficult to invoke an independent will in such cases, but this does not obliterate the agency of those who undertake the act (Mahmood, 2005, pp. 8, 32). The practice is the product of authoritative discourses that women reiterate in order to construct a coveted self; it is not a manifestation of a free choice or an independent will, but it is not entirely an imposition either (Mahmood, 2005, pp. 31-32, 158, 195).

This is all the more clear in the context of the influence of the divine will on the veiled participants. For some participants, taking up the veil was part of their deliberate attempts to obey the divine will and further their relationship with God. As Tala, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, explains:

> I was six when I put on the veil. It was my own decision. It was something I felt
> and did for God. I was reading the Quran and I felt that I wanted to do something

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to please God and obey Him so I decided to wear the veil and I never took it off after that day. (Tala 10-2)

Joppke problematizes the agency of women like Tala because it is motivated and necessitated by a divine will that has to be obeyed (2009, pp. viii, 5, 6). For Mahmood and Scott on the other hand, agency is exercised in such a coercive context. It is only possible to detect it however if we keep in mind the difference between willful acts of self-realization and the autonomous will as such (Mahmood, 2005, p. 41; Scott, 2007, p. 188). In other words, as long as Dalia and Tala are aware of and deliberately implicated in their coerced self-constitution, the agency embedded in their ethical work should be validated. Mahmood uses Foucault and Butler to explain that agency is produced and exercised within structures of power not outside them, and that being enmeshed in structures of subordination is precisely what makes any individual a subject and an agent (2005, p. 17). Mahmood's framework thus underscores the importance of considering the conditions that structure subordination and that ensure an individual's enmeshment in it (2005, p. 14-15). However, I would argue that it simultaneously draws the attention away from the need to problematize the content of the participants' will in such cases and the implications of its enactment. For instance, willful or not, Dalia's actions make her body a sexualized object of the male gaze after all.

Mahmood's insight may work in fact to reify the exceptionalism of veiling among other structures of subordination so that they are justified under the guise of acknowledging constrained and constraining forms of agency. Mahmood holds that such structures give place to actions and desires that do not fall within the parameters of "modern" constructions such as liberty and freedom (2005, p. 14, 15). While I agree with Mahmood that the quest for freedom does not exhaust the myriad of ways in which

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norms are inhabited and in which agency is performed, I find bracketing the viability of individuals' desire for freedom as such (2005, p. 14) problematic. Moreover, I would argue that focusing on the context of subordination in such cases could illuminate only one part of the larger picture. For one thing, this focus does not answer or even engage the question of how to problematize and disrupt such structures of subordination. After all, these structures do not affect the willful agents implicated in them exclusively. Rather, they also necessarily permeate the lives of non-veiled Muslim women (as well as the lives of non-Muslim women for that matter) and limit the modes through which they can become subjects and agents. As explained in chapter four, non-veiled Jordanian Muslim women often find their embodiment of Muslim femininity and their agentic bodily work discredited religiously and culturally for example precisely because it is measured against that of women like Dalia whose willful act of veiling is reified as the only viable way of embodying Muslim femininity.

More importantly, the structures of subordination in question seem to put pressure even on those who perform them willingly and seem to distort their relationship to their bodies. For instance, Lama, a middle class participant with a working class family background, willingly took up the *jilbab* out of devotion. Lama explains that her experience of her non-jilbabed body was one of guilt however. She explains that she felt that she was subject to God's revenge when her body did not live up to what she took to be the correct embodiment of the divine mandate, and this further limits her agency:

> Whenever I got bad grades I used to think that it was because I was not properly veiled. I knew that God did this to me because He was displeased with me because I was not a jilbabi and because I used to wear tight clothes. (Lama 4-18)

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Lama's adoption of the *jilbab* was driven by her agency but it was enacted in a context of fear and was difficult to embody. Her decision was in fact only eased and consolidated by continuous reminders of the anticipated divine contentment and reward:

> The first few months I had to remind myself that I was doing this for God's sake and because I love Him (…) I <u>wanted</u> to wear the *jilbab* but it wasn't easy. So at first I had to remind myself all the time. I even put a post-it note on my mirror where I had written: '<u>why wear the *jilbab*</u>?' So <u>every morning</u> when I woke up I'd tell myself: remember why you're doing this [emphasis in original]. (Lama 4-19)

A framework like Mahmood's would place the focus on the particularity of Lama's agency and the conditions that produced her desire for such a constrained embodiment in the first place. It would also target the means through which Lama constructed herself as a subject and an agent within a structure of subordination such as the divine mandate. However, what I find to be equally important are the implications of Lama's agency on her own experience of her body, and on the Muslim femininity that she consolidates in the process. Willful and coveted as it is, Lama's experience of her body seems to be based on guilt, fear, and coerced containment. Endorsing the presumed divine mandate seems to alienate her from her body and to construct it as a source of threat or unease at best. Moreover, Lama's agentic embodiment of the practice plays into normalizing the containment of the Muslim female body more generally. In the context of the Jordanian culture that does not facilitate nor promulgate the agentic non-containment of the body, the effects of the willful acts of women like Lama are pervasive. The structure of subordination that Lama endorses gains even more hegemony through her ethical work and uses her example to vilify other embodiments of Muslim femininity. Clearly, I am not arguing that Lama's willful decision to don the *jilbab* should be constrained. Rather, I am arguing that a theoretical framework that focuses exclusively on

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Lama's agency in containing her body runs the risk of losing sight of and condoning this action's effects, whether in terms of reifying the inherent sexualization of the female body, or in terms of consolidating the entitlement of the male gaze to women's bodies and to space. More importantly, such a framework loses sight of the need to push for a social, cultural, and even legal framework that opens a space for non-veiled women to exercise their agency as much as Lama does. While Lama's disposition of her body may be indeed motivated by personal divine-related concerns, it has concrete earthly manifestations that affect other women as much as they affect her and these should be equally addressed.

The deliberate embodiment of the divine will is not exercised in a vacuum after all; rather, it is enmeshed in practice with other relationships such as the participants' relationships with men and their experience of their bodies in "male spaces". For instance, while Lama's above quotes illustrates that her decision to wear the *jilbab* was enacted in the context of her concerns over her relationship with God, she also argued that the decision was simultaneously part of her attempt to manage the invasive male gaze:

> One of my friends told me that that she had a fight with some guys on campus because she caught them taking pictures of girls' butts. I felt disgusted. Would they have <u>dared take the picture</u> of a jilbabi girl? Would they have looked at her at all if her dress code was *msattar* [lived up to *satr*]? I don't know I started having these thoughts and within a week I had made up my mind. I decided to wear the *jilbab* [emphasis in original]. (Lama 4-16)

Lama's willful embodiment of the divine order seems to be very much structured by the male gaze then. And as her quote indicates, her decision to inhabit her body as best fits the male gaze ultimately distorted her relationship to it as she seems to locate the problem in it, rather than in the intrusive gaze.

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For the non-veiled participants the ethical work enacted in the context of embodying Muslim femininity seems to be equally dependent on their relationships to their families, to men in general, and to the divine. As explained in chapter four, Yara, a middle class non-veiled participant, is often obliged to tame her non-veiled body to protect the reputation of her father. However, it seems that her non-veiled body is relationally constructed as best accommodates random men too:

> The men I deal with at work and other spaces think that I am displaying my femininity for them (…) So I try to appease society by taming my dress code (…) But this doesn't bother me because I feel that knowing how to appear in different contexts is the core of my femininity. Knowing how to balance being feminine and being professional is part of who I am as a woman. (Yara 8-2, 8-3)

Yara's narrative illustrates how the relational aspect of living her body makes her think of the need for masquerading it as being a core part of her femininity. This in turn flags the constrained and constraining characteristics of her agency, which may be different in form but not in content from the agency of non-veiled participants. What Yara frames as a "chosen" disposition of her body only works to reify the structures that try to tame it. However, unlike veiled participants, Yara and the non-veiled participants do not endorse masquerade out of a sense of the body's inherent flawed shameful state:

> I see my femininity as something beautiful. I don't feel that I have to hide it or apologize for it or cover it up because it's a shame or a *fitna* [a source of chaos] or because it's desirable for men. It's God who created me this way so I don't think he'd ask me to cover up [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-7)

Yara's example also illustrates how non-veiling can be part of the bodily work that constructs the participants' relationship to the divine. Hers is an example of a type of ethical work that challenges the dominant veiling regime's construction of Muslim femininity in this sense, and more drastically so than the veiled participants:

Islam asks both men and women to abide by ethics. It doesn't ask women to <u>hide themselves</u> and allow men to do <u>whatever</u> they want. This is what stops me from wearing the veil. Veiled or not <u>my ethics</u> and my love for God are what make me a Muslim woman. If I reduce my Islam to an attire or to the way others look at me it means that I see God in a very limited way [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-5)

While Yara believes that hers is a proper embodiment of the divine orders, the cultural and Islamic viability of non-veiling remain questionable however as explained in chapter four. In this context, non-veiled participants are often obliged to slightly modify their dress code to meet the hegemonic requirements. Only Dana however, a non-veiled middle class participant, goes as far as veiling to navigate the spaces that normalize the practice. Similarly to Yara, Dana justifies the malleability of her embodiment of Muslim femininity by taking recourse in the masquerade logic and its agentic connotations:

If I am going to a lower-class neighborhood to do some charity work I wear the veil because I know that unfortunately people there <u>won't accept me</u> as I am. But <u>I accept</u> this. I understand their background and how they judge women, so I have no problem wearing the veil when I go there [emphasis in original]. (Dana 11-2)

Dana's example also underscores the question of agency in the context of accommodating "veiling regimes" (Secor, 2002, p. 6). As explained in chapter three, Secor uses the term to refer to the rules that regulate which spaces require non/veiling in any one society. By placing the emphasis on her agency and presumed control over her body, Dana reinforces the structures of subordination that determine women's navigation of space. Interestingly however, while Dana is the only participant who resorts to "alternate veiling", as explained in chapter four she is also one of the few who completely gave up on veiling for lack of conviction in its religious basis. Dana's previous first hand experience with veiling and her familiarity with its intensity and effects as a cultural requirement may be behind her decision to go to such lengths to maximize the benefits she gets from each veiling regime she enters.

Through Dana's alternate veiling and Yara's reification of masquerade we see that even an embodiment of Muslim femininity that is often considered transgressive such as non-veiling is also limiting in terms of its effects on disrupting the dominant veiling regime and the hegemonic structure of Muslim femininity that accompanies it in practice.

In what follows, chapter six will elaborate further on the question of embodying non/veiling by examining the experiences of living desire and desirability through the non/veiled body.

Chapter 6

Living Desire and Desirability in the Context of Veiling

1- Introduction

Chapter five shed light on what the participants' understand to be the life enhancing effects of veiling. It illustrated how the practice could be a means for leading active lifestyles and for enjoying, rather than merely constraining, the body and the desire for looking feminine and attractive. Chapter six complicates such enjoyable aspects of the practice by drawing attention to the constraining effects that it simultaneously has on the participants' experiences of desire and desirability in particular. Rather than a contradiction, the tension embedded in the participants' experiences of veiling underscores the complexity and implications of trying to live a practice that is constraining in its goals in a way that is primarily desire enhancing. Moreover, the tension in question illustrates how the participants' embodiment of veiling works to negotiate the politics of desiring in Islam while simultaneously re-affirming them. As will be further explained in chapter seven, this ambivalent approach seems to be one method that the participants use to instate change. While significant in terms of its strategic effects, this method does not ensue long-term changes however.

Chapter six starts by exploring the participants' sense of themselves as desiring subjects and as objects of desire, and proceeds then to examine the satisfaction and the pain that ensue from living desire through a body project that is based on constraining sexuality. In the process, the chapter highlights the potential and the limitations that lie in the veiled and non-veiled participants' understandings of female desire in Islam. As

explained in the previous chapters, given the middle class affiliations of the majority of the participants, the insights that they provide are necessarily particular and contextualized but far from being limiting.

2- Living Desire and Desirability through Veiling and Non-Veiling

2.1 The Blurry Line between Being a Subject and an Object of Desire

As explained in chapter four, the veiled participants seem to contest the limits of permissible *zeena* and to construct a type of veiling that allows them to negotiate the possibility of addressing the male gaze within the parameters of their material conditions. As the participants work to transform veiling from a desire-inhibiting project into a means for actively living and expressing desire, they illustrate interesting ways of being subjects and objects of desire. Haya for instance, a jilbabi participant from the working class, explains that part of what she enjoys about veiling is the way it attracts the male gaze and allows her to act on her desire to be admired for her femininity:

> I like the *jilbab*. I feel that it's like a dress and it makes me look very feminine (…) One time, an American visitor on campus stopped me and asked me about it because he wanted to get one for his wife. He told me that I looked very girly and pretty in it and this made me very happy. If I am wearing a *jilbab* this doesn't mean that I don't look feminine or attractive. On the contrary, such comments make me realize that I can and I do. (Haya 3-20)

Being a desiring subject in this context is often a tensioned experience however. The veiled participants seem to construct their sense of being subjects of desire by objectifying themselves. As Jood, another jilbabi participant from a working class background explains, actively constraining and objectifying the body is the means for enhancing its sexual appeal and for constructing oneself as a subject of desire:

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Veiling does not affect the way that others see me as a woman, on the contrary, I think that it enhances my femininity (…) When I cover up my body people actually become more curious about it. If a girl is not veiled men can see her hair, her arms, her legs, everything! But if she is veiled like myself they become curious as to what she looks like without her veil. (Jood 1-9)

For Jood, veiling is a technology of the self that enhances, rather than tones down, the desirability of the body then. By deliberately concealing her body with this purpose in mind, Jood constructs herself as a subject who acts on her desire. However, she simultaneously reifies herself as a sex object, or as a series of segmented sexualized parts, packed for an anticipated omnipresent male gaze. In addition to blurring the lines between subject-hood and objectification, Jood's insight opens a space for re-thinking the goal that the Quran presumably sets for veiling. As explained in chapter three, verse 24.31, which is often taken to prescribe the practice, posits covering the body as a means for warding off the gaze and containing the appeal of the body. However, limiting the exposure of the body seems to work to intensify, rather than limit, the eroticism of the body in practice (Eilberg-Schwartz, 1995, p. 2). As Jood explains, it is the anticipated sight of the body rather than its actual exposure that is considered to be the most enticing for the gaze –and interestingly, pleasantly so for her as a jilbabi.

When read in this context, Jood's construction and performativity of veiling as a desire-enhancing practice can be considered to be transgressive because they turn the practice against its grain. However, the transgressive potential in question becomes rather limited when we consider the parameters of Jood's subject-hood. After all, Jood does not seem to push for more than being an object of the male desire. The desirability of being a mere possession or an object of an anticipated male viewer seems to be a trope that structures in fact all the veiled participants' sense of themselves as desiring subjects

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across their class positionalities and different types of veiling. As the following examples illustrate, even the language that the participants use in order to discuss their desirability points in this direction. As Areej, a jilbabi working class participant, and Dalia and Suha, two fashionably veiled middle class participants, emphasize:

> When a man proposes to a veiled woman he knows that she will be <u>all his</u> and that he will be <u>the only one</u> to have ever seen her body. Men like that. They like to get married to women whose bodies are theirs exclusively. They are selfish by nature and they don't like others to share the beauty of their women. So that's why I think that the veil makes us more desirable. It makes me happy to realize that this is how they think [emphasis in original]. (Areej 14-10, 14-11)

> The veil enhances desire. A veiled woman makes her husband very happy because he knows that he's the only one to know her body and this makes her so sexy in his eyes. So I am personally content, I think that the veil makes me more not less desirable. (Dalia 9-10)

> Veiling does not constrain desire, it helps you save your body for someone who will love it. Veiling is indeed very much connected to men. Of course it's about me first and foremost but it's also about men and how they see us. That's why I think it will be much easier and enjoyable when I get married (…) In the future when I get married my partner will see and appreciate my body. That's why I don't feel that I am missing out on anything. (Suha 12-11, 12-14)

None of the participants was, or had ever been, married at the time of the interviews. However, they all seemed to be content with constructing their relations of desire through what seem to be passive recipient roles in the anticipated marriages that they invoke. The quotes illustrate in fact three important aspects that organize the veiled participants' understanding of desire in general. For one thing, the participants reify heterosexuality and marriage as the only acquiesced venues for living desire. Moreover, they emphasize the desirability of being solely sex objects for their partners. And they further underscore the desirability of being mere guardians, rather than owners, of their bodies. For instance, the above quotes seem to indicate that the relations of desire that the participants covet and anticipate are based on maintaining and guarding their bodies until

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they are ready for male consumption rather than on desiring their partners or actively sharing their bodies with them.

Rather than implying that there is one "correct" way of experiencing desire that the participants forgo, I seek to underscore the complexity of living desire in the context of a body project that idealizes guarded sexuality. The lines between being a subject and an object of desire in this context are often blurry. Moreover, the process of constraining and objectifying the body for the sake of an anticipated partner is not only deliberate and enjoyable, but seems to be also approached as a means for exercising control over the body and over relations of desire. As Areej, a jilbabi working class participant, explains:

> The *jilbab* does not constrain my desires. <u>I don't want</u> to express them in a more open way than what veiling allows. Every woman has desires and I am no different but <u>I don't want</u> to express my desires in any other way but the correct *shar'i* [*shari'a*-based] way [emphasis in original]. (Areej 4-14)

It seems that the religious discourse is part of what wraps the process of self-constraining and self-objectification in an empowering appealing guise:

> When God asks us to cover up it's because we are jewels. Precious stones are always covered and inaccessible. This is how we are as veiled women, we guard ourselves for those worthy. Only those deserving will see the special parts of my body. (Areej 14-2)

Areej perceives her body in terms of being a desirable stone that she guards for conquest. She does not consider the discourse that structures her relationship with her body along those lines to be degrading or objectifying. Rather, she believes that it enhances the value of her body by likening it to a precious jewel. In this sense, the religious discourse teaches Areej to separate herself from her body so that her experience of inhabiting it as a subject depends on objectifying, commodifying, and surveilling it.

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The blurry line between being a subject and an object of desire and the enmeshment of objectification and "empowerment" in this context seem to permeate different classes and veiling types. For instance, in a similar vein to Areej, the working class jilbabi, Suha, a middle class fashionably veiled participant, structures her sense of her body and her relations of desire along the lines of being the object of an omnipresent male gaze. In her case, the ability to determine the future viewer and/or owner of her body is perceived as an empowering "choice":

> If I continued to be unveiled the difference between what a stranger would see of my body and what my future partner would see would be just a few inches. I used to wear low cuts, mini skirts, you name it! With such clothes there is really no difference. But now that I wear the veil I feel that my body is more precious. I feel that I am protecting it for this one special person that I will meet. (Suha 12-6)

The above-discussed examples underscore the importance of re-thinking the connection between the subject-hood and agency of a desiring subject and the content of her desires. As these examples indicate, being a desiring subject may entail actively constraining one's disposition of her body, deliberately objectifying it, and perceiving the ensuing relations of desire as coveted and fulfilling. In order to acknowledge and unpack the desire of the participants in such cases it is important to de-conflate the agency that underlies an act of desire from the content of this act. If nothing else, this keeps the analysis away from the limitations of presuming a false consciousness on the part of the participants. However, it is equally important to keep in mind the limitations that may ensue from over-emphasizing the participants' subject-hood in this context. Similarly to the question of agency discussed in chapter five, focusing exclusively on the subjectivity of the participants rather than on the limiting content of their desires in this case works to reify the structures of subordination that construct female-male relations of desire in

Islam hierarchically. After all, whether or not Suha and the above mentioned participants perceive themselves as desiring subjects, they seem to construct and experience their desire in non-reciprocal ways in practice. More importantly, regardless of their intentions, the very body project that they endorse is structured along a limited perception of female desire and sexuality whereby they are necessarily in need of containment in order to protect men from lust and distraction.

Islam does not vilify sexual desire per se. However, it does condemn any manifestation of desire that does not abide by the religious laws (Bouhdiba, 1998, p. 15; Mernissi, 2000, p. 19). Interestingly, the Islam that is established by theologists seems to construct female desire in particular as necessarily destructive and transgressive of the laws in question (Mernissi, 2000, p. 32). Al-Ghazali for instance argues that women are inherently possessed by an all-absorbing sexual desire that can cause *fitna* (chaos) when not properly managed, hence Islam's reification of institutions that foster control over women's sexuality (1964, p. 50).

The Islam that ensues from such theorization simultaneously acknowledges and stigmatizes female desire. Veiling for example seems to emphasize women's sexuality and to be simultaneously based on the presumption that it is inherently and necessarily dangerous and in need of curbing. In other words, it acknowledges women's subjectivity, but severely limits the subject position that they may have in the context of relations of desire. As the above examples illustrate for instance, the veiled participants are in touch with their desires and sexuality but the veiling project limits the ways through which they can understand it and act on it in practice.

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2.2 Female Desire in Islam: A Non-Veiled Perspective

The non-veiled participants across class affiliations openly problematize the constraining construction of desire that is embedded in the project of veiling. The middle class participants in particular go as far as disputing the Islamicity of this model altogether. This could be influenced by the relative power and considerable space that their class status offers them for challenging norms. Rana for instance, a non-veiled middle class participant, argues that veiling as a body project is based on a gendered conceptualization of desire that contradicts the Quran's intentions:

> Veiling presumes that women are more sexually attractive than men. I don't believe this is true. For example, when I see handsome guys I think that they are hot and there's nothing wrong with that. So should they be covering themselves up too? I find it confusing because Islam acknowledges men's beauty and acknowledges the fact that women can desire them, but veiling doesn't and that's why I am not convinced with the practice. For example in the Quran there is the story of prophet Joseph who was so attractive that one day when he entered a room the women who were there eating chopped off their fingers because they were so engrossed in looking at him that they forgot that they held knives in their hands. (Rana 7-5)

For Rana, the project of veiling does not acknowledge the subject-hood of women within relations of desire and this makes it problematic. From her perspective, the Quranic story of Joseph considers women to be subjects of desire and this in turn should be reason enough to question the viability of the construction of female desire through the veiling project. The Quranic stance with this regard can be described as at best ambivalent. For instance, the story that Rana invokes vacillates between emphasizing and denouncing the viability of women's active sexual desire (12.23-12.32). On the one hand, the story underscores female desire indeed, but on the other, it approaches the main female character who desired Joseph as the prototype female temptress who is

condemned for her active desire and for the inherent *kaid* or guile that is considered to be an intrinsic part of her femininity (Bouhdiba, 1998, pp. 20, 25).

Yara, another non-veiled middle class participant, argues that the stigmatization of women's desire in Islam is only part of the religion's necessary enmeshment with culture:

> I don't think that this has anything to do with Islam. It's the influence of our Arab culture. Our culture is what teaches us that it is <u>wrong</u> and <u>shameful</u> for a woman to desire someone or to want to be sexy or attractive [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-8)

Yara's argument underscores an important aspect that should be taken into account if we are to re-think the construction of female desire in Islam. The viability of Yara's claim can be pondered only if we keep in mind that the Quran as we know it is a culturally mediated and historicized version of the word of God (Abu Zayd, 2007b, 99-100). Once revealed, the divine word became necessarily mediated by human perception. As humans interacted with it and interpreted it, it went through many phases of transformation (Abu Zayd, 2007b, p. 100). The Quran itself seems to underscore this aspect of its construction by emphasizing its flexibility as a framework that should accommodate changing contexts and time periods (Abu Zayd, 2007b, p. 113). If this aspect of the scripture is embraced, a more affirmative sense of Muslim female desire that does not stigmatize women as temptresses possessed by *kaid* can indeed be established.

Yara argues that the uni-dimensional construction of desirability embedded in the veiling project makes the female gaze unintelligible and places the male body as inherently outside the limits of being an object of desire. More importantly, Yara holds that this structure distorts women's very sense and experience of desire so that they are

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no longer capable of acting on it even within the one venue were it is considered benign;

i.e. marriage:

> Why is it that only women are supposed to veil their bodies? Why aren't men required to hide their beautiful bodies too? Men are beautiful and sexy and desirable too. This is how women see them but it's never ok to acknowledge that. Women are told to veil because they are brought up to believe that such desires are wrong. And this in fact causes huge problems for them when they get married because they often find it very difficult to tell their husbands that they love or want them [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-9)

In other words, the project seems to limit women's experiences as subjects of desire to being mere objects of desire even when other subject positions are open for them.

Interestingly, while the non-veiled participants seem to argue thus for a more affirmative construction of female desire in Islam, they simultaneously reject the enactment of this alternative through the practice of veiling itself. Rana, the non-veiled middle class participant mentioned earlier, explains for example that she was outraged by the sight of a veiled woman kissing her dance partner in a club:

> One time I was in a club and I saw a veiled woman dancing with a guy. She kissed him and he had his hands on her. I was outraged I went up to her and I had a fight with her. I told her that she was a slut and shameless. I told her: take off your veil and then do whatever you want I don't care but you can't do this while you're veiled. (Rana 7-2)

Rana feels entitled to police veiled women's enactment of desire although she is very critical of the limits that the practice imposes on them. Her previous quote illustrates for instance that she wants Muslim women to assert their desire for men and to act on it openly. Moreover, Rana's own conduct is pretty non-conventional from a cultural and religious perspective as she frequents clubs and has a boyfriend herself. However, she seems to find a veiled woman's attempt to have a similar experience as herself

inacceptable. Rana's reaction is anchored in a larger cultural framework that justifies and normalizes policing women in general and veiled women in particular. Moreover, while Rana seems to believe that the construction of desire embedded in veiling should be disrupted, she seems to want it to be challenged only from without. For her, a woman should question the limited sense of desire in cultural Islam by giving up on veiling, not through a transgressive performativity of the practice.

Yara sheds further light on the reasons that make such a desire-affirming performativity of the practice problematic even for non-veiled women who try to establish an open articulation of desire in Islam like herself:

> Women can't be veiled and yet act on their desires. I think that it is <u>wrong</u> for a veiled woman to have a boyfriend or to be close to a guy and tell him intimate details about herself because the veil means that a woman should think of herself as a blemish that has to be covered and should suppress her desires and should only live them with one person which is her husband. She is not even allowed to let a guy see her <u>hair</u> so how is it possible for her to get intimate with someone? (…) According to the veil logic a woman is a source of *fitna* [sexual chaos] and should be hidden so she cannot endorse this logic and still want to act openly on her desires [emphasis in original]. (Yara 8-17)

In other words, a desire-enabling veiling is denounced because of the contradiction that it bespeaks. The non-veiled participants may fight to construct a space for themselves as Muslim women to experience desire openly, but they deny veiled Muslim women the same right. In this sense, the alternative that such participants seek to establish is limiting because it denies veiled women the possibility of challenging the constraints imposed on their experiences of desire within the limits of their material conditions. Dana, a middle class participant who took off the veil after years of wearing it, is the only non-veiled participant who acquiesces of the transgressive performativity of veiling in this context precisely because she understands the limited spaces of resistance

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open for veiled women. For Dana, veiled women should be given a venue to vent and live their desires to the extent possible even when this entails contradictions:

> Society expects veiled women to act like nuns. But they are women after all and they want to tackle their femininity. Whether they are forced to wear the veil or wear it by choice they try to live their desires within the limits that the veil imposes. I know that nowadays veiled women seem to be able to act more freely but at the time when I was veiled I used to feel that I was missing out on a lot of things (…) So I feel sorry for them and I understand what they are doing. People are very critical of veiled women who dance with guys at mixed-sex parties for example but they are human beings for God's sake! They have a feminine side and it is going to show no matter what (…) So I don't judge these women but I also don't accept to be accused of being more seductive to men than they are just because I am not veiled. (Dana 11-12)

Dana's stance seems to be fueled by her own previous experience of managing her desire through the veil then. Interestingly, Dana brings up another important discrepancy in this context. As explained in chapter four, the hierarchy that seems to construct veiling and non-veiling in the Jordanian imaginary places veiled women higher than non-veiled women on the scale of *satr* and respectability regardless of the particularities of their dress and conduct. Dana sheds light on the connection between this hierarchy and the embodiment of desire. For her, the hierarchy ignores veiled women's desires and constructs them as inherently and necessarily less capable of enticing desire even when their conduct contradicts this premise. Dana seems to be arguing that veiled women should be given a space to live their desires more openly and that this space should be made culturally viable. More importantly, she seems to argue for using this validated desire to disrupt the hierarchy's presumptions about the inherent uncontained desire and desirability of non-veiled women.

3- Managing the Pain and the Obstacles that Ensue from Living Desire through the

Project of Veiling

As explained in chapter four, the participants often embody veiling in transgressive ways that allow them to act on their desire for living active outgoing lifestyles. For instance, some of them try to interact with men freely while others practice certain hobbies that may entail a non-conventional disposition of the body such as swimming and dancing. However, as the following examples illustrate, the process does not come without its painful consequences nor are the alternatives that enable the coveted lifestyles in question always entirely fulfilling for that matter. For example, Haya, the jilbabi working class participant whose example was discussed in chapter five, explains that she cannot entirely escape the limits that her attire imposes on her interaction with men. While her quote in the previous chapter shows that she is able to befriend her male colleagues and shake their hands despite social disapproval, the following quote illustrates that she still feels constrained in terms of further acting on her desire to get to know someone closely and possibly fall in love with him for instance:

> No matter what I do the veil still puts a barrier between me and men. For example, when you're not veiled a guy finds it easier to get close to you and try to know you better. And it would be easier for him to come up to you and tell you he loves you if he develops feelings for you. But in my case he'd be scared because the veil puts barriers between us even if I try to act normally. (Haya 3-12)

The barriers that Haya invokes seem to have some of their roots in a cultural mould that works to shape veiled women's conduct and whose effects seem to permeate different classes. For instance, both Haya who comes from the working class and Aya who comes from the middle class and whose example is discussed below seem to be subject to cultural constraints because of their veiling. The social-cultural trope discussed

in chapter four may bestow an aura of respectability on veiled women and may reduce their risks of getting unwanted male attention compared to non-veiled women, but it seems that this aura simultaneously hampers veiled women's attempts to get attention when they want it. The experience of Aya, a jilbabi middle class participant, further accentuates the limits imposed on a veiled woman's ability to articulate her desires openly:

> One time I went to buy a top to wear at an upcoming party. I chose a revealing top because it was a women-only party. When I went to pay for it the man at the cash asked me: are you married? At first I didn't get it so I told him: no I am not. He scolded me and said: sister! you can't wear this top! not even at home it's too revealing that's shameful! I was so surprised that I actually started reasoning with him. I told him that I was going to wear it at a women's party and layer it up but he told me that's still inappropriate! See? At times like these I just lose hope that I'll ever have a normal life again. (Aya 5-31)

The shopkeeper felt entitled to police Aya's adherence to the cultural expectations that regulate her disposition of her body –something he might have been reluctant to do in such an open direct way had Aya been non-veiled. Considered to be already errant, non-veiled women are often spared such open interventions because they are considered to be beyond hope. Veiled women are presumed to be more docile and corrigible on the contrary. Moreover, men often feel entitled to police women's enactment of veiling as part of their sense of entitlement to police religion more generally. For such men, veiled women are mere tools for reifying particular religious tenets; they should embody them without owning or negotiating them in the way Aya did.

In addition to the trope of surveillance, the shopkeeper's argument accentuates another important aspect of the construction of viable desirability in the Jordanian imaginary. It seems that any attire that accentuates the beauty of a woman's body is only appropriate for the sight of a male who is "licensed" to desire her. A veiled woman seems

to be only allowed to construct herself as the object of a legitimate partner's desire. Her own desire to live her body in the way she wants seems to be beside the point.

Aya's experience provides an important insight into men's general perception of veiled women and their reluctance to interact freely with them. Men's attitude in this context stands in contrast to the general low social-cultural status of non-veiled women discussed in chapter four, but it is simultaneously in line with the general presumption that constructs non-veiled women as lax and promiscuous:

> Male shop assistants were always very nice to me before I took up the veil. They always joked with me and sometimes they even flirted with me. But when I started wearing the veil and then the *jilbab* things changed. Now they talk to me in a very serious way, and they always greet me with <u>Sister</u> which pisses me off. And when a non-veiled client comes in they leave me and go talk to her. It hurts because I can feel the difference. Had I always been treated this way I wouldn't have minded, but the change in their attitude makes me feel that I am no longer woman enough in their opinion [emphasis in original]. (Aya 5-6)

For Aya, the *jilbab* imposes unwanted limits on her desirability as a woman. She experiences her relegation to the status of a "sister" by such random male strangers as painful because it signals her diminished sexual viability in their eyes. While this should be indeed the goal behind veiling, for Aya it is an unwanted effect that counters her attempts to remain desirable for strangers. This in turn provides an interesting contrast to the veiled participants' narratives discussed in the previous section. The veiled participants seem to seek a sense of desirability that is based on having their bodies admired by one exclusive "legitimate" partner, and to simultaneously want to continue to be seen as desirable by men in general. This ambivalence is actually materialized by the participants' very *zeena*-based veils that aim indeed to accentuate their desirability yet pronounce their bodies as off the limits for anyone aside from their "legitimate" partners. For example, Suha, a fashionably veiled middle class participant whose quote in section

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2.1 emphasized her strong desire to constrain the appeal of her body and to guard it for the exclusive gaze of an anticipated future partner, argues in the following quote that the process is simultaneously painful and somehow even undesired:

> It is not easy because you have to constantly <u>resist</u> your desires. You resist <u>fashion</u>, you resist <u>wanting guys to look at you</u>, you resist beauty and elegance and all the like. Like now for instance, you and I are sitting here I am veiled and you are not and this makes a lot of difference in terms of how people see us. So I have to get used to the idea that <u>not everyone</u> is like me. There are women who are showing their beauty and their hair and who are admired for it while <u>I am not</u>. I have to resist wanting to live that feeling [emphasis in original]. (Suha 12-11)

While Suha's earlier quote indicates that guarding her body from the gaze is what is desirable for her, in this quote she seems to argue that being gazed at and admired by random strangers is still equally desirable. She explains that embodying the project of veiling entails a constant struggle against this desire in particular. The tension that underlies Suha's perspective does not bespeak a contradiction but underscores the complexity of living desire through a project such as veiling and the necessary interplay of pain and agency in this context. Suha may actively want to construct her desirability through limiting the appeal of her body but this does not make the pain that ensues from suppressing her other desire any less acute.

Veiling seems to impose constraints on the participants' desires outside the realm of relationships and sexuality too. For example Lama, a jilbabi participant who is making her way into the middle class, sheds light on the pain that she experiences at having to suppress her desire for trendy clothes. As explained in chapters four and five, Lama wears a fashionable *jilbab* that she took up out of a desire to please the divine. This however did not make the process of suppressing her other desires any easier:

> I made up my mind to wear the *jilbab* and that night I couldn't sleep. The next day I got up and I opened my closet to get dressed and I just broke into tears. The

sight of my clothes, my favorite tops, the cute things that I used to wear, it all made me cry. It felt painful because deep down I didn't want to give up on them. I was very convinced with the *jilbab* and I wanted to wear it with all my heart, but there's an entire life that you have to give up on you know? And it's not easy. (Lama 4-15, 4-16)

Lama explains that she often tries to make up for this suppressed desire by buying fashionable clothes and trendy *jilbabs*, but these measures do not seem to satisfy her desire entirely:

I love fashion and I still buy trendy clothes even now that I am a jilbabi. I know that I can't wear them but I still buy them to satisfy my desire for them. My mom keeps saying that my closet will explode from all these things that I can't even wear but I can't help it I love nice clothes. I also buy nice *jilbabs*. I get bored fast so every month I buy a new *jilbab* or two and I make sure that they are the latest styles of *jilbabs*. Trendy and cute. I do it to feel that I can make up for what I am missing out on. The fashionable *jilbabs* make me feel that I am still able to wear trendy things. And when I am at home I also try to wear all the other clothes that I like and that I can't wear outside. What else can I do? At least I try to satisfy this need that I feel [emphasis in original]. (Lama 4-20)

Lama tries her best to act on her desire for fashionable clothes within the limits of her material conditions. While her class status makes it financially possible for her to indulge in buying clothes and to negotiate the constraints imposed on her, the above quote illustrates that the experience remains painful nonetheless because it does not satisfy her desire fully. Moreover, as Lama's next quote illustrates, even when she carves a space to act more openly on some of her desires, the pleasure of living the desires in question remains truncated because it is often intermingled with public scrutiny and policing and with a personal sense of guilt. This is clear in Lama's description of the guilt she feels for acting on her desire to play music for instance:

I love music and I started to learn to play the violin recently. You won't believe how people on the street look at me when they see that I am a jilbabi and that I am holding a violin case! It hurts because they stare at me as if I'm mentally ill or as if I am an alien. For them the two things are just incompatible. I understand their perspective because for them when a woman wears the *jilbab* she has already

reached a high degree of religiosity and many people think that music is Islamically frowned upon. But if I play the violin this doesn't mean that I don't pray or obey God, but people don't get it (…) So I try my best to make adjustments. I am very formal in my interaction with the male instructor for example and I wear special bands that start at my wrists to make sure that my forearms are covered when I raise them to play. Unfortunately, sometimes the instructor just has to touch my hand in order to show me how to place it on the violin, but I try to avoid this as much as possible. What can I do? I really love music and I want to learn to play. I know that this may be wrong but I am not perfect after all [emphasis in original]. (Lama 4-13, 4-14)

Not only is the experience painful then but it seems that Lama's very sense of her desire is distorted in the process. Lama seems to perceive her desire as flawed and her decision to act on it as questionable. This in turn adds to her pain and to the constraints that she has to negotiate in order to make her desires viable in the context of veiling.

With Maram, a fashionably veiled middle class participant, we get insight into the manifestation of this pain when the experience of veiling is entirely forced. Maram's dissatisfaction is in fact more pronounced than that of the other participants because, unlike them, she does not seem to be convinced with or emotionally invested in veiling. As explained in the previous chapters, Maram was forced to wear the veil at a very early age and was never able to readjust her desires to fit her new corporeality:

I never lived the experience of taking care of my hair and my looks as I got older. I never experienced this feeling of getting to enjoy my body and to get complimented for it as it developed. And this is not something you can make up for. Even now after so many years when I see non-veiled women with their hair done I envy them because they can do this. They can go out with their hair uncovered and style it the way they want. But for me I have a limited space to experience these feelings. Even when I go to parties and have a veil-do it's not the same. Sometimes when I get a haircut I feel like styling my hair and going out just like that. I would really love to but I can't. It hurts but there isn't much I can do about it [emphasis in original]. (Maram 15-3)

Maram's experience of living the veil is marked by the requirement to suppress her desire for enjoying her body and for expressing her femininity openly. It is also

marked by the pain that she experiences when she realizes that she is being seen as less desirable than non-veiled women:

> I know that men see me as less attractive than non-veiled women. And I know that if I show my hair I will attract <u>more</u> attention, and this is important for me. I don't want my brother or my uncle to complement me on my hair and my looks, I want a stranger to do that. This feeling is never satisfied until you get compliments from men outside your family. But in my case no one gets to see this aspect of me so I feel I am missing out. Very few people even see the real Maram. (Maram 15-8)

Maram's pain derives from not being able to show her full beauty and attract the gaze subsequently. And it also derives from having to be known through a bodily form that does not reflect her reality from her perspective.

While the transgressive *zeena*-based veiling may thus open a space for women to express their desires by allowing them to underscore the attractiveness of their bodies and to actively engage the male gaze, the above-discussed examples illustrate that it simultaneously engenders truncated desires. Moreover, the examples illustrate that the subversive desire-accentuating veiling practices that the participants perform limit their sense of active desiring to self-objectification in practice; that is, to perceiving their bodies as "jewels" or segmented sexual objects guarded for male consumption. In other words, while the participants may disrupt the hegemonic performativity of veiling so that they can live certain desires openly, they fail to change the ideals of desirability which remain androcentric. As I argue in chapter seven, one way to challenge this reality may be to rethink the discourses that limit female desire in Islam and that constrain women's subject positions within relations of desire.

Chapter 7

Conclusions: On the Potential and Limitations of the Project of Muslim Femininity in Jordan

1- Introduction

Conducting this study has been quite a journey on both intellectual and personal levels. The insights that the participants' generously shared with me proved invaluable in terms of allowing me to understand and theorize some of the less discussed aspects of the practice of veiling; namely, its shifting religious conceptualization and its bodily implications for living femininity and desire. As I came to know the participants and as I meticulously engaged their narratives over the past two years I was also constantly challenged to reflect upon my own understanding and embodiment of Islam and its implications for the knowledge that I produce as a feminist researcher who is also Jordanian, Muslim, and non-veiled.

The conclusions that I draw from this research and that I will explicate in this chapter are not so much latent findings that I uncovered along the way, but are necessarily reflective of my own story of the participants' stories. They represent only one of many possible insights into non/veiling as it is practiced in Jordan. As argued in chapter two, the researcher is never merely a transparent medium through which words pass after all (Spivak, 1988, p. 257), and meanings are not simply latent and embedded in the data but are rather multiple and constructed and mediated by the researcher's baggage as much as they are dependent on the participants' narratives.

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I took up all the methodological measures designed to help a researcher remain faithful to her participants' stories. However, I am aware of the situatedness and partiality of the knowledge that I produced on Muslim femininity through my research. As a feminist researcher working from within a feminist understanding of epistemology and qualitative research, I approach this as a point of strength. On the one hand, this approach disputes the possibility of engendering one outlook that can sum up the multiple facets of the body projects that make up Muslim femininity. On the other, it underscores the need to enrich the knowledge produced in the context of this research through future projects that engage the aspects that I may not have been able to explore fully due to the necessary limitations intrinsic to my standpoint.

This chapter recapitulates the major findings of my doctoral dissertation research and examines their significance for feminist knowledge production on veiling. Moreover, it suggests potential venues that future feminist research on the topic may take in order to further the current understandings of the practice as it is lived in Jordan. I will start by re-visiting the non-conventional understanding and embodiment of Muslim femininity that the participants establish through their non/veiling. More precisely, I will focus on the potential and limitations that their outlooks hold for disrupting the hegemonic organization of the project of Muslim femininity in the country. Subsequently, I will examine the implications of the research findings for future feminist research on veiling and femininity in Islam.

2- Re-visiting the Veiled Participants' Insights Into Muslim Femininity: The Potential and Limitations of the Fashionable Veiling

As the previous chapters illustrate, the Muslim femininity that the veiled participants construct holds a significant disruptive potential because it challenges the hegemonic structure of the project on three levels in particular: its Quranic conceptualization; its embodiment and parameters as a bodily experience; and the discourses and structures that should conventionally inform it from the point of view of mainstream Islam.

The Quranic Conceptualization

The fashionably veiled participants establish a Muslim femininity that is *zeena*-based (i.e. beautification and adornment based) and desire affirming. As explained in the previous chapters, the "veil verses" (especially verse 24.31) problematize drawing the gaze to the body, flaunting its beauty, and openly articulating its desires and desirability. By understanding the veil to be a tool for (rather than a means against) accentuating femininity, and by inviting, enticing, and enjoying the gaze, the participants re-think the very religious meaning and purpose of the practice and embody it in a way that disrupts the dominant veiling regime to a certain extent.

The participants are able to implement this new conceptualization of veiling by validating it on the religious level and by using the tools of the hegemonic discourses that mandate it against their grain. For instance, as explained in chapters three and four, the participants use a *zeena*-friendly verse and *hadith* that do not speak directly to veiling or to women's bodily disposition in order to argue that beautification per se is not condemned in Islam and should be in fact an intrinsic part of the practice of veiling.

Some even posit the *zeena*-based performativity of veiling as a religious duty and a political statement that serve to underscore the flexible and femininity-friendly aspects of Islam. The participants also use the very hegemonic signification of the garment to disrupt its limits as a signifier. For instance, they take advantage of the fact that the garment is religiously and culturally interpreted as a boundary marker and as a signifier of respect in order to validate materially and conceptually transgressive forms of veiling. The respect signification that seems to be intrinsic to the practice as it is constructed in the Jordanian imaginary allows the participants to modify the signifier (the veil) so that it accentuates their bodies and addresses the admiring male gaze without running the same risks of harassment and scrutiny that subversive dispositions of the body normally engender.

The fashionable veil holds a significant potential for validating such non-hegemonic conceptualizations of Muslim femininity precisely because it tries to disrupt the religious and cultural systems from within. This makes it an important method of change that speaks to the structure of the Jordanian society. Since the transgression that it articulates is hard to pinpoint it is often more tolerated than other non-conventional embodiments of Muslim femininity such as non-veiling. The veiled participants' beautified, pseudo-concealed, hyper visible bodies expose the emptiness of the mandate as it is constructed in the Jordanian imaginary and present an interesting example of the possibility of challenging a signifier through a disruptive reiteration of its tenets. This approach necessarily comes with its own limitations however as will be explained in section that discusses the shortcomings of the fashionable veil.

The Parameters of the Bodily Experience

On the level of its embodiment, the new conceptualization of veiling instated by the participants is translated into a bodily experience that seems to be transgressive on the personal and the relational levels. For one thing, the experience of veiling as the participants live it is not one of disembodiment and/or de-sexualization as mainstream Islam and the Jordanian culture intend it to be. Rather, the participants' veiled bodies are actively adorned, fully inhabited, and experienced in terms of being a source of pleasure. The veil seems to function as a surrogate hair that is subjected to the same beautification strategies as the hair (e.g. the veil-dos) and that provides a similar kind of enjoyment for women. For the participants, concealing the body is part of intensifying, rather than limiting, their sense of their femininity and sexuality. The pleasure that they derive in this context comes from their ability to determine to what extent and in what capacity they can accentuate their bodies for their own personal enjoyment and for the purpose of tantalizing the sexualizing male gaze.

The alternative embodiment of the practice holds an interesting potential in this sense especially in terms of negotiating the conventionally limited relational aspect of the practice. For instance, many participants combine veiling with certain types of open bodily interactions with men that are often frowned upon in the context of veiling. The nature of these interactions and the extent to which they are considered transgressive depend of course on veiled women's class and family backgrounds and on their type of veiling. What may be extremely transgressive of the limits of the bodily experience in one context may be normative in another; hence the significance of the potential that the new veiling holds as it works to instate change in each context according to the context's

parameters. For instance, the participants who come from the more conservative backgrounds and who wear the more conservative forms of veiling (such as the *jilbab*) challenge the limits of the acceptable embodiment of veiling in their contexts by shaking unrelated men's hands. Others from less strict backgrounds and with less conservative forms of veiling undertake male friends or implicate their veiled bodies in even more unconventional activities such as swimming in mixed-sex public venues or having male dance partners and so on.

The alternative conceptualization and embodiment of the practice that are materialized through the participants' ethical work challenge the parameters of the hegemonic veiling regime in place in Jordan and the structure of the modes of being that should accompany the practice from the point of view of mainstream Islam. For one thing, the veiling that many of the participants perform is not primarily religious but is more often practiced as part of fulfilling non-religious desires and as part of complying with the social-cultural mandate for covering up, and this disrupts the intentions of the practice. More importantly, even when endorsed for religious reasons, the veil as some Jordanian women practice it figures as part of negotiating the limits of what can count as a religious mode of being in the first place. The participants seem to negotiate the ontological limits of the religious modes of being so that they prioritize the body and encompass attracting the gaze and having unconventional male-female interactions. The participants' transgressive embodiment of the hegemonic structure is similarly clear in their enactment of the social-cultural veiling through the religious "criteria of veiling". It is important to keep in mind however that by using religion and disrupting it simultaneously the change that the participants instate remains ambivalent. As will be

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discussed in the latter parts of the chapter, it can end up giving more power to the structures in question through the very guise of transgression in practice.

The Discourses and Structures that Inform Veiling

The important role that the socio-cultural and media discourses play in informing and organizing veiling in Jordan disputes the presumed primacy or exclusivity of the religious discourse in this context. As explained in chapter four, five socio-cultural tropes prove to be particularly influential in promoting the practice of veiling in Jordan. For instance, the veil is increasingly endorsed by many Jordanian women as part of accommodating a powerful social mandate to cover up and a relational construction of masculinity that structure the Jordanian society. It is also often undertaken because it boosts a woman's respect, status, and chances of getting married, and because it provides a means for reducing harassment. The protection that veiling ensures in this context is very limited yet valued by the participants firstly because of the lack of more effective measures for protection, and secondly because of a widespread social notion that blames women for being harassed.

The media discourse proves to be similarly influential in the outspread of the practice in Jordan and seems to work primarily through indirect indoctrination. By presenting the non-veiled body as primarily implicated in culturally inappropriate contexts Arabic drama implicitly vilifies it and feeds the cultural aversion towards non-veiling. Western drama on the other hand seems to reinforce the flourishing of the fashionable veil; as young women feel trapped between the ideals they see on TV and the ones they are expected to embody they devise creative forms of veiling that allow them to negotiate and accommodate their reality.

Even the structures that consolidate the practice in Jordan do not depend on promoting its religious benefits. Rather, they use its capitalist value and consumerist potential and advertise it primarily as an appealing lifestyle. For instance, the veil fashion industry is one of the influential structures that stand behind the current understanding and performativity of veiling in Jordan. By making veiling part of fashion and by providing an ever-changing supply of affordable appealing veil gadgets, the veil fashion industry consolidates the exhibitionist conceptualization of veiling, and boosts its appeal as an enjoyable lifestyle that is moreover convenient and amusing to adopt.

Constructing a *zeena*-friendly veil and living it in the context of discourses and structures that challenge its exclusive and/or conventional religious connotations is necessarily important in disrupting the hegemonic meaning of the practice. However, as the following three sections illustrates, the transgressive potential of the new understanding of the practice remains simultaneously limited on both the structural and experiential levels. The limitations of the fashionable veiling are in fact particularly salient at three levels. Namely: its ability to disrupt the structural mandate that stands behind the practice; the types of alternative femininity that can be validated through the disruptive space that it opens up; and the scope of the enhancing effects that it has on veiled women's lives.

Accommodating the Concealment Mandate

By sporting beautified pseudo-concealed bodies, the veiled participants challenge the goals of Muslim femininity as instated by the Quran, mock the conventional social-cultural limits of the *satr* or concealment ideal, and challenge the very intentions of both

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discourses with regard to women's role as mere consumers of their ideals. However, transgressive as it is, the participants' nuanced way of inhabiting the cultural and religious discourses in Jordan does not question or challenge the very requirement to conceal the female body in the first place. As mentioned in chapter six, the participants' method of change seems to lie in disrupting certain politics while simultaneously re-affirming them. While important, this method has limited effects in terms of opening up Islam and its hegemonic cultural articulations. For instance, even the most fashionably veiled participants do not dis-identify with the logic that underlies the practice. Rather, many of them believe that their bodies are indeed dangerous sexual entities that should be covered up in order to protect men and protect them from men. While the veiled participants may thus advance a conceptualization of Muslim femininity that is *zeena*-based and desire enhancing, the potential of their veiling as a method for changing the religious and cultural perception of the female body remains truncated because their embodiment of *zeena* and desire continue to revolve around the *satr* ideal.

The participants' ongoing identification with the logic embedded in veiling makes the alternative conceptualization of the practice that they establish limiting on the level of the ensuing approach to the body -and also on the level of the femininities that can be validated as will be discussed in the following section. While the new understanding of the practice that the participants establish is based on embracing, beautifying, and enjoying the body indeed, it is simultaneously based on continuing to perceive the female body as a source of embarrassment and dangerous lust that has to be covered or subjected to *satr*. Femininity, female sexuality, and desirability are understood and lived in a tensioned antagonizing way in this sense. The pleasure that is derived from them is

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promulgated and intensified on the one hand, but they are simultaneously implicitly stigmatized and understood to be unruly and in need of containment on the other. In other words, by challenging the forms but not the core of the *satr* mandate, the fashionable veiling keeps the hegemonic problematic conceptualization of the female body in place, and this severely limits its potential as an alternative.

The Ensuing Alternative Muslim Femininities

When any *zeena* and desire-based experience of the body has to be anchored in the *satr* ideal in order to be considered viable, the veil remains the primary valid signifier of modesty. This makes the potential that the new conceptualization of veiling holds for validating alternative forms of Muslim femininity at best truncated. The fashionable veiling may work to challenge the hegemonic forms that the veil as a signifier can take, but it does not disrupt its primacy as the most viable way of expressing *satr* and modesty, nor the need for Muslim femininity to be anchored in these ideals for that matter. For instance, as this research has illustrated, non-veiling based Muslim femininities are only validated insofar that they approximate or mimic the concealment ideal embedded in veiling.

This limited disruption of the veil as a signifier and of its *satr* signification may be strategically significant as explained earlier, but it results in practice in a hierarchical approach to Muslim femininity whereby only certain forms are considered "Muslim enough". The ranking and validity of other forms become dependent on the extent to which they are considered to bespeak the *satr* signification. So for instance, certain forms of the fashionable veiling become abject through this hierarchical structure because their presumed "excessive" fashionability places them low on the scale of *satr*, while some

forms of the *jilbab* become privileged on the other hand because they rank higher on this scale, and so on.

The ensuing hierarchy does not only dis/validate certain conceptualizations of Muslim femininity. More importantly, it distorts women's rights so that they are perceived as mere conditional privileges bestowed on some women but not others according to their embodiment of femininity. For instance, as explained earlier, some of the main tropes that ensure the increasing popularity of veiling in Jordan are protection and respect. The veiling hierarchy makes these two aspects mere contingent privileges so that the extent to which a woman can expect to be respected or safe from harassment depends on her being veiled and on the type of veiling that she wears. In other words, while the new conceptualization of veiling may allow women to endorse transgressive bodily dispositions and to undertake non-conventional relationships without being openly stigmatized or hurt, this comes at the expense of constructing protection and status as privileges granted for some bodies only, and only insofar as they approximate the *satr* ideal.

The Life-Enhancing Effects of the Fashionable Veiling

The participants' experiences illustrate that the fashion-based veiling has both limiting and enhancing effects on their daily lives. For instance, veiling can be an enjoyable fashion-based experience and part of an active social lifestyle. However, it can simultaneously have detrimental effects on a woman's sense of her body as much as on her relationships and activities. The participants' description of their unfulfilled desires on the levels of dressing up, attracting the gaze, and having relationships with men (discussed in chapter six) illustrate that the pleasure that they derive from their bodies by

accessorizing them and enhancing their desirability remains truncated. The *zeena* and desire-affirming conceptualization and embodiment of veiling remains limiting despite the considerable space it opens in this context precisely because the transgression it allows continues to be constrained by the parameters of the *satr* ideal.

Accommodating this ideal limits the participants' ability to act on their desires for more daring forms of veiling fashion, or even for non-veiling based forms of fashion for that matter. It also fails to fulfill their desires for more open forms of male attention and relationships. This tension in the effects of the fashionable veil will be further discussed in the last section of the chapter. It is primarily a necessary byproduct of the attempts to turn a practice that seeks to inhibit desires and beautification into a practice that is desire enabling and beautification friendly. After all, while Butler argues that the parameters of a signifier and its signification can be negotiated through a subversive reiteration of their tenets (1993, pp. 105-106), there seems to be a limit in practice to the degree and nature of dissent that can be articulated through a medium that seeks to constrain the female body ontologically and experientially.

The fashionable veiling seems also to distort the participants' sense of desire while enabling it. For example, even when the veiled participants transgress the limits of the activities that are conventionally acceptable for veiling in order to fulfill a desire to swim in public while veiled for instance or a desire to play music while wearing the *jilbab* and so on, their sense of guilt for doing this exposes the limits of the shift that is taking place in the conceptualization of desire. The new embodiment of veiling may allow the enactment of transgressive desires but only while continuing to stigmatize

them. Desire itself and women's right to act on it are not de-vilified in the process of the partial liberation of its enactment.

The participants' approach to their own desirability remains similarly limited because it continues to be primarily constructed along the lines of objectification. As explained earlier, the transgressive conceptualization of the practice of veiling opens a space for the participants to accentuate the appeal and desirability of their bodies and to actively entice the desiring male gaze. However, the only subject position open for the participants in the process is that of being the object of male desire. In other words, the new understanding of the practice holds a potential for rethinking the viable expressions of desire in Islam and its being public and open, but it does not enable women's subjectivity beyond the limits of being sex objects or mere guardians who protect their bodies for the exclusive consumption of one anticipated partner. As explained in chapter six the practice as the participants perform it may often blur the rigid lines of being a subject vs. an object of desire, but in practice female desire is not restructured so that it can be lived in non-hierarchical or in reciprocal ways. This is the case because hybrid forms of veiling such as the fashionable veiling do not target the discourses and the structures that conceptualize active female desiring in terms of objectification in the first place, or the structures that validate policing transgressive forms of desiring.

3- Muslim Non-Veiling: A Truncated "Alternative" Muslim Femininity?

The non-veiled participants' conceptualization and embodiment of Muslim femininity hold a more pronounced subversive potential than the fashionable veiling primarily because they establish non-veiling per se as a viable way of expressing Muslim

femininity and as a viable part of the Muslim religious mode of being. As explained in chapters four, five, and six, both the religious and socio-cultural discourses prevalent in Jordan have antagonizing approaches to the female body and hair. Their explicit exposure is frowned upon, while their concealment even when nominal is reified as the only viable expression of Islam and propriety more generally. The challenge that the non-veiled participants pose to this structure is that they do not just flaunt their bodies and denounce Islam in a way that would make it easy to dismiss them as non-believers altogether. The problem they pose is that they self-identify as Muslims and are often practicing and seek to make their uncovered bodies and hair an acknowledged and validated part of their religious identities. In this sense, they challenge mainstream Islam to make room for a Muslim femininity that is ontologically different than the hegemonic one: a Muslim femininity that does not bracket the body nor presume that an omnipresent male gaze has to mediate women's spirituality.

Moreover, the Muslim femininity that is constructed through non-veiling is also different than the fashionable veil-based one in terms of its' adherents approach to their bodies. As explained earlier, the fashionably veiled participants may beautify their bodies and take pleasure in them, but they continue to have an antagonizing approach to them and posit them as a source of embarrassment to be concealed through the *satr* ideal. The non-veiled Muslim participants express a more overt acceptance of their bodies on the other hand and are able to see them beyond the limits of the omnipresent male gaze that structures hegemonic Muslim femininity in Jordan. Of course, living under the religious and socio-cultural mandate of *satr* necessarily pushes these women to tone down their appearance at times. However, the difference lies in the motivating logic: unlike that of

the fashionably veiled participants, the motivation in the case of the non-veiled ones does not harbor any vilification of the female body or any implied sense of the unruliness of its sexuality and the fairness of the mandate to contain it.

The non-veiled Muslim femininity that the participants construct does not come without its many shortcomings however. For instance, while the female body is in fact embraced and de-stigmatized according to this understanding of Muslim femininity, the non-veiled participants simultaneously bracket the veiled participants' ability to beautify, accentuate, and embrace their bodies and to express their desires openly. As explained in the previous chapters, many non-veiled participants frown upon the fashionably veiled women who frequent clubs or have boyfriends for instance. This exposes a tension in the Muslim femininity that they live and advance. For one thing, the non-veiled participants do not seem to acquiesce any attempt for re-thinking the mainstream understanding of Muslim femininity from within the confines of the veil. For them, one can challenge the logic of veiling but not the hegemonic enactment of the practice. For another, the participants seem to reproduce the policing logic embedded in the hegemonic construction of Muslim femininity that they challenge. For instance, they do not disrupt the notion of a policed Muslim femininity whose validation depends on following certain rules imposed from without. Rather, they only disrupt particular rules that do not appeal to them personally and this makes their understanding of Muslim femininity remain as limiting as that of the fashionably veiled women.

4- Some Concluding Remarks: Future Directions for Feminist Knowledge Production

on Veiling and Muslim Femininity

The veiled participants' narratives shed light on one of the important yet less discussed aspects of the practice of veiling; namely, its implications as an expression of femininity and desire. Much has been written on the religious and political bases of the practice and on its implications as an expression of piety, a coerced imposition, or a liberating "choice" (Ahmed, 1992; Barlas, 2002; Bullock, 2002; El-Guindi, 1999; Joppke, 2009; Lazreg, 2009; MacLeod, 1991; Mahmood, 2005; Mernissi, 1975, 1991; Scott, 2007; Stowasser, 1997; Zuhur, 1992). Little attention has been given however to understanding veiling as a bodily experience and to examining the pleasures and contradictions that it engenders for women on the level of living their femininity. My dissertation research has tried to complement current feminist scholarship on veiling by placing the emphasis on this aspect of veiling in particular and by unpacking the effects that a femininity and desire affirming performativity of veiling can have on its religious and cultural conceptualization and on the current parameters of the project of Muslim femininity more generally.

The participants illustrate that living femininity and desire through veiling is often a tensioned experience. For instance, as explained earlier, the participants' sense of their adorned veiled bodies is simultaneously one of pleasure and embarrassment, and their sense of their desirability is simultaneously dependent on actively enticing the gaze and on limiting their subject positions to being merely its object. The tension in question is complex however; dismissing it as an indicator of the unfruitfulness of negotiating the parameters of veiling, or reading it through a rigid dichotomous lens may be analytically

unproductive since it draws the attention away from the context that produces the tension in the first place.

As mentioned earlier, the tension in question is a byproduct of trying to re-think the parameters of the practice of veiling without challenging the gender dynamics embedded in it. The tensioned corporeality that the participants live is in fact one necessary result of the trajectory that change is following in Jordan. The shift that is taking place in the conceptualization and embodiment of the practice in the country is one that is based on providing immediate but temporary fixes and props for some of the constraints conventionally imposed on women. The change that ensues is necessarily tensioned and truncated because it fails to address the very logic of veiling and the structures that bracket the viability of the female body. In other words, as long as the *satr* ideal and the other structures that enable women's objectification in Jordan remain in place, and as long as women continue to define their bodies through them, any alternative conceptualization of veiling or of the project of Muslim femininity more generally will remain permeated with tensions.

The challenge that faces feminist theorization in this context lies in walking the fine line between acknowledging these limited but significant shifts and not losing sight of their shortcomings. After all, there is a myriad of ways other than drastic subversion for inhabiting and negotiating the regulatory norms as Butler (1993) and Mahmood (2005) rightly argue. A dichotomous lens may cover over the nuanced and strategic forms of change that the fashionably veiled participants instate, especially when the constraints of their material conditions are taken into consideration.

However, the limiting effects that ensue from the nuanced change in veiling are equally important to consider. For one thing, being content with devising daring forms of veiling that can challenge the hegemonic forms of the *satr* ideal but not its very binding nature as a mandate reinforces the limits imposed on Jordanian Muslim women who see their femininity outside the parameters of this ideal and who may not "willingly" covet it as some veiled participants do. Moreover, focusing exclusively on the significance of the limited but strategic change that ensues in this context leaves out one of the more important aspects that are at the heart of the current structuring of Muslim femininity in Jordan: namely, the question of the relational conceptualization of masculinity that is at the root of the *satr* mandate and of the shaming of the female body in Jordan. Cultural-religious veiling is a byproduct of a worldview structured around the primacy of the male gaze after all. As this research has illustrated, its power as a social mandate in Jordan is largely engendered by the social construction of women's bodies as an extension of men's bodies, authority, and reputation. If this context is not addressed, veiling will necessarily continue to be over-valued and any subversive forms of Muslim femininity will continue to revolve around the ideal of *satr* that mandates the concealment of the female body. For instance, as this research has illustrated, the transgressive fashionable veiling manages to survive even in the more strict class and family contexts in Jordan despite the fact that it challenges the conventional sense of modesty and the Quranic intentions for Muslim femininity precisely because it continues to bespeak men's authority over women's bodies. The new forms of veiling in Jordan may be adorned and body-affirming indeed, but they still bespeak the primacy of the male gaze in structuring space, as well as the primacy of protecting male guardians' relational sense of self. In this

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sense, while the participants manage the veiling regime they do not question its androcentric structure or men's sense of desirable and/or "proper" femininity.

Muslim masculinity figures then as a primary feminist issue that should be examined closely if we are to open up the project of Muslim femininity to more drastic alterations and enlarge the scope of feminist knowledge production on veiling. After all, even when women undertake the veil out of personal and/or religious preferences, their interaction with men (whether family members, co-workers, or even random strangers) simultaneously influences their personal "choices". The study of the social construction of Muslim masculinity in Jordan and its dynamic forms is thus one of the future directions to which my dissertation research points. My next research project will work to complement this one by turning the gaze on Jordanian Muslim men. In fact, unpacking the nuanced, dynamic, and tensioned constructions of Muslim masculinity in the country, examining men's perspectives on veiling, and trying to understand the sense of personal fulfillment with which the practice provides them as well as the discourses that inform the gendered relational construction of the self in the country will help me address one of the questions with which this research has left me and which concerns the reasons that induced many of the research participants' male guardians (across different background) to push them to take up the veil. While my participants' bodies are the ones that materialized and negotiated the veiling mandate, a comprehensive feminist analysis of the practice as it is developing in the country needs to target Muslim men's perspectives too. Not simply in the sense of locating the root of the problem in the hegemonic construction of masculinity, or unpacking the arguments of male theologians on veiling, but in the sense of deconstructing the viewpoints and experiences of the everyday lay Jordanian

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Muslim men, the different ways they understand and embody masculinity, and the way they negotiate the hegemonic structures in question.

Another question that my dissertation project opens up for future research concerns the *satr* ideal and the socially required pseudo concealment. Lazreg for one, highlights the limits of the nominal modesty embedded in covering the hair and accentuating the body (2009, pp. 32, 65). My dissertation research examined one context where the hair-based modesty that Lazreg invokes is mandated and practiced. Additionally, my research identified the *satr* ideal as being at the basis of this mandate as it is practiced in Jordan and unpacked the role that the ideal plays in bridging the religious and cultural levels of the practice. One question that still needs to be addressed in future feminist research however is the means for effectively disrupting the pervasiveness of this ideal. If the importance of the *satr* ideal can be re-thought so that it becomes only one of many other culturally and religiously viable ideals in Jordan, new forms of Muslim femininity can come about. Displacing the significance of this ideal entails unpacking and disrupting its importance for men and women. In other words, what is at stake is researching practical means for negotiating the hegemonic structures in the country so that they induce Jordanian Muslim men and women to stop conceiving the female body as a source of embarrassment to be covered up in the first place.

The potential that I read into the fashionable veiling, especially in terms of its ability to open up a space for dismantling the limits of viable Muslim femininities in Jordan, is what pushed me to start this research project initially. Engaging the trend closely and unpacking its many layers allowed me to understand its limits and complexity

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however, and helped me become aware of its being an embodiment of femininity that can be at best said to tread the lines of hegemony, transgression, and (non)privileges.

My research has brought me to the conclusion that establishing alternative understandings of Muslim femininity that can address the enmeshment of culture and religion in Jordan and the way they join hands in constraining Muslim women's sense and experience of their bodies and their femininity, requires more than what hybrid forms of veiling such as the fashionable veil can offer. I would argue that in order to disrupt both the hegemony of veiling as a practice and the hegemony of the *satr* ideal more generally, Jordanian Muslim women should problematize the external and internalized Panopticon towers -to use Foucault's term (1980b, p. 153)- that permeate the different facets of their lives. If the policing logic that structures Muslim femininity in Jordan is disrupted, non-veiled as well as veiled non-conventional articulations of the project of Muslim femininity may be validated. As explained earlier, non-veiled women police veiled women's embodiment of Muslim femininity as much as veiled women feel entitled to police each other. What is needed then is a context that allows each woman to define her Islam and her embodiment of it without fearing an inspecting male or female gaze. More importantly, what is needed is a context whereby women (as much as men) would not define themselves as inherently responsible for and entitled to police Islam in the first place.

Such a change can happen if Jordanian Muslim men and women start re-thinking the parameters of women's subject positions and if they stop approaching any challenge of the hegemonic constructions of Islam as an attack on the sanctity of the religion itself. As long as women continue to perceive themselves (and to be perceived) as mere tools

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that embody certain rules of cultural or religious "propriety", and as long as the sanctity of Islam is located in its petrified institutionalized forms and the historicization of its inductions vilified, the change that can happen in Muslim femininity in Jordan will continue to be limited.

One place to start challenging this context would be tackling what Foucault calls the paradox of subjugation as it plays out for women in Jordan; i.e. the way that women are subjugated by the discourses that make them subjects in the first place (1982). The problem after all is that Jordanian Muslim women's sense of themselves as subjects, and by extension their sense of what change they are entitled to instate into their reality, are structured by the very hegemonic discourses that constrain their femininity and their Islam to begin with. One way to break this cycle may lie in re-thinking the parameters of the frames of reference through which Jordanian Muslim women construct their sense of themselves as subjects so that they would allow new subject positions to materialize and so that they would induce women to adopt the nascent positions.

Simultaneously with gradually advancing alternative frames of reference that would dispute the hegemony of the religious-cultural ones in Jordan, it is important to tend to the limitations of the latter given their extensive power in the country. Validating new frames of reference would cater indeed to the needs and aspirations of Jordanian Muslim women who do not identify through the religious-cultural discourses in place. However, given the strong hold of Islam and culture in the country it is equally important to simultaneously try and instate change from within the confines of these discourses, limited as they are. Since Islam remains an authoritative frame of reference for millions of people, it is often unrealistic to ignore it or to expect its adherents to reject it

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completely all at once (Abou El Fadl, 2002; Ali, 2006), or even to expect them to be willing to embrace new ideals if they seem to run against it. In other words, it is often strategically fruitful to initially promulgate change through the hegemonic frames of reference, at least until the new ideals start gaining validity in the social imaginary.

As explained in chapter six, it may be possible to change the limited formulations of Islam and to challenge the presumed defiling nature of developing some of its inductions and suspending others altogether if the historicity of the Quran, its mediated nature, and the contingency of its verses became accepted and normalized, and more importantly, if the authority of interpreters and the monopoly they exercise over the frame of reference is questioned. Abu-Zayd argues that the Quran itself supports indeed this outlook (2007b, p. 113). In such a context, new ideals and subject positions that make women the only ones in charge of their bodies may be injected into the Islamic frame of reference. In other words, one way to proceed might be to establish a malleable Islam that can embrace feminist changes that break from the hegemonic limits altogether rather than ones that apologize for or accommodate them. An elastic Islam that steers clear from exceptionalism and from bracketing gender problematic issues may be one place to start instating the type of change that caters to different Jordanian Muslim women's realities. It may be one venue that sets the social and cultural stage for validating non-religious frames of reference and more drastic forms of change eventually.

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