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Defiant Embodiments and the Gender Geopolitics of Seeing

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Introduction

This chapter develops work on ‘Burqa-Ban’ controversies in light of the ‘post-feminist’ debates about the global beauty and fashion industries’ partnership with popular TV makeover shows.¹ It looks at the politics of visibility in the context of controversies in the EU and the US about the regulation of Muslim veil dressing and comparable controversies in the Middle East and North African region about women’s naked protests. In both cases national-regional debates became global, mediated ones. It does so from the perspective of how these politics are rendered in, made visible through artists’ interventions and, conversely, how embodied political actions incorporate artistic references and theatrical idioms in turn. It is part of a tripartite project to articulate a viable critique of Burqa-Ban discourses in the EU and with that, to address related, often moribund, debates about what sorts of well-dressed, or undressed embodiments count, and for whom.² The main aim is to point these

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arguments in another direction by confronting a western liberal – and feminist – blind spot about which vested interests are being served when staking claims on what sorts of (naked or dressed) bodies can, or should, emit the appropriate signs of ‘emancipation’. This means coming to terms with how an inner ‘illogic’ of dress-sense and dress codes at the psycho-emotional level interacts with societal, including sub-cultural, codes of conduct.

Before proceeding, however, some historical context is called for; in the first decade of the twentieth century British suffragettes were grabbing newspaper headlines with their direct actions. Today, it is just over a century since Emily Davison became the first casualty of the movement when she threw herself – or fell – under one of the horses at the 1913 Epsom Derby. The photograph taken of that moment has become iconic for the history of twentieth-century women’s rights activism. At around the same time, in Egyptian cities and other countries in the region including Algeria and Tunisia, women were taking off their customary headscarves (*hijab*), marking another wave in the history of unveiling and veiling that punctuates the Middle East and North African region’s shifting gender power hierarchies before, during *and* since colonial rule.³ By the 1970s, women students on Egyptian university campuses were taking up the veil again, a new form of Islamic dress that marked the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood as a religious and political force to be reckoned with.⁴ In Turkey women were doing likewise. Meanwhile, on US and other Anglo-European university campuses feminists were mobilising against forms of sexual discrimination, through legislatures and by direct action; for example, by disrupting beauty pageants and holding public ‘burn the bra’ events. Slogans such as ‘our bodies ourselves’ and ‘the right to choose’ – emblematic of that era – have continued to echo down the generations of western feminism.

Back in the Middle East and North African region, a few decades later, in 1999, a woman deputy, Merve Kavakçı, entered the Turkish

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parliament 'wearing a white headscarf with fashionable frameless eyeglasses and a long-skirted, modern two-piece suit'⁵ to a raucously critical reception. Her fashionable accessories aside, it was her hijab that incensed critics. Following close on the heels of that year's election of the first veiled woman deputy from a pro-Islamic party, other women deputies also condemned Kavakçı's action for its avowing of the 'ideological uniform of Islamic fundamentalism.'⁶ Returning to Western Europe, since the turn of this century (though presaged in the 1990s) there have been concerted efforts in a number of EU member states to regulate the hijab and other public forms of veil dressing such as the *chador*, or *niqab*. Current moves to instigate an outright ban on all if not certain forms of veil dressing have been championed by a loose confederation of anti-immigration/Eurosceptic populist parties to the right of the political spectrum. Whilst eschewing the xenophobic polemic of 'Burqa Ban' arguments, centre-left, liberal and feminist voices have also expressed their own sense of unease with visibly Muslim forms of dress for EU residents and citizens.⁷

These measures, as a political response to how the veil represents an apparent increase in the number of Muslims who 'refuse' to integrate, have polarised opinion-makers, and academe. For it is visibly Muslim, and not any sort of 'modest' dressing from other faiths that is under scrutiny.⁸ In the heat of this debate, contemporary forms of hijab and, with them, local-global fashion trends and personal sartorial inflections have been reduced to a symptom of Islamic fundamentalism's inroads into western society. Consequently, all women wearing the veil become positioned as oppressed rather than active subjects, incomplete rather than full citizens in these nominally secular societies and so ipso facto unfashionably clad with respect to liberal capitalism's consumerist codes of aspiration and modernity.⁹ Nonetheless, and for many reasons, Muslim women living in these increasingly intolerant and xenophobic societies have been insisting on their right to wear what they deem to be appropriate, refusing

to conform to these crosscutting prescriptions; their (veiled) bodies themselves, their right to choose.¹⁰

Amidst legislated and spontaneous changes in public dress codes in urban centres, and rising anti-Muslim sentiment amongst some EU residents, what then to make of the two young women in Egypt and Tunisia, Aliaa Magda Elmahdy and Amina Sboui-Tyler, uploading photos of themselves naked or bare-breasted onto their Facebook pages, in 2011 and 2013 respectively. Reactions – from religious authorities, burgeoning secular powers, Muslim and non-Muslim women's and civil rights activists, in the region and in the west – were fierce and divided. On record both women declared that they were protesting against their respective governments. But it was their allying themselves through these actions with the European-based Femen organisation, notorious for the staging of topless, 'flash' demonstrations against human trafficking and prostitution, that pushed debates out beyond Egypt and Tunisia as the images went viral. Their acts echoed the rhetoric of individual emancipation, freedom and equal rights from the heyday of mid-twentieth-century feminism. First, that 'my body belongs to me, it is not the source of anyone else's honour'¹¹ and second, that 'I am not shy of being a woman in a society where women are nothing but sex objects harassed on a daily basis by men who know nothing about sex or the importance of a woman.'¹² But they also point to wider issues at the intersection of changing dress codes, women's embodiments, and sociopolitical orders all of which underscore ongoing contestations around civil rights in societies marked by the aftermath of the events of 9/11 and the Arab (and Persian) Uprisings.

The above interwoven timelines set the scene for this discussion. They also underscore the conceptual framework underpinning this juxtaposition between art and politics, and the gender geopoliticisation of the 'everyday corporeal practices'¹³ of Muslim women's veil dressing. They illustrate the ways in which the body, in Foucault's terms, 'is also directly involved in a political field; power relations

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have an immediate hold on it, mark it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. The political investment of the body is bound up [in]... complex reciprocal social relations ... the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body.¹⁴ More specifically they reveal how women's bodies, and the ways in which women deploy their own bodies, 'emit' as well as resist the complex social relations that interested Foucault. In the above scenarios, all of these women – fighting for the right to vote, by insisting or desisting from veil dressing, or going naked in public – are confronting the power relations that hold them back, that dictate the signs their bodies are supposed to emit, and for whom. Those refusals to conform as a subjected body in societies based on highly disciplined 'homosocial'¹⁵ orders that police the physical separation of male from female 'interior, intimate, gendered' spaces¹⁶ – such as Iran or Saudi Arabia – appear more dramatic. However, when it comes to controversies around Muslim women veil dressing, or un-dressing as the case may be, in ostensibly liberal – and allegedly liberated – European or North American societies, we see a comparable effect albeit on another status quo, another 'order of things'. These actions around women's bodies and claims for the right to choose, and responses to them, leave no one untouched, no one a neutral bystander, no intellectual a disinterested, non-gendered observer.

Rationale and Argument

In this chapter I take this line of thought in two directions: defiant embodiments as rendered by artists and as/in protest. In the first case I explore these tensions through the humorously disruptive self-portraits of British artist, Sarah Maple, vis-à-vis those by US-based Iranian artist, Shirin Neshat. Maple's work pokes fun at perceptions of veil dressing, sexual propriety and (Muslim) womanhood within would-be multicultural societies whilst Neshat's challenging

portrayals of the ‘domestic, and culturally crafted ... bodily codes of an “Islamic woman”¹⁷ are embedded in the geopolitical and intimate consequences of the Iranian Revolution and subsequent Islamic fundamentalism in Iran and amongst the Persian diaspora. I then (re)turn to the controversies that arose from Elmahdy and Sbnoui-Tyler’s naked ‘selfies’ as their actions were picked up by western blogger-journalists and explore how the geopolitical dimensions of conflicting interpretations of the women’s actions were ratcheted up a level through the link between these two protagonists and the Femen movement. The intersection of aesthetic idioms and/as politics in this social media frenzy underscore how the deployment and display of (semi-)naked women’s bodies in public spaces still polarises opinions across the cultural, religious and political spectrum.¹⁸

Through the cases above, this chapter aims to do three things in particular. First, to highlight the intentional and spontaneous synergies between art and protest, as these bear on the injustices and hypocrisies that Burqa Ban sentiments have imposed on Muslim women living in the west.¹⁹ The second is to consider the ways in which women’s bodies, clothed and unclothed, work to ‘signal resistance or protest against the views of the majority ... [by making] visible a presence of a dissenting minority’²⁰ in their respective sociocultural and political settings. In both contexts veil-dressing issues underscore the labour entailed in maintaining the respective ‘regimes of power organized on principles of visibility.’²¹ This is particularly acute for those cases where women (veiled, naked) embody forms of defiance and refusal that are either not compatible with the protest traditions and idioms that characterise western civil rights activism or violate other cultural and ‘bodily codes.’²² In both scenarios we see women engaging a ‘morality of refusal’²³ either by volition or force of circumstance. A third aim is to show how in these instances women’s rights advocates round the world – across historical eras, generations and cultures – do still share common ground, despite marked and entrenched differences in voice, idiom

and ways to fight social injustice at large and women's oppression in particular. These commonalities are being subsumed at present in Burqa-Ban controversies pivoting on supposing that the veiled face of the Other is that of 'a disguised enemy'.²⁴

Intellectual Background

Being visible, and with that the politics of seeing, permeates Leila Ahmed's 2011 book, *A Quiet Revolution*. Part of a growing literature on veil dressing, religion and culture from an insider's perspective, this book is a personal and intellectual encounter with women activists in Egypt and abroad who opt to veil dress.²⁵ Ahmed reflects on the rise and fall and rise again of veil dressing in twentieth-century Egyptian society as the litmus paper for the changing power relations between secular and religious (read Islamist) power blocs during and since the end of colonial rule, from Nasser through to the present day. Ahmed argues that at all points of this timeline women taking up the veil, or conversely 'de-veiling',²⁶ generates controversy because, on the one hand, it operates as a 'quintessential sign (among other things) of irresolvable tension and confrontation between Islam and the West'.²⁷ On the other hand, Ahmed argues that there is more than one meaning and set of experiences indicated in the observable (albeit statistically less significant) rise of veil dressing in the Muslim world and how these figures emerge elsewhere in the world where Muslim communities form a substantial constituency.²⁸ The multiple albeit 'new meanings of the veil' for wearers and onlookers highlights a double paradox: veil dressing is at once seen as an 'emblem supposedly of Islamic patriarchy and oppression of women [but it also] emerged today in America [and elsewhere] as an emblem of a call for justice, and even for gender-justice'.²⁹

For Ahmed there is significant intellectual work to do in fully apprehending the 'dynamics and meanings with which these debates over the veil [have been] charged ... [and] why this

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garment continues to be such a volatile, sensitive, and politically fraught symbol today.³⁰ Her account of how she came to realise that reductionist and ahistorical understandings of the politics of 'the veil' (as a pejorative noun) end up obscuring women's religious and political agency is the flipside, I would argue, of western Burqa-Ban debates that overlook the wider sociocultural context and practices of *veil dressing* (as a verb) in a multicultural modality, even if greeted within a monoculturalist setting. In both cases, it is the viewer whose worldview is at stake, as in their unarticulated investment in the 'ideological framework'³¹ of Orientalist thought, and with that western colonial rule of the Middle East and North Africa. This deflection of the discomfiting dimension to those who confess their unease when encountering women choosing to dress a certain way overlooks Muslim women's multifaceted resistance to both these sorts of impositions.³² Leila Ahmed's account – that of a committed, non-veiled feminist – is a corrective to the double bind that many western liberal – and feminist – critiques of 'The Veil' suffer from; namely the obfuscation of the racialised dimension to how Burqa Ban laws in Europe dovetail with corollary debates about contemporary migration flows from the Muslim world and cultural identity in a nominally secular west. References to Patriarchy or Religion do not suffice in explicating this misapprehension that Muslim veil dressing, in all its many forms and applications, is ipso facto proof that the veil wearer is a subjugated body.

The events of 9/11 and their aftermath have underscored this unease in intellectual and political circles, and media outlets, with the increasing presence of indigenous and immigrant Muslim communities who are at home in the western world. To date there has been little critical space to consider the shifts in veil dressing practices that Ahmed recounts as one example of the changing personal and gender geopolitics of visibility. Nor is there a concerted effort to consider how these practices might be rendered, or reconsidered,

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within the sartorial and global fashion-beauty industrial complex that exerts enormous influence on what women should (or should) not wear.³³ In the polarised geopolitical times in which women are getting dressed or undressed today – whether in Tunis or Amsterdam, Cairo or London – what (not) to wear in public has become politicised in ways that exceed traditional modes of critical post-colonialism and the spectrum of feminist politics. For when women themselves are active participants in their veiling – or unveiling as the case may be – cogent analysis tends to stall. It stalls because casting veiled women as actors who are responding to, and making sense of, their world within variously restrictive and permissive contexts, and doing so with and through their own bodies as tools of action in variously (un-)clothed embodied encounters, means leaving to one side reductionist modes of analysis. To borrow from Göle (2002), it means shifting the gaze from arguments about what counts in this context as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ (e.g., feminist politics, modest dressing, forms of religious observance, sex gender roles) to consider instead the specific moments of everyday life and/as modalities of defiance without resorting to overgeneralisation or anything-goes relativism that ignores the gendered and racialised dynamics of repression. When it comes to how some groups of women dress, the (geo)politics of everyday life are thrown into relief.³⁴ As the two cases below show, women’s dress, or state of undress, in public highlights how in this respect ‘refusal is the first principle of civil disobedience.’³⁵ Before looking at how Appadurai’s observations contribute to this discussion, let us turn to the two cases in point.

Veiled Bodies Misbehaving – ‘Islam is the New Black’³⁶

The UK artist Sarah Maple, winner of the 2007 ‘Four New Sensations’ competition sponsored by contemporary art impresario Charles Saatchi, has made a name for herself through a series of self-portraits

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in which she depicts herself in hijab, chador, or burqa doing ‘odd’ things such as smoking, wearing a lapel pin with the words ‘I ♥ Orgasms’, eating a banana, or campaigning with the caption ‘vote for me or you’re Islamophobic’ (see Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). These photographs and paintings saw Maple come under intense scrutiny from Muslim community leaders in the UK; a painting of her holding a piglet (entitled *Haram*) generated a lot of negative attention in particular.³⁷ What makes her images challenging is that they confound both Islamophobic and Islamist readings of veil dressing and

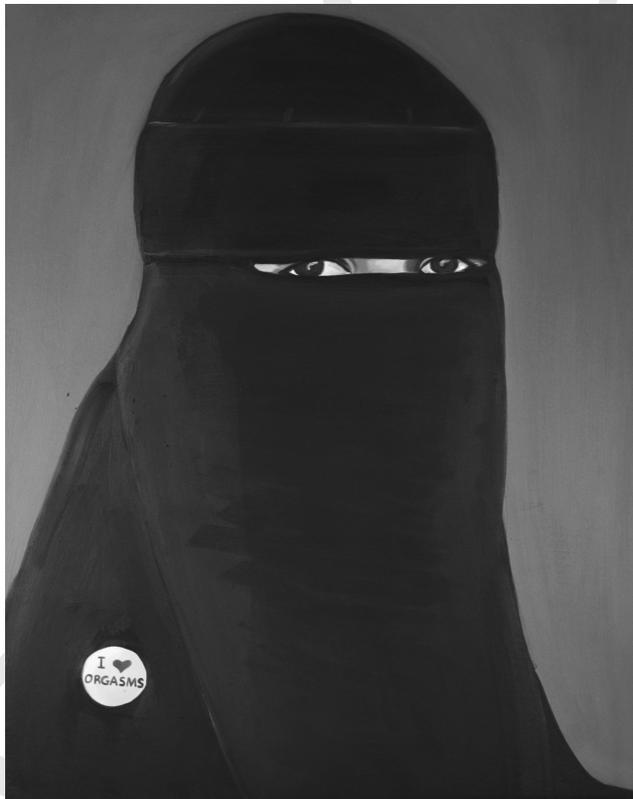


Figure 3.1 *I Heart Orgasms*, Sarah Maple, 2007. Acrylic and oil on board, 60 x 47 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

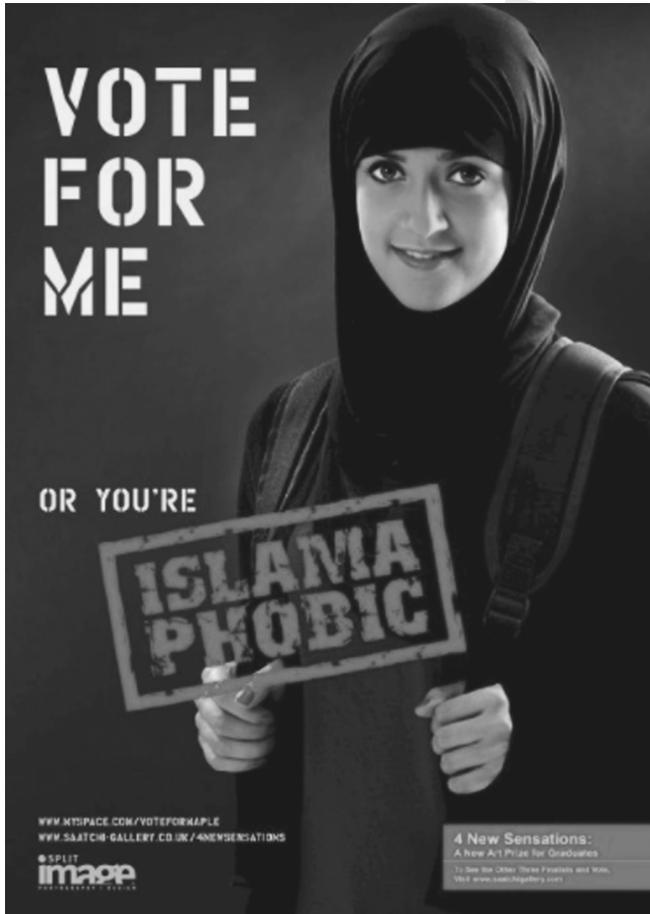


Figure 3.2 *Vote For Me*, Sarah Maple, 2007. Courtesy of the artist.

Muslim womanhood. Maple sees her 'art [as] a form of activism'³⁸ as she combines a feminist politics with references to life as a young, Muslim woman growing up in the predominately non-Muslim southeast of the UK.

Poking fun at veil dressing, and attitudes about veil dressing, or assumptions that veiled Muslim women are asexual, abstemious and apolitical is a provocative act in a climate characterised by

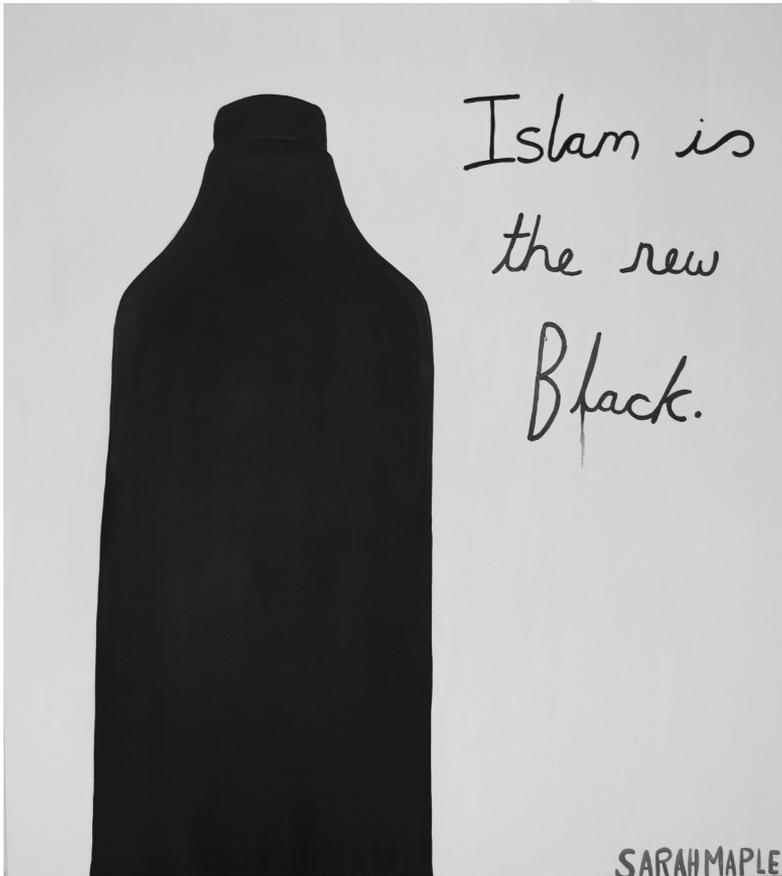


Figure 3.3 *The New Black*, Sarah Maple, 2007. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 190 x 170 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

discursively racist and culturally reductionist media stereotypes of Islam.³⁹ Maple acknowledges here that a

lot of people think that I'm mocking when that's not my aim. And people also think that I'm not taking the subject seriously when it's a very serious subject. But I've approached things in a tongue-in-cheek way, and some people can't grasp that ... I suppose from looking



Figure 3.4 *Fighting Fire With Fire*, Sarah Maple, 2007. C-type. Courtesy of the artist.

at other Muslims and speaking to other Muslims, they look at the religion very differently than I do. And what I perceive to be a good Muslim isn't what other people perceived.⁴⁰

Her 'naughty Muslim' images provoke strong, ambivalent responses precisely because they make you chuckle (see Figure 3.4). But whilst these images have attracted publicity they are only one aspect

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of Maple's work. She also pokes fun at a range of sex/gender stereotypes; hence, her veiled 'women misbehaving' are corollaries to other upbeat depictions of herself as a woman whose body defies and requires grooming, invoking and satirising assorted rules of etiquette, behavioral norms and sexuality. For instance, the signature painting of her 2012 show, 'Menstruate with Pride', at the New Art Exchange in Nottingham depicts a woman (herself) with menstrual blood on the outside of her white dress surrounded by shocked and curious onlookers (young men, mothers and children), making explicit an everywoman moment of dread: having one's menstrual cycle 'show' in public.⁴¹

Maple's veil dressing series also evoke the work of the US-based Iranian artist and filmmaker Shirin Neshat, although Maple's irreverent sense of humour and use of pop-art idioms are in stark contrast to the sombre tones and political overtones of Neshat's artistic practice. Neshat's photographic (self-)portraits and her feature films focus on the everyday realities and perceptions of the separation between female and male domains in Iran following the Iranian Revolution. Her work also speaks to the waxing and waning of diplomatic tensions between Iran and the US since then. Neshat achieves this through depictions of women who, from 'behind the veil', meet the onlooker's gaze unapologetically – an aesthetically radical depiction of those who, for some, epitomise the archetypal Islamic fundamentalist. The subjects of Neshat's 1990s series *Women of Allah*, like those of Maple, all look at you, straight up and into the viewer's gaze (see Figure 3.5). In distinction to Maple's tongue-in-cheek captions, Neshat superimposes Farsi and design motifs onto or behind the bodies, faces, and hands of her subjects (see Figure 3.6). In this series, the texts – for those who can read them – operate as literal and symbolic, conjuring up the exotic and familiar and encapsulating the politicised and familial dimensions to the everyday lives of her subjects. In so doing Neshat underscores the ambiguities that 'Women of Islam'

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Figure 3.5 *Rebellious Silence*, Shirin Neshat, 1994. RC print & ink, 118.4 x 79.1 cm. Photo by Cynthia Preston. Copyright Shirin Neshat. Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

represent to both Iranian exiles and western commentators. These women figure as silent, militant and confined subjects as Neshat's depictions work with 'four symbolic elements...: the veil, the gun, the text, and the gaze'⁴² to unsettle how we, the viewer, see these

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colonially crafted on it ... Shirin Neshat manages to target both of these divergent yet colliding agents ... Her photographs show and tell what has been forbidden to show and tell ... without violating the bodily codes of an 'Islamic woman'.⁴³

Several films and two decades later, Neshat's 2012 exhibition *Book of Kings* takes the interplay between text and the gaze in new directions, from symbolism to narrative. In these life-size black and white photos, the Persian national epic the *Shahnameh* is inscribed onto the portraits of both men and women who gaze out of the frame at the viewer (see Figure 3.7).⁴⁴

Both Maple, and Neshat before her, invoke a response from those publics suffering from what Nancy Nussbaum argues is an accelerating fear that fuels the rise of religious intolerance in the US and Europe,⁴⁵ a fear that according to Nussbaum requires ways to 'understand it and to think how best to address it'.⁴⁶ Nussbaum's diagnosis, and proposed treatment of this 'fear' based on the existence of a 'real problem',⁴⁷ the psychology of displacement behaviours, and the 'idea of a disguised enemy'⁴⁸ are evident in the way both artists challenge the viewer. Using different aesthetic idioms, both Neshat and Maple make use of personal, biographical and cultural-political narratives to show how those who are the objects of this fear⁴⁹ are also living, breathing subjects. As Mukhopadhyay puts in his analysis of Neshat's work, these works have a countermanding force to Nussbaum's fearful, non-Muslim, anti-veil citizen in that they cut both ways by working

as a confrontational force. Not only do they question the ability of the 'Orient' to speak back and address a systemic denial of expression, but they also contort multiple power relations, often stemming from rigid gender roles. ... [They] manage to 'undo' this matrix of privilege by challenging understandings of who derives actual benefit from this power.⁵⁰

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Figure 3.7 *Nida (Patriots)*, from *The Book of Kings* series, Shirin Neshat, 2012. Ink on LE silver gelatin print, 152.4 x 114.3 cm. Copyright Shirin Neshat. Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

The seriousness of Neshat's work – no attempt at humour or irony here – underscores how expat as well as Western-born Muslim women artists are engaging in a

a new politics of vision, in which the 'exoticisation' of the East slowly disappears in the wake of new systems of

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representation, heralding a turn in conventional practices of *seeing*. These artists affront their viewers with imploring stares from today's Near East [and, in Maple's case, western Europe], asking them to reflect on their own prejudices and inherited assumptions.⁵¹

Neshat's photo of a fully veiled mother holding the hand of her naked boy-child whose body is 'clothed' in decorative motifs and a poster Maple designed for Amnesty International – to take just two examples – encapsulate the way these artists issue this challenge within their respective aesthetic and generational idioms (see Figure 3.8).⁵²

Naked Bodies in/as Protest

The second case of Amina Sboui-Tyler and Aliaa Elmahdy and their depictions of nakedness takes us online, in the context of the internet and social media's role in the Arab world, particularly during and since the region's 2010–11 uprisings overturned the political order there. In Tunisia and Egypt, internet access and mobile phones – using the ubiquitous global social media brands of the era (i.e., Twitter and Facebook) – have been a significant means and platform for younger generations to mobilise, find a voice and engage in public political discourses and, in so doing, to potentially disengage from majority (or regime-sanctioned) opinion. These interventions, in idiomatic social networking tropes, took place in the heat of polarised electoral politics, political assassinations and, in the case of these two women, poor progress for women's rights and everyday lives in the wake of conservative parties' election victories. Social media is a window into this world and one that talks back. Here, women – the same age as Sarah Maple – living through major socio-political transformations, and their (counter-revolutionary) aftermath, have been generating their own gender geopolitics of visibility, this time as spontaneous 'user-generated content' rather than formal artistic practice.

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Figure 3.8 *Untitled*, Shirin Neshat, 1996. RC print & ink, 135.3 x 95.9 cm. Photo by Kyong Park. Copyright Shirin Neshat. Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

In February and August of 2013, Amina Sboui-Tyler placed several photos of herself topless on her Facebook page in protest of the poor record of women's rights in post-Arab Spring Tunisia. At the time of her action, Sboui-Tyler was inaugurating the Tunisian chapter of the aforementioned feminist activist organisation, Femen, as

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she posed in this first photo, still accessible on Facebook, topless whilst reading the Koran and smoking a cigarette. Across her chest are the words ‘my body belongs to me. It is the source of no-one else’s honour.’⁵³ This photo was just the start as another shot shows her bare torso with the words, in English, ‘Fuck your morals.’⁵⁴ These images went viral, instigating protests in support of her actions in Tunisia and abroad, online and on the streets; Femen organised a ‘Topless Jihad Day’ in her support shortly after her arrest and two-month imprisonment.⁵⁵

But this is not the first instance in the region of a young woman from the generation of ‘Digital Natives’ appearing naked online. Two years earlier in Egypt, Aliaa Elmahdy posed fully naked on her Facebook page,⁵⁶ a form of ‘nude art’, in her words, but also a protest to the deterioration of women’s rights under the Muslim Brotherhood. These images circulated at lightning speed around the world, snapped up, for instance, by print and online opinion-makers like the *New Yorker* and *Huffington Post*. It is at this point that Femen’s intervention to mobilise for Amina’s release from prison catapulted her case into the global blogosphere and with it, sharpened debates about the relevance and effectiveness of Femen’s topless tactics, in the west but more particularly in the Muslim world,⁵⁷ as a quintessentially feminist politics. The demarcation lines drawn as a result between western and non-western feminists, complicated further by those demarcating religious and non-religious Muslim women, have overshadowed the original audience that both Sboui-Tyler and Elmahdy were addressing at the time: Tunisian and Egyptian electorates and incumbent sociocultural authorities.

What makes these photos remarkable and pertinent to this discussion is Elmahdy and Sboui-Tyler’s use of their own bodies – the gaze outwards – and the multidirectional forms of address that these images invoke in ways comparable to those of Neshat and Maple. In the case of Sboui-Tyler, we also see text used as an integral part of the provocation, comparable I would argue to the way

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Maple's image of herself in hijab with a cigarette dangling from her mouth (see Figure 3.4), or Neshat's self-portraits of her caressing or pointing a gun, as they both gaze out at the viewer. Guns, cigarettes and naked torsos are arguably traditional tropes of masculine agency, from James Dean to Marlborough Man cigarette ads to shots of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin's naked torso. Here, they are made all the more subversive in the context of strict religious observance and the explicitly controlled domains for women's attire and behaviour. But in the case of these two naked online protests, what looks like a carbon copy of western feminist understandings of women's liberation, as the shedding of oppression quite literally, is not as it seems at first sight. According to Amina Sboui-Tyler herself, her nakedness was not to show that 'I want to wear short skirts. I could do it if I wanted to. But I want women to be able to become president if they want to. I want women in rural areas to stop suffering'.⁵⁸

As political power struggles between secular and Islamist factions intensify in parliaments and on the street, women in the region like Sboui-Tyler and Elmahdy use nakedness as a means to an end, not an end in itself. This is where critiques of the Femen organisation converge on the actions of these two women. Critics cast Femen's insistence on nakedness as dogmatic if not Islamophobic⁵⁹ and sensationalist if not neo-colonialist⁶⁰ when transported to non-western settings. According to one trenchant critic of Femen's tactics, the problem about both these women's use of nudity and acknowledgment of Femen as a source of inspiration lies in the controversial image that Femen has for many of its detractors in the Muslim world; as 'an organization with a problematic viewpoint on the region. It also strikes me that, if the aim of specific tactics is to work toward societal change, these actions would be more effective if modified to fit the given context'.⁶¹ Criticisms of Femen also come from western feminist circles, zooming in on the apparent prominence of 'skinny, pretty women'⁶² figuring in these protest actions, and no less by the

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Femen leadership. Overlooking the many images of Femen protests that feature women of all shapes and sizes, the point in this debate is that 'nude protests are not the problem. The problem is that, within our pornified culture, women seem to only be able to find power in their sexualized bodies'.⁶³

These actions, and Femen's mobilisation in major European cities, generated another sort of comment from Muslim women around the world. For these critics Femen's appropriation of Amina's action meant that 'nuance is lost, the actual material realities of Tunisian women are ignored, and feminist activism that has been taking place in Tunisia for decades is erased'.⁶⁴ Stronger still, both women's acknowledgement of Femen saw them positioned as collaborating with 'certain problematic discourses'⁶⁵ in the west that reduce Muslim women, and veil dressing, to Orientalist sexual tropes.⁶⁶ In so doing they become complicit with the

idea that Muslim women are suffering from 'false consciousness' because they cannot see (while Femen can see) that the veil and religion are intrinsically harmful to all women. Yet again, the lives of Muslim women are to be judged by European feminists, who yet again have decided that Islam – and the veil – as key components of patriarchy. Where do women who disagree with this fit? Where is the space for a plurality of voices? And the most important question of all: can feminism survive unless it sheds its Eurocentric bias and starts accepting that the experiences of all women should be seen as legitimate?⁶⁷

For communities of Muslim women who do disagree, Facebook also emerged as one site for counter-protests, particularly in response to Femen's *Topless Jihad Day* in April 2013. Two examples are the 'Muslimah Pride' and 'Muslim Women Against Femen' social media campaigns replete with Twitter accounts, hashtags and articulate bloggers.⁶⁸ Protagonists, supporters and critics walked a

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fine line indeed online, incurring direct forms of punishment and retribution there and on the ground as a result, nuance notable by its absence in Anglo-American mainstream media coverage. As one blogger puts it, this lack of nuance and awareness of context matters in more ways than one:

Unpacking this issue relies on understanding one thing: Muslims are not monolithic. Muslims in the West (Europe, Canada, America) face a different set of challenges than those in the Middle East. And hence, they're going to react differently to those circumstances. You know, just like everyone else. In the West, neither Muslim nor non-Muslim women would face what Amina Tyler has. Nudity is, at most, considered a misdemeanor ... Context matters. *You can't disconnect actions from the longstanding cultural environment it came from. When Elmahdy and Tyler went naked, they were protesting specific groups dictating policy in their home countries.* Activists in the West don't have that context. Railing against Islamists here means attacking an immigrant group while reinforcing centuries' old prejudices.⁶⁹

Amidst all these arguments, Amina Sboui-Tyler took her distance from Femen on her release from prison. But here too, commentators questioned her autonomy, if not with respect to her Femen affiliation then to whether she was now under pressure from Islamist forces in Tunisia to retract her affiliation, an accusation levelled at her from Femen representatives themselves.⁷⁰ Amina measured her words carefully: 'I don't want my name to be associated with an Islamophobic organization. I did not appreciate the action taken by the girls shouting "Amina Akbar, Femen Akbar" in front of the Tunisian embassy in France ... These actions offended many Muslims and many of my friends. We must respect everyone's religion ... I thank them all for their support. They took some good actions, but it wasn't the case for all of them.'⁷¹

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The web and its role in raising the public profile of Femen, a media-savvy group by its own admission, and spreading news of the harassment and arrest of both Aliaa and Amina as a result of their actions goes beyond the scope of this chapter, as does a fuller exploration of the politicised aesthetics of DIY art and politics in a web-saturated world. Suffice it to say that these overlaps did not escape the attention of the two protagonists. On being asked why she posed naked, Elmahdy responded that the 'photo is an expression of my being and I see the human body as the best artistic representation of that. I took the photo myself using a timer on my personal camera. The powerful colors black and red inspire me';⁷² likewise, although in another political art idiom, for Sboui-Tyler. When asked why she published yet 'another topless photo' of herself on quitting Femen she replied that this was different because it was 'a topless photo of myself bearing a painted circled A, the anarchist symbol'.⁷³ In this photo she stands topless, this time in profile and lighting a cigarette from a lit Molotov cocktail; on her torso she has written, in English, 'We don't need your Dimocracy' (sic).⁷⁴

These preoccupations about women's public dress and demeanour, and how these embodiments map over time onto the uneasy dividing line between religious politics, personal conviction and civil liberties reflect inchoate conflicts within and between societies about the gendered dimensions to social order and cultural identity. These become a lightning rod for perceived, if not engineered, crises of conscience when certain women appear to get away with (not) dressing according to the assumed or prescribed norm. As such, they go to the heart of ongoing debates within feminism about what counts as agency in a world still premised on structural hierarchies of gendered inequality. The 'underlying assumption ... [that] female liberation can be directly linked to what women wear ... is not a new idea, and in fact has formed the basis of much of western feminism ... This type of logic automatically leads to the conclusion that in order to progress, women who veil must unveil, and

therefore “free” themselves.⁷⁵ It is this logic that feeds the intransigence of Burqa-ban legislation in western societies today, as well as one that underpins the ongoing ‘politics of discomfort’ with which feminist and liberal critics of this legislation see Muslim women’s veil dressing at the same time.⁷⁶

In this context, as the converse to stripping off or going topless in public, women in hijab, with or without a niqab, are cast as religious zealots, Islamic fundamentalists, oppressed women. Simply getting dressed in the morning for these groups of women in Brussels, Paris or Amsterdam has become an act of defiance by definition. It is this particular context in which artists and filmmakers like Sarah Maple and Shirin Neshat remind the viewer of the underlying psycho-emotional struggles that constitute the everyday embodiments of gendered, ethnic and class-based production of order, and how these unfurl as multiplex contradictions rather than in monolithic ways. They also point to how individual and community subjects embody resistance to said order at an everyday level rather than as a response to an exceptional event, that level of exception reserved for military mobilisation or national protest actions for instance.⁷⁷ In the case of Muslim veil dressing, these struggles call into question notions that the constitution of any order comes readymade. The furore around more explicit expressions of non-compliance with the established order recall the Gulliver-like ways in which those incumbent or emerging powers with something to lose maintain their social order through the minutiae of socialisation, legal and moral codes of political and religious authority, peer pressure, and when these no longer work, through violence.

Analysis: Modalities of Refusal

So what do these examples tell us, first about defiance and refusal for women deciding to ‘dehajibise’, or the converse,⁷⁸ in polarised political settings and, second, for how Muslim women artists depict – or

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deflect – these tensions in their art? This is where Foucault's productive and subjective bodies meet Arjun Appadurai's observations on the embodied morality of refusal that for Appadurai underpins Mahatma Gandhi's (admittedly masculine) use of non-violent resistance to colonial rule in India.

In a short essay, Appadurai highlights the need to make a distinction between non-violent protests – referring to the program of civil disobedience in Gandhi's case – as an active form of resistance, on the one hand, and the violent responses that this use of passive resistance as a 'mobilising strategy' can inspire on a mass scale, on the other.⁷⁹ This focus on refusal as an active force rather than a passive one, puts to one side the western liberal lens of utilitarian thinking that undergirds moral philosophical traditions⁸⁰ or the assumption that liberation is always synonymous with a 'superior' form of personal empowerment, as exemplified by undressed or suitably fashionable women's bodies in western women's liberationist understandings.⁸¹ The iconography of Gandhi's own embodiment over time shows, in the most iconic photographs at least, how in his male ascetic case, nakedness is also a moral commitment, part of an evolving and mobilising worldview. As Appadurai argues when looking at the way embodied forms of refusal worked in the context of Gandhi's role in the history of Indian independence, these forms of civil disobedience as a 'large-scale resistance to imperial or colonial rule' were embedded in 'a particular way of mobilizing the inner link between asceticism, violence, and non-violence in the Indic world.'⁸² In this sense this was a particular articulation of refusal that was 'intimately connected with the politics of the body and the morality of avoidance, abnegation, and abstention.'⁸³

It may well be a leap from the Gandhian movement of civil disobedience that is steeped in his own lifelong experiments with his own bodily limits (as part of the mass mobilisation that culminated in Indian independence) to the social media statements of topless

and naked Muslim women versus their veiled sisters, or to the ironic humour of a Sarah Maple self-portrait, or the shock tactics of Femen protest events. But the leap is not so far, I would contend, because in all these cases, non-violent, even if highly theatrical and mediatised, forms of protest show how strong female actions 'invite the forces of violence to declare and enact themselves and to manifest themselves practically'.⁸⁴ When these actors are then marked as a dissenting or indeed defiant minority, the forces of violence swing into action, close to home as well as further away, through global media channels for instance. Whilst distinct from Gandhi's ascetics, we can still see in the case of veiling and unveiling, in posing or protesting (semi-)naked, how non-violence here works as a form of active refusal. These are not expressions of a 'quietist' or acquiescent politics,⁸⁵ as civil disobedience both incurs and fuels dogmatic forces. Appadurai is pointing to the intricate and intimately violent ways in which order is imposed and maintained in everyday life. He reminds us how the world in which we live is one 'characterized by forms of violence that have deep histories, in forms such as rape, torture, warfare, forced ritual mutilation, and so on'.⁸⁶ Precisely because when it comes to forms of civil disobedience, conscious or unconscious, spontaneous and individualised or organised against a clear opponent (e.g., colonial powers, sexist advertising or violence against women), the tension between the politics, and moment of refusal as one modality of resistance that does not take up arms, and violent reprisals to such actions. What is being made visible, as deed as well as word and image, is the way in which the

production of routine social life is a complex project in which ordinary persons strive to find the right balance between attention and abstraction, compromise and confrontation, visibility and recessiveness, in their bodily presence, and between greater or lesser knowledge of the circumstances of their daily lives.⁸⁷

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What Appadurai wants to emphasise here, *pace* Foucault, is that not only the production but also the maintenance, and implicitly the contestation, of any social order is fraught with violent outcomes because of the way that stability, real or imagined, has to be fought for, whatever the circumstances. Those with the power not only to steer this order, by exercising discipline if not dishing out direct forms of punishment in so doing, are intuitively looking to control what is the 'generally vulnerable outcome of uncertain social processes'.⁸⁸ As with the case of the Suffragette Movement a century ago, or a naked 'selfie' on a password-protected blog, non-violence also works 'as a militant morality of refusal'.⁸⁹ This morality is one that includes artistic practice alongside more self-conscious forms of protest action. Whilst neither is reducible to another, these two scenarios show how forceful the response can be to 'peaceful opposition to established legal orders'⁹⁰ that women can, and do, use. What this means for critical analysis in the context of veil dressing and its discontents is that if non-violence and violence are not to be construed as 'reciprocal and symmetrical forms' but rather as 'different resources for managing social life'⁹¹ then the gender geopolitics of (un-)dressing in public are less about utilitarian arguments that religious intolerance is futile⁹² or testimonies of the effects of revolution and counter-revolution on people's life-paths.⁹³ These pleas for deeper understanding from an historical and experiential perspective are important. However, for this chapter, I would argue that these two cases of defiant embodiments in a post-9/11 and, as far as we can tell, a post-Arab Uprising, context tell us more about the cynical politicisation, and with that the racialisation of all forms of Muslim veil dressing by political demagogues in western societies.

The gender geopolitics of seeing is what is at stake. In terms of veil dressing debates and the political contortions they currently inspire (in the Anglo-Euro-American context at least), such polarities affect the 'actual lives of Muslim women ... in the United States or women who live abroad and whose lives are directly affected by

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American views and policies [and those of their allies]⁹⁴ in several ways. First, for western observers, whether or not they are opponents of Burqa-Ban legislation, the consequence is that all forms of Muslim veil dressing becomes religiously motivated, culturally backward. The flipside of this equation is the assumption that all unveiled Muslim women are *ipso facto* secular 'moderns' and so unveiling is in itself liberating, a progressive act, if not by a process of social and cultural progress then helped along by law, as in the case of Turkey and now European Union member states.⁹⁵ Second, as Muslim feminist commentators underscore, an understanding of both the immediate and the wider context is indispensable to being able to distinguish between instances in which women can be 'experimenting with dress and fashion for their own reasons, deciding for (and disagreeing amongst) themselves what meaning the veil' holds on the one hand or, on the other asserting their cultural identity, religious convictions, political solidarity, or communal affiliations against a largely disapproving majority.⁹⁶ Third, for critical scholars, a macro-level analytical view of geopolitical power relations needs to be accompanied by a micro, actor-centred viewpoint. Both levels of analysis matter to understanding how veil dressing has become encoded since the mid-twentieth century as the visible manifestation of radical Islam at the same time as these practices incorporate 'old and new meanings of the veil'⁹⁷ as experienced by their wearers. Religious and sartorial practices can, and do, converge in this respect as the meanings imputed to veil dressing differ from place to place, generation to generation, for wearers and onlookers, domestic and foreign powerbrokers respectively. This is because of the way in which, in this case, the gender power 'relations between body and surrounding instruments, tools, spaces [are] both constraining and enabling for the movements, be they physical or mental'.⁹⁸

The challenge for critical analysis of these dressing/undressing controversies is to avoid the twin perils of facile cultural relativism or ethnocentric judgments about how women, if they are to

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be recognisable, indeed recognised as ‘authentically’ liberated subjects, should look and conduct themselves. This means making a careful and time-sensitive distinction between those moments of deliberately political forms of embodied defiance (e.g., going topless, putting on or taking off a veil, chaining yourself to the railings, burning a bra) and those forms of refusal that the context renders, by definition, an implicit, more ‘everyday’ transgression (e.g., going topless, taking up the veil, dressing modestly for personal or religious reasons, or not knowing ‘what not to wear’ according to the fashion rules of the day). The shriller tones of Muslim veil dressing debates in western Europe nowadays, and in colonial times, underscore how both liberationists and prohibitionists can be ‘as despotic about liberating us [women as they can be despotic] about our enslavement’.⁹⁹

Conclusion: the Geopolitics of *Seeing*

In the digital age, no editor or mediator gets to decide how to frame a public battle. A woman has a room, a body, a camera, and a Facebook profile of one’s own (Greenhouse 2013).

The above observation underscores how these struggles around how dress codes confirm, or indeed challenge, dominant understandings of the ideal society (whatever the religious or political constitution) are taking place in the highly visible and visualised environments of consumer societies and that these are now being augmented by the digital interfaces and cyberspaces of the internet’s visual and material cultures. The embodied defiance, veiled or naked, of these moments from over a century of women’s rights protest exemplifies how bodies operate as conduits for complying with and contesting ‘relations between body and surrounding instruments, tools, spaces both constraining and enabling for the movements, be they physical or mental’.¹⁰⁰ They are also indicative of how women’s bodies

are conveyed, and so can be deployed, in non-violent ‘moralities of refusal’.¹⁰¹

To recall, in 1970s Egypt, taking up the veil was a conscious decision, an act of a particular political consciousness and identity politics. Observers at the time and since have noted that the 1970s saw a particular sort of veiling emerge, the most visible aspect of ‘new and formidably concealing styles of dress’ that differed from their rural counterparts or pre-colonial precursors.¹⁰² As Nilüfer Göle points out in her discussion of the analytical conundrums raised by the ‘new visibilities’ of Islamist politics in Turkey, ‘one of the arguments widely used against the headscarf is that it has been appropriated as a political symbol, so the desire to wear it is not a disinterested one’.¹⁰³ When counter-posing these arguments for or against veil dressing, and its regulation in either Muslim or non-Muslim settings, with naked protests – those of the Femen movement in general or Sboui-Tyler and Elmahdy in particular – we see that the underlying issue is less about clothing than it is about deploying the body as a site and conduit for civil disobedience. Polarities between Muslim-Secular East and Christian-Secular West, and feminist and post-feminist politics in a globalising consumerist world, are found wanting when it comes to considering how these forms of nakedness and modest dressing – veiled forms in this case – operate in polarised settings, when they are not being deployed directly as a form of protest. We also need to consider the online-offline interconnections of everyday life, together with the gender geopolitics and moralities of refusal that surround today’s veil dressing controversies. We could do this along the lines that Walter Benjamin encapsulated in his *Arcades Project*; namely, not to look for mono-causal explanations or grand narratives of historic-cultural changes in the way people live but, rather, to study more closely the multiplicity of specific instances within any given context. In this way those seemingly banal and exceptional instances show how the

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transmission of culture (high and low), ... is a political act of the highest import – not because culture in itself has the power to change the given, but because historical memory affects decisively the collective, political will for change. Indeed, it is its only nourishment.¹⁰⁴

These transmissions now happen at the interstices of offline and online lives. but what about simply catching the bus with niqab or even chador? Are such decisions always to be read as defiance or protest? Yes – and no – given the corrosive effect that Burqa-Ban laws have on fundamental rights, at least in the EU. By the same token, when considered in light of women (un)dressing in public, whether or not they do so in closely patrolled or ostensibly liberal settings, we see how Muslim veil dressing on the one hand and, on the other, women's (semi-)naked protests embody 'the elaborate labour of coexistence'¹⁰⁵ that targets certain groups and individuals in an anxious age – Muslim women in particular. These bodies, and our bodies (I am, after all, also a woman), exist and persist as productive and subjected bodies through conflicting moralities of refusal, defiance and compliance that are embedded in the 'complex reciprocal social relations' underpinning the local-global gender power hierarchies in which we – and they – live. It is all too easy to judge people by their appearance or beliefs, which is why liberal societies pride themselves on their rights-based jurisprudence. But unlike women's right to vote, which is now uncontestedly enshrined in international law after decades of concerted embodied resistance by women themselves, the unwritten laws about what (not) to wear in public are, for many women around the world, still 'under advisement' at best.

Notes

1. M. I. Franklin, 'Veil dressing and the gender geopolitics of "What Not to Wear"', *International Studies Perspectives* 14/4 (2013), pp. 1–23.

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2. Ibid.
3. Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011); Fadwa el Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy, and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003).
4. Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*, p. 82 passim.
5. Nilüfer Göle, 'Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries,' *Public Culture* 14/1 (2002), pp. 173–90.
6. *Hürriyet* cited in Göle, 'Islam in Public,' p. 178.
7. Overtly religious items of clothing, from the male fez to the female headscarf, have been a contentious issue since the founding of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s. Entering the Turkish parliament dressed in this way was publicly flouting 1970s legislation that had institutionalised an implicit ban on religious dress in public office, including universities, in the 1924 constitution. This ban was lifted in 2013 as part of a reform package from the Erdoğan government, a sop to fundamentalism according to government critics; a stride forward in allowing religious freedom according to others. The main forms of veil dressing in contention here are the hijab (headscarf), niqab (face-veil), chador (the Persian term for the head-body covering thrown over other garments), and burqa (the head to toe covering originating in Afghanistan). 'Hijab' is a term for Islamic dress code in general.
8. Emma Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2010); Judith Brown, 'Glamour's Silhouette: Fashion, Fashion, and Modernism' in Jean-Michel Rabaté (ed.), *A Handbook of Modernism Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 297–312; Didier Bigo, 'Globalized (In)Security: The Field and the Ban-opticon,' in Didier Bigo and Anastasia Tsoukala (eds), *Terror, Insecurity, and Liberty: Illiberal Practices of Liberal Regimes After 9/11* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 10–48; Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*, p. 82 passim; Martha C. Nussbaum *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 19, 42 passim.
9. Franklin, 'Veil dressing'; Alexandru Balasescu, *Paris Chic, Tehran Thrills: Aesthetic Bodies, Political Subjects*. (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2007).
10. 'The Veiled Woman: What I'm Really Thinking,' *The Guardian*, 30 April 2011. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/apr/30/what-really-thinking-veiled-woman> (accessed 11 November 2016).

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11. Sboui-Tyler in Sophie Récamier, 2012, 'L'automne des femmes arabes agite Facebook', *Les Inrocks*, 3 November 2012.
12. Elmahdy in Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, 'Egyptian blogger Aliaa Elmahdy: Why I posed naked', *CNN Inside the Middle East*, 20 November 2011. Available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/19/world/meast/nude-blogger-aliaa-magda-elmahdy> (accessed 2 November 2012).
13. Emma Tarlo and Annelies Moors (eds), *Islamic Fashion and Anti-Fashion: New Perspectives from Europe and North America* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
14. Michel Foucault, 'The Body of the Condemned,' in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 173.
15. Roger G. Denson, 'Shirin Neshat: Artist of the Decade', *Huffington Post*, 30 December 2010. Available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/g-roger-denson/sherin-neshat-artist-of-t_b_802050.html#s216201title=Attributed_to_alWasiti (accessed 13 January 2012); Lila Abu-Lughod, 'The Active Social Life of "Muslim Women's Rights": A Plea for Ethnography, Not Polemic, with Cases from Egypt and Palestine', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 6/1 (2010), pp. 1–45.
16. Göle, *Islam in Public*, p. 175.
17. Hamid Dabashi, 'Foreword', *Women of Allah* (Torino: Marco Noire Editore, 1997). Available at <http://iranian.com/Arts/Dec97/Neshat/index.html> (accessed 13 January 2012).
18. Femen was founded in the Ukraine in 2008 and is currently based in Paris. Calling itself a 'sextremist' activist organisation, it has made a name for itself through its staging of highly theatrical and media-genic, sexually provocative and increasingly topless protests in major European capitals. Their main focus is human trafficking and prostitution particularly focusing on the run-ups to major sporting events such as the Olympics or international football tournaments. Their interventions around women's rights are not confined to the Muslim world as Femen protesters have also targeted the Catholic Church. A gallery of press images is available online through the Cryptome website (<http://cryptome.org/info/femen/femen-protest.htm>) and Femen's own website (<http://www.femen.org/en>). Whatever women might feel about Femen's tripartite mantra of 'Sextremism, Atheism, Feminism' (<http://femen.org/about>) or whether their success does rest on their looks, their modus operandi does articulate a Foucauldian insight: i.e., 'In the beginning, there was the body, feeling of the woman's body, feeling of joy because it is so light and free. Then there was injustice, so sharp that you feel it with your body, it immobilizes the body, hinders its movements, and then you find yourself your body's hostage. And so

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you turn your body against this injustice, mobilizing every body's cell to struggle against the patriarchy and humiliation' (ibid).

19. Franklin, 'Veil dressing'.
20. Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*, p. 210
21. Balasescu, *Paris Chic, Tehran Thrills*, p. 280.
22. Dabashi, 'Foreword'.
23. Arjun Appadurai, *The Morality of Refusal: 100 Notes, 100 Thoughts*. Art by Nalini Malani, Documenta Series 023, (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012).
24. Martha C. Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*, p. 19.
25. See, for example, El Guindi (2003), Abdul-Ghafur (2005), Abu-Lughod, (1998, 2010), Al-Qasimi (2010), Göle (2002). See also Tarlo 2010, Tarlo and Moors (2013).
26. Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*, pp. 283–4.
27. Ibid., p. 11.
28. Saleemah Abdul-Ghafur (ed.), *Living Islam Out Loud: American Muslim Women Speak* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005). Annelies Moors, 'The Dutch and the face-veil: The politics of discomfort', *Social Anthropology* 17/4 (2009), pp. 393–408.
29. Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*, p. 8.
30. Ibid., p. 11.
31. Ibid., p. 35.
32. Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); el Guindi, *Veil*.
33. Franklin, 'Veil dressing'; Linda Duits and Liesbet Van Zoonen, 'Headscarves and Porno Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the Multicultural Society', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13/2 (2006), pp. 103–17; Rosalind C. Gill, 'Critical Respect: The Difficulties and Dilemmas of Agency and Choice. A Reply to Duits and Van Zoonen', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14/1 (2007), pp. 65–76; cf. Moors and Tarlo 2013.
34. Thanks to Zeena Feldman for this insight.
35. Appadurai, *The Morality of Refusal*, p. 10.
36. This is the caption on Maple's 2008 painting of a woman wearing a black burqa; the pun works both ways in this image; see Anikka Maya Weerasinghe, 'Islam Is The New Black: A Conversation With Sarah Maple', *Art Threat*, 24 November 2008. Available at <http://artthreat.net/2008/11/sarah-maple-interview-islam-new-black> (accessed 12 January 2012).

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37. Her first solo show in London in 2008 was put under spotlight and police protection, after an incident of vandalism due to accusations of blasphemy.
38. Emerge Gallery, *Fighting Fire with Fire* crowdfunding project, 2013. Available at <http://www.kisskissbankbank.com/fighting-fire-with-fire> (accessed 20 May 2014); Robert Klanten et al. (eds), *Art & Agenda: Political Art and Activism* (Berlin: Gestalten, 2011).
39. Gholam Khiabany and Milly Williamson, 'Veiled bodies – naked racism: culture, politics and race in the Sun', *Race & Class* 50/2 (2008), pp. 69–88.
40. Maple in Anikka Maya Weerasinghe, 'Islam Is The New Black: A Conversation With Sarah Maple', *Art Threat*, 24 November 2008. Available at <http://artthreat.net/2008/11/sarah-maple-interview-islam-new-black> (accessed 12 January 2012).
41. See <http://sarahmapleart.blogspot.nl/2012/07/menstruate-with-pride-on-display-at-new.html>.
42. Sayantan Mukhopadhyay, 'The use of the written word in the art of Shirin Neshat and Lalla Essaydi', *Reorient*, 30 June 2013. Available <http://www.reorientmag.com/2013/06/shirin-neshat-lalla-essaydi>, original emphasis (accessed 12 January 2012).
43. Dabashi, *Foreword*.
44. See Sayantan Mukhopadhyay, 'The use of the written word'; Erin C. Devine, 'Shirin Neshat: Book of Kings and OverRuled', *New York Arts*, 23 February 2012. Available <http://newyorkarts.net/2012/02/shirin-neshat-book-of-kings-overruled> (accessed 20 March 2012). Another take on the veiled, violated and naked Muslim woman's body is the hallmark of the 2004 short film *Submission*, written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali and the late Theo van Gogh. Here, the Qur'anic script on the women's naked backs is aligned to scars on the bodies of the naked victims of domestic violence whose accounts animate this film; depicted semi-naked in submissive positions, their naked torsos visible beneath diaphanous black veils. The use of Qur'anic script, veils and naked bodies in this film's wholesale condemnation of Islam implicitly draws on Shirin Neshat's work (van Jole, 2004) albeit for a different political project.
45. Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*, p. 9.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *The Veiled Woman*, 2011.

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50. Mukhopadhyay, 'The use of the written word'. One of Maple's photographic self-portraits, entitled 'Ballerina', exemplifies this point as she poses head and shoulders, topless but for the blurred out (read, censored) area of her breasts. This is Maple's own 'fave' photo, part of her 2012 'It's a Girl!' exhibition at the Aubin Gallery in London. Its corollary is her 2009 video work, *Page Three Girl*, in which she and her team of 'Art Ninjas' insert photos of Maple wearing a large, pink bra into *The Sun*, a British tabloid newspaper with a long history of photo features of topless women. The edition that day featured the headline 'My Hubby the Violent Bully'. It is just visible as Maple and friends insert her alternative page-three girl into sales outlets in central London; *double entendre*, double standards, and double burdens in one frame. See Maple's **Blog Post** on this action, <http://sarahmapleart.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/taking-on-page-three-171109-next.html>
51. Mukhopadhyay, 'The use of the written word', emphasis in the original.
52. See the *Women of Islam* series (Neshat 1994) and the poster Maple designed for an Amnesty International event for International Women's Day in which she juxtaposes one of her 'smoking hijab' images with a verse from Corinthians, in the New Testament (Maple 2010).
53. In Emily Greenhouse, 'How to provoke national unrest with a Facebook photo', *The New Yorker*, 8 April 2013. Available <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/elements/2013/04/amina-tyler-topless-photos-tunisia-activism.html> (accessed 15 May 2015).
54. Greenhouse, 'How to provoke national unrest'.
55. The initial photo and subsequent ones of Amina and her supporters that include other Arab women as well as Femen activists, clothed and naked, has been made available as a slide show on the French language edition of the **Huffington Post** (Hamadi, 2013, see Beji, 2013).
56. Aliaa Magda Elmahdy, 'Nude Art' blog entry, 23 October 2011. Available at http://arebelsdiary.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/nude-art_2515.html (accessed 20 December 2013).
57. Maryam, 'Femen vs. Muslimah Pride: Fighting for the Voices (and Bodies) of Muslim Women', *Autostraddle*, 15 April 2013. Available at <http://www.autostraddle.com/femen-vs-muslimah-pride-fighting-for-the-voices-and-bodies-of-muslim-women-authors-draft-172860> (accessed 20 December 2013).
58. Cited in Sarah Ben Hamadi, 'Amina Sboui quitte les FEMEN: "Je ne veux pas que mon nom soit associé à une organisation islamophobe"',

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