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EWIC Online Preview Supplement I Selected Articles

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New Modes of Communication: Web Representations and Blogs: North Africa

The Muslim countries of North Africa – Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya – provide an interesting context for exploring some of the salient trends in the adoption, use, and implications of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Within less than one decade, the use of mobile telephones, the Internet, online spaces, and social network sites (Facebook, MySpace) has known spectacular growth, especially among the segment of the Maghribi population whose voices are usually underrepresented in the public sphere: young women and men. Between 2000 and 2007, the number of Internet users in Morocco and Algeria, for instance, increased by 4,500 per cent and 3,740 percent respectively; mobile phone subscribers reached 73 and 77 percent of the population in Libya and Tunisia respectively (see Table 1). While overall access to the Internet remains relatively low in this region compared to the rest of the world, the remarkable popularity of the new media compels us to move beyond mere speculation about whether or not they have any social and political impact worthy of scholarly attention.

The new media, as this entry demonstrates, are operating within a very dynamic region where new spaces of social interaction are beginning to transform citizens' habits of self-expression, communication among themselves as well as communication about and with their social and political institutions. While some analysis has highlighted the subversive or democratizing promises of the new technologies, the first two sections of this entry discuss forms of empowerment by grounding technologies within the broader contexts of North African countries where issues of accessibility and state surveillance and censorship affect the uses of the technologies. The third section focuses on the Maghribi political blogosphere to highlight the emergence of alternative forms of civic engagement and social and political critique. The last section turns to mobile telephones and cyber social networks to reveal individual forms of empowerment, particularly with respect to gender (redefinitions) and identity politics.

TECHNOLOGIES IN CONTEXT

Technologies of communication, regardless of their novelty or sophistication, acquire meaning only within the specificities of the larger environment in which they are embedded and used. These environments are already structured by power differentials across, age, class, gender, and ethnic lines. In exploring the social and political meanings of the technologies and in assessing the scope of their empowering potential, we have to acknowledge both the power differentials at play, as well as their reproduction through the institutions, practices, and realities of everyday lives.
The realities of the Maghrib region are complex, dynamic, and differentiated. Although Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia are united by their geographic proximity, linguistic similarities, and long Islamic traditions, their social, economic, and political realities are different enough (Zoubir and Haizam 2008) to produce a nuanced map of Internet development and use. Significant differences exist not only at the level of natural resources endowment and household income, but also in the rates of adult literacy, state investment in information infrastructure, and their politics concerning freedom of expression.

The Maghrib countries have been experimenting for the last two decades with different forms of political and economic liberalization with varying degrees of success (Zoubir and Haizam 2008). After years of military rule, Algeria seems to be leaning toward a more participatory polity; Libya's decades of isolation and closed economy are gradually yielding to slow integration with the global world economy; Morocco's political and economic liberalization have opened more spaces for the

participation of new political actors and the emergence of new economic and social entrepreneurs, while Tunisia has invested more in economic development and growth than in civil liberties. Challenges in bridging the gender gap are common, however, across the Maghrib, despite the fact that Tunisia and Morocco have the most progressive Family Status Laws in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Resilient patriarchal structures and ideologies reproduce and reinforce gender differences in access to resources and development opportunities in the region. The 2008 *Global Gender Gap Index* produced by the World Economic Forum captures this reality by ranking Tunisia 103 out of 130 countries, Algeria 111 and Morocco 125, while Libya remains unranked given the unavailability of data. Gender inequality is based on gaps measured in economic participation, educational attainment, health and life expectancy, as well political empowerment. Despite the absence of accurate gender disaggregated data in the use of and access to new media, the gender digital divide is a reality in the region given the overall persistence of the gender literacy gaps in all four countries, and the feminization of poverty. Not surprisingly, the digital divide within countries "broadly reflects the gender divide" and the dominant patterns of discrimination (Gurumurthy 2004, 22).

Gaps in gender equity and varying levels of economic and political participation provide a context where trends in the development and uses of the technology remain unpredictable. Although Tunisia was the first Arab country to introduce the Internet (1991), their technology has grown relatively slowly. Between 2000 and 2007, the number of Internet users grew by a mere 854 per cent compared to 4,500 percent growth in Morocco over the same period (Tables 1 and 2). Yet Morocco has the lowest Gross National Product per capita and the highest rates of adult illiteracy in the region, with the widest literacy gender gap. Despite this, the country has the fastest growing community of Internet users in both the Maghrib and MENA (Internet Usage Statistics 2007).

Table 1: Development Indicators and Technology in the Maghrib

	Algeria	**Libya**	**Morocco**	**Tunisia**
Population 2007	33,506,567	6,293,910	30,534,870	10,342,253
Income Per Capita 2007	7,309	13,565	3,835	7,086
Literacy Rates	60.1% F	74.8% F	39.6% F	65.35% F
Over 15 (M&F)*	79.5% M	92.8% M	65.7% M	83.39% M
Internet Cafes	3,000	700	4,000♦	300
Personal Computer Per 1000, 2005–06	10	24	30	62
Internet users Per 100, 2007	10.34	4.36	21.14	16.68
% Internet Growth 2000–07	3,740	1,950	4,500	854

Source: World Bank 2009; Central Intelligence Agency 2007; Internet Usage Statistics 2007; International Telecommunication Union 2007.

*M=Male and F=Female

♦ Recent estimates by the Moroccan Internet Society (www.misoc.ma)

The Internet was first introduced in Morocco in 1995. Its rapid growth has been facilitated by the large numbers of cybercafés (estimated at 4,000), the flexibility of their schedule (24 hours a day, for most), their neighborhood proximity, and the decreasing rates per hour (average 50 cents/hour). The Moroccan blogosphere, estimated to include 10,000 blogs in 2006, has since grown into the largest in North Africa (OpenNet Initiative 2007). The 2009 World Internet Statistics ranks Morocco third and Tunisia eighth in the African continent in terms of Internet penetration.

Table 2: Change in Internet users* per 100 inhabitants, 2000–07

Year	Algeria	Libya	Morocco	Tunisia
2000	0.49	0.19	0.68	2.72
2004	4.64	3.57	11.28	8.35
2007	10.34	4.36	21.14	16.68

Source: International Telecommunication Union 2007

* Internet users are defined as persons with access to the Internet (as opposed to subscribers who must have purchased access through a service)

Despite the relatively higher purchasing power in Algeria and Libya and a narrower gender literacy gap, Internet use is still surprisingly limited in both countries although it was introduced more than a decade ago, 1994 and 1998 respectively. Both countries still have fewer numbers of personal computers than in Morocco and Tunisia and fewer Internet users. The number of Internet cafés in Algeria, however, has grown enormously, which explains the noticeable growth of 3,740 percent between 2000 and 2007.

Low Internet penetration in developing countries points to such access-restricting factors as the high cost of technology, low rates of basic and computer literacy, time constraints for women, and the dominance of English language. All these challenges are equally observed in the Maghrib. Yet, as Tables 1 and 2 show, the correlation between all these factors is less systematic than usually maintained. We have to look at the regimes' (in)tolerance of free speech as a key indicator in the development of the new media.

STATE CONTROL AND CENSORSHIP OF CONNECTIVITY

As in the rest of the Middle East, the spectacular popularity of the Internet among growing segments of the Maghribi population has triggered an equally spectacular reinvention and sharpening of authoritarian impulses. Governments have mobilized a variety of multilayered censorship measures of surveillance and control to impose physical, legal, and/or technological restrictions on technology users.

In addition to harsh press laws and regulations that punish dissent, Tunisia deploys extensive filtering and blocking of sites with critical views of the regime. Repeated cases of harassment, arrest, and imprisonment of Internet users have earned Tunisia its rank among the "enemies of the Internet" according to Paris-based freedom watchdog, Reporters without Borders. All internet cafés "are supervised by the regime and access to the video-sharing website *Dailymotion* is regularly blocked" (RWB 2008, 166). Algeria and Libya, also ranked very low in Internet freedom, deploy a vast arsenal of regulations and approaches to monitor cyber activity and persecute perceived regime offenders. Censorship and retribution are justified by the twin loose categories of "public order" and

"public morality." These categories cover dissenting political views and Islamist materials, as well as pornographic materials and homosexuality. Algeria's highly centralized network subjects all Internet connections to control and censorship by government servers before content reaches the global Internet (OpenNet Initiative 2007). Libya does not monopolize Internet service providers, but strict control is exercised over oppositional websites and through regular blocking of Amazigh-related websites (<www.libyaimal.com>) and Libyan human rights sites (<www.libyanhumanrights.com>).

In Morocco, restrictions on Internet use and the filtering of cyber materials have remained relatively minimal until recently. The reputation of Morocco's tolerance of online free speech started to suffer in 2008 when the 24-year-old blogger, Mohamed Elrraji, was tried and sentenced to two years imprisonment for criticizing the king. The same year, Fouad Mortada was arrested for assuming the identity of Prince Moulay Rachid on Facebook. Both young men were later pardoned, but the reputation of Morocco as a dreamland for Internet users has been tarnished since. In addition, users have internalized self-censorship by avoiding open criticism of the three topics that test the country's tolerance for freedom of expression both online and off: Western Sahara, royal authority, and defamation of Islam.

The development, use, and regulation of the Internet in the Maghrib provide compelling evidence about one of the unresolved tensions crippling the development of technologies in the Arab countries. On the one hand, the regimes demonstrate a keen desire to wire their societies with the technologies to facilitate their global economic integration and enhance their competitiveness. On the other hand, their profound distrust of the democratizing potential of the technologies fuels their deep-seated fear of citizens' access to open sources of information. The more citizens develop skills for creating alternative systems of information sharing and knowledge production, the more heightened are the regimes' anxieties about losing monopoly over the nature, direction, and sources of information.

Cyber censorship and control of information are practices that no longer mask the regimes' tendencies to infantilize their citizenry. Conversely, users' manipulations of technologies consistently test the regimes' discourses of political liberalization and debunk much of the professed improvements in their human rights records.

Interestingly, the constant surveillance and threat of censorship and persecution render the simple fact of accessing the Internet in these contexts an empowering act in and of itself. The mere attempt at expressing oneself, through blogs, chat rooms, YouTube, or Facebook, acquires exaggerated meanings for both the user and the controlling regimes. While the technologies are not turning all users into political activists or advocates for human rights, and while not all users are champions of gender equity, some uses could potentially be perceived as political acts of defiance, resistance, and/or subversion. Indeed, trends in the use of new media suggest a strong desire to be informed and connected across gender and age lines despite the regimes' taxing censorship measures and the structural constraints limiting access to and use of information technologies.

POLITICIZING MODES OF COMMUNICATION

The prolific literature on empowerment recognizes the thick and multilayered meanings of the concept. Empowerment includes affirmation of agency, greater access to resources and participation in decision-making, enhanced self-confidence, and enlargement of individual choices (Kabeer 1994, Narayan 2005, Sharma 2008, Rowland 1997). While different degrees of emphasis are placed on each

of these dimensions, the literature on ICT's potential for women's empowerment foregrounds their "transformative" aspects. A key distinction is made between empowerment "as capacity building *to cope with* the requirements of life more efficiently versus *capacity building to transform* the conditions of life and assert alternative gender roles" (Huyer and Sikoska 2003, 4). Along with this comes the distinction between individual and collective forms of empowerment. While the former highlight gains in the individual's level of knowledge, self-esteem, and confidence in using technology, the latter points to women's capacity to organize themselves as political actors and advocates for change who use "public information as an input to their agendas, and put it to the service of women at large" (Huyer and Sikoska 2003, 9).

Although these distinctions are important, we need equally to acknowledge the intersections between individual and collective forms of empowerment, given the network-building capabilities of the technologies themselves and the collectivistic context in which technologies are used. The contexts in which young women and men access the technology are structured by already existing webs of social networks and relationships that are carried over and reinforced by the technology. Recognizing this leads us to broaden our understanding of "connectivity" to include the "social spaces of networking that surround women and link them and their personal, household, community and other networks to ICTs" (Huyer and Sikoska 2003, 8). This also helps us capture the direct and indirect forms of women's access to the technology as well as recognize the important links "between people, technology, institutions, and places which can in turn lead to more effective and powerful uses of technology" (Huyer and Sikoska 2003, 8–9). The next section reflects on the multidimensionality of empowerment in the Maghrib.

BLOGGING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

New media in Muslim societies have attracted attention as potential political tools for creating (alternative) public spheres and spaces for political dissent, networking, and activism (Eickelman and Anderson 1999, Skalli 2006a). In the Maghrib, some of these promises are materializing in the bold and creative ways that citizens use new technologies – political blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and chat-rooms – to articulate their political consciousness and foreground their political engagement.

The participation of women in these spaces, though not substantial, is significant enough to demonstrate that the Maghribi political blogosphere is gendered. Despite the scarce political commentary in Libya, the first brave and witty blogger in 2007 was a young girl with the cyber identity of Highlander (Gazzini 2007, 11). In Tunisia, the Best Blog Prize in 2005 was awarded to a young Tunisian woman, La Rebelle, for the pertinence of her "blog of rebellion around a cup of coffee, emotion, truth" (<http://tn-blogs.com/>).

The remarkable presence of youth in these spaces is not surprising given the population structures of the Maghrib where those 30 years old and younger constitute more than half of the total population. What is surprising, however, is the multiple ways in which young women and men engage in a dialogue with their political institutions and leaders even within spaces categorized as apolitical, such as "jokes" and "society," suggesting that political leaders have a great deal to learn about and from Maghribi youth.

Cyber comments reflect deep cynicism about the local political scene and a heightened concern for violations of citizens' rights and freedoms. Political blogs deliver a pertinent, informed, and penetrating critique of the social, political, and economic institutions that hinder development in the

region. They also introduce to the world a brave young citizenry that is resilient and determined to invest its civic energies in expanding the boundaries of freedom against all odds. As a young Tunisian blogger vouched, "We are fed up. We need real change, not a revolution, just [to] express ourselves freely … but what can we lose? [The government] stopping our blogs, we can create a blog for the occasion. We will post our notes in a new blog. We will create an aggregator for the occasion and see what happens. If the 300 blogs and the aggregator are censored; no problem. We will do the same thing with new addresses" (*Magharebia* 27 June 2007).

Often, the Maghribi blogosphere is more proactive than the written press and more efficient in rallying public opinion to defend human rights violations. When the young Moroccan blogger Mohammed Erraji was arrested in 2008 and sentenced to two years in prison, the story was barely reported in the print media while the blogosphere immediately questioned the fairness of the trial and appealed for international support.

In Tunisia, young students from the Tunisian Institute for Press were actively involved in the production of the first Tunisian online magazine, *Kalima*, while many others contributed to the diffusion of its contents in support of the often harassed journal editor and human rights advocate, Siham Bensedrine (Pintak 2007, 2). Young Tunisians, according to Bensedrine, are "experts at web publishing" and outsmart state censorship of the journal: they used proxy sites, copied the journal "from computer to computer using flash discs" and deleted it once read (Pintak 2007).

These efforts highlight interesting connections between cyber activism and changes in the real world of the Maghrib. Several youth-driven initiatives about naming injustices and shaming the nation have repercussions beyond cyberspace. For example, in the case of the famous YouTube Targuist Sniper, a young Moroccan from a small mountain town in northern Morocco (Targuist) videotaped in 2007 Moroccan gendarmes (royal police) in the act of accepting bribery. The release of the video was timed with the visit of the king to the region: nearly 400,000 YouTube visitors watched within the first week and many millions subsequently. The video prompted immediate reaction from police headquarters, which arrested the nine policemen caught on camera, and the anti-corruption units were ordered to follow cases of corruption.

Moroccan media commented on the initiative after the newsworthiness of the story was established by the French newspapers *Le Monde* and *Libération*, and Al Jazeera television (Sekkouri and Zaroui 2008). In a recent interview with the Moroccan online weekly *TelQuel*, the Sniper said he was "just a Moroccan citizen who dreams of a better Morocco, and of security services worthy of the name, whose priority would be to protect the people and not to pick them clean as is the case today." Similar video initiatives have been reproduced in other regions of the country where teams of young citizens complement each others' technological skills to "build on the methods used by political dissidents from the past who were forced to remain underground" (Sekkouri and Zaroui 2008).

It is precisely in the areas of reinforcement of skills, complementarity, and networking that there is a greater promise for women's empowerment in the Maghrib. Networking and alliance building are powerful tools and expressions of women's empowerment. In real or virtual spaces, through old or new media, networking has proved to be one of the powerful forces in the recent developments of women's mobilization in the region (Skalli 2006a).

Scarce gender disaggregated data on Maghribis' access to and use of technology puts limits on assessment of gender empowerment. This does not, however, lie in the way of identifying ways in

which new technologies are serving as "amplifiers of women's voices and perspectives" (Gurumurthy 2004, 38) in the Maghrib. Many initiatives are already solidifying the activists' advocacy agenda and improving their efficacy in using media as political tools for awareness-building and mobilization.

In 2004, a national network of 17 Moroccan women's organizations and centers for battered women launched the website Anaruz (<www.anaruz.org>) to promote women's freedom from violence as "a right and not a privilege." Grounded in the reality of the women's movement in Morocco, the initiative builds on the advocacy work of women's associations over the last decades and extends their mobilization to areas long considered by male structures too private to justify their inclusion in public debate and political action. Anaruz acts as an information broker and an unparalleled platform for collecting, disseminating, and updating information on domestic violence. It informs the (national and international) public, creates a social dialogue and pressures policymakers to respond to the basic rights of Muslim women. Going online encourages activists to reach out for and garner the support of diasporic communities invested in the democratization of their home countries.

Research on the use of Internet by migrant communities reveals interesting efforts at coordinating political action. Migrant groups attempt to "use the political process in one country to influence events in another country" (Staeheli et al. 2002). More research is clearly needed to determine how the Maghribi diaspora uses the technologies to reconnect with their compatriots to effect political change. The few documented examples reveal interesting trends. The United Kingdom-based exiled Libyan community who settled abroad in the 1970s "used their websites primarily to create networks of Libyans abroad and to lobby with foreign governments against the ruling establishment in Tripoli" (Gazzini 2007, 3). Given the strict surveillance on cyber activity inside Libya, young Internet users rely on proxy servers and satellite connections to circumvent restrictions, access Libyan opposition sites abroad, and communicate with them. Recent cyber mobilization efforts pressured the government to sack the head of Tripoli's Al Fateh University about whom reports of corruption were sent by students and teachers to the United Kingdom-based online journal, *Akhbar Libya*, and published by the journal's editor-in-chief (Gazzini 2007).

The same motivation for citizenship action across borders was behind the creation of the photoblog Intikhabat2007.com (election 2007) by three friends from Morocco, France, and Canada. The site founders were motivated to "find creative ways to improve the political situation" in their country and encourage Moroccan citizens to "express their thoughts on politics one picture at a time" (Brea 2007). Additionally, the site provides direct links to political parties' programs, relevant websites, legal documents and other political information. This initiative was meant to complement such vigorous political blogs as "Larbi," "Eatbees," and "Ibn Kafka" established within the country.

The diaspora also uses the Internet to rekindle ties with their culture, maintain relationships with their families and communities, and negotiate their "complex and layered identity" (Gazzini 2007, 10). Second-generation Maghribi youth in Europe and the United States are organizing themselves on the Internet along ethnic lines to collect and disseminate information about their countries, and to connect with fellow citizens across borders through social network sites. Maghreb.nl and Maroc.nl are two of the early websites set up by second-generation youth in the Netherlands (Brouwer 2006) to negotiate their identities and citizenship and to network with communities. In many similar instances, the Internet empowers first-generation migrants to maintain their strong

financial and social ties with their homeland, while second generations use technologies to express their identity politics.

NEW MEDIA AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Instances of individual and collective forms of empowerment facilitated by new media should not be underestimated within societies where restrictions on freedom of speech and movement come from diverse institutions. In addition to authoritarian regimes, patriarchal ideologies and established gender norms constrain individuals' freedoms. In the Maghrib, as elsewhere, new media are creating unprecedented opportunities for young men and women to discover themselves and the "other" as they negotiate the demands their societies make on their gendered identities. This section of the entry briefly highlights forms of empowerment facilitated by mobile telephones and the Internet. In the four Maghrib countries, mobile subscriptions have become phenomenally popular across regional, age, income, and gender lines. Nearly two-thirds of the population in each country are subscribers while fixed telephone lines seriously lag behind, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mobile Cellular Subscribers per 100 inhabitants, 2000–07

	Algeria	**Libya**	**Morocco**	**Tunisia**
Mobile Subscribers 2000	0.28	0.75	8.01	1.25
2004	15.09	8.71	30.1	37.38
2007	81.41	73.05	64.15	75.94
Land Line per 100 people	9.06	14.4	7.76	12.42*

Source: International Telecommunication Union 2007

*Data for land line telephones are from 2007, except for Libya which is from 2005.

Such growth has tremendous implications not only for market activities, but most importantly for potential transformations in individuals' communication habits, management of time, negotiation of privacy in collectivistic cultures, and reformulation of the norms of sociability. Although more research is required to assess the long-term impact of these transformations, the cellular seems to provide "yet another impetus towards experimental identity construction and politics" (Kahn and Kellner 2004, 89).

The purchase, ownership, and use of mobile telephones are practices imbued with power struggles over established gender definitions and roles. A recent study of the uses of ICT by legal centers for victims of domestic violence in Morocco reveals that many interviewed victims consider their mobile more than a mere tool of communication: they refer to it as "your friend in need, your brother, mother and father," "a solution to problems," "a protection sometimes," and "a necessity." Other victims recognized the power struggles involved in ownership since they resented their husbands' control over their use of the phone: "the man sees the cell phone as an enemy. If the man has the right to have the cell phone, the woman also has the right to have it and is in need of it" (Tafnaout and Timjerdine 2009).

For the young generation, ownership of mobile phones and the use of Text Message System have quickly developed into a marker of youth communication and youth culture. Collected views from

youth in the region highlight the extent to which the cell enhances their sense of agency and independence in managing their time, relationships, and the personal flow of communication (<lequotidien-tn.com>). The cell is also seen to fulfill significant socio-psychological functions by helping young men and women overcome their shyness and fear of expressing themselves.

Some of the social implications of the technology in the urban centers are seen in its providing more communication opportunities and relationships between young men and women. While fixed lines permit patriarchal structures to restrict such possibilities, the use of mobile telephones "generates alternative strategies for connectivity that produce important slippages and openings in the spatial fixity and temporal uncertainty of sociality in the public sphere" (Bahiyyih 2006, 201).

Many similar forms of slippage take place in the gendered use of the Internet and visits to cybercafés. Real or virtual trips to the cybercafé and participation in social network spaces permit a renegotiation of the gendered management of space and time. In the patriarchal realities of Maghrib countries, still ill-reconciled to the principle of gender mixing, women's access to the public space is an ongoing project of negotiation with male claim to exclusive ownership of public space. Women, as Leslie Kanes-Weisman aptly put it, "are taught to occupy but not control space" (in Ormond 2001). Such ambivalent societal attitudes are reflected in pervasive sexual harassment targeting women in schools, offices, on the streets, and in other public spaces (Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité).

While Internet cafés are spaces not as inappropriate for urban young Maghribi women as ordinary cafés or leisure spaces, their access remains relatively restrained by location and operating hours of the cafés. When trips do take place, their empowering significance becomes multidimensional. Accessing the technologies enables young women to expand and articulate their subjectivities as well as consciously participate in producing information and acquiring knowledge. The links between identity politics and online presence should not be underestimated: cyberspace might be, after all, the rare space that allows them to articulate the uncertainties and anxieties they face as they negotiate the different demands made on them by global forces and local realities (Skalli 2006b).

For young women and men, using online spaces such as Facebook and personal blogs means more than mere opportunities for chatting, flirting, and dating. They are spaces where they affirm the importance of their voices, try to make sense of their realities, and create their own meanings of their gendered social experiences. In the process, they exercise agency through the processes of self-directed learning and peer-to-peer based communication that are situated outside the parameters of hierarchical structures of learning and knowledge production. The new practices are undermining the established traditions of imparting information and knowledge. They are also disrupting the generational logic where the old are always seen to know more and better.

CONCLUSION

This entry demonstrates the emergence of empowering spaces and practices that result from the interactions between new communication technologies, resourceful young citizens, and dynamic contexts in North Africa. Clearly, technologies do not in themselves guarantee empowerment, but "technological leaps contain the seeds for random and unanticipated change" (Gurumurthy 2004, 7). The Maghrib countries might still be under-wired, in comparison to the rest of the world, but the astounding rates of the adoption of modern technologies are such that changes in communication habits are beginning to transform (urban) people's lives.

Despite the pervasive biases (urban, gender, literacy, and income) restricting the uses of technologies, new opportunities and possibilities are emerging for Maghribi citizens to engage with the institutions of their societies. Technologies neither disrupt nor redress unequal structures of power in the Maghrib. Yet, the remarkable presence of young male and female voices on the Internet speaks to their desire for greater inclusion in the processes of economic and political development in their countries. It is around issues of exclusion that we see the strengthening of old forms of resistance and political engagement and the emergence of new forms of political organizing.

However, women's economic empowerment through the technologies remains visibly marginal in the Maghrib. Results from a recent survey of Tunisian businesswomen demonstrate the limited use of the technologies and the challenges still to overcome. Nearly 82 percent of women do not have a website, 45 percent had never used the Internet and only 51 percent regularly use email (CNFCE 2008). The assessment of the much publicized virtual marketplace project, set up by anthropologist Susan Schaefer Davis with the support of the World Bank, is a sobering reminder of the huge gaps technologies cannot fill. Given the poverty and illiteracy of the women carpet weavers from Moroccan villages, connecting their products to global markets largely rested on the skills, resources, and personal investment of the American anthropologist as she coordinated efforts between several entities (Buskens and Webb 2009).

In the end, while we have to recognize the empowerment potential of technologies, we cannot afford to overlook how technologies exacerbate the exclusion of the already marginalized communities in the Maghrib.

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Cinema: Representations in Commercial Films: India

PARTITION IN *PAKEEZAH*: SONGS OF THE UNSPEAKABLE

This entry explores the cinematic depiction of Muslim women against the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. One film is explored specifically (*Pakeezah*, The Pure One, dir. Kamal Amrohi, 1971), tracing Partition as presence and absence through its narrative and depiction. This film is apparently based on a theme different from Partition and set in a different time. However, the entry argues that this film is constantly intercut by the "shadow lines" of Partition (Ghosh 1988) and explores the world of its Muslim female protagonist as such, depicting notions of honor and shame that bind the Muslim woman in place as well as the changes that make it im/possible for her to shift place. Through a web of implications, suggestions, and implicit referencing, the film deals directly with the specter of Partition-Independence. The film tackles Partition and its related questions politically, emotively, and philosophically, without making a single direct reference to the event or its impact.

There have been few films from the Bombay cinema industry that deal directly with the Partition of the subcontinent. The small number of mainstream Hindi-Urdu films on the subject is surprising in an industry, many of whose members, northern Indian, Hindu and Muslim, were deeply affected by the event. Many of them lost family, property, and nation through it. Several Muslim film professionals had to leave Bombay for Lahore while many Hindu Punjabi film workers had to leave ancestral homes within the new nation of Pakistan and seek refuge in India. Yet there is reluctance to speak of these tumultuous experiences within the cinema industry, both on- and off-screen. There are important reasons for this silence, including a calculated sense of the commercial non-viability of bitter memories as well as "self-censorship" regarding this subject on the part of Bombay filmmakers (Srijana Mitra Das 2006).

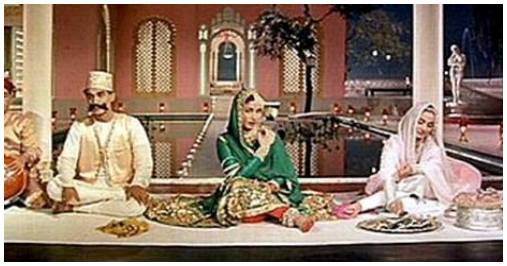
There have nonetheless been significant variations in the depiction and non-depiction of Partition in commercial Bombay films. Some films have shown Partition as an event occurring prior to a film's main plot; Partition is thus embedded in a film's backdrop or rationale but fenced off from its present. These include Raj Kapoor's *Chhalia* (Trickster, 1960), which showed a Hindu woman separated from her husband during Partition, the main protagonist making tremendous efforts to help her. Some films have depicted Partition as an event that is somehow implicit in their plot through a sense of tragedy or catastrophe that directly affects protagonists but is not shown. These include *Waqt* (Time, 1965) which describes a Hindu Punjabi family separated from each other by a catastrophe (supposedly an earthquake), which seems to forever close all options of return to their town of origin, making the protagonists permanent refugees. Recently, some commercial Bombay films have shown Partition directly, making the event the visible central motor of their stories. These include *Gadar: Ek Prem Kahani* (The Riot: A Love Story, 2001) and *Pinjar* (Skeleton, 2003).

Significantly, the latter films have used the figure of the abducted and/or "dishonored" (implying molested/raped/violated) woman as their central protagonist, over whose legitimate return physical, territorial, and moral battles are waged. Interestingly, the Pakistani Punjabi-Urdu cinema industry also contains films of this type. A highly successful Pakistani film depicted a Hindu female protagonist being rescued from her oppressive relations in India by her Pakistani Muslim lover during/after Partition (Sen 2005). In the Bombay cinema industry, commercial outcomes have clarified notions of desirable closures or "happy endings" to the unhappy event. *Gadar*, about a Muslim woman rescued from her Pakistani family by her Indian Sikh husband, was a massive

blockbuster. *Pinjar*, in which a Hindu woman is abducted by a Muslim man but chooses to remain with her abductor in Pakistan when offered the choice of returning to family in India, was financially fruitless. In the commercial cinema industry of Bombay, it is clear that films made explicitly about Partition need to contain explicit characters and explicit plots, where legitimacy is made absolutely clear and any shadow lines of ambiguity forcefully erased.

This entry explores one particular Bombay film which is shot through with ambiguity, filled with doubt, inconsistency, and contradiction. The world of this film, apparently set elsewhere, constantly travels back and forth from Partition, simultaneously treating the event as absence and presence, catalyst and phantom. All its characters are colored deeply by the episode, yet none refer to it at all. The Hindi-Urdu film *Pakeezah* is one of the greatest super-hits of the Bombay cinema industry.

Pakeezah was released in 1971, several years after it began production. Depicting the lives of a courtesan, her daughter, and the two men who loved them, it starred major actors of the Bombay cinema industry. The popular tragedy queen, Meena Kumari, helmed her estranged husband Kamal Amrohi's directorial project, essaying the double roles of the courtesans Nargis and her daughter, Sahibjaan. Veteran star Ashok Kumar played Nargis's lover, Shahabuddin (Shahab), while the dashing Raj Kumar was his nephew and Sahibjaan's lover, Salim. In addition to its dramatic plot and rich camerawork, the film featured marvelous sets, gorgeous costumes, and superb music.



Pakeezah (still): The courtesan Sahibjaan (Meena Kumari, center) before a *mujra* (music and dance performance) with her troupe in Gulabi Mahal (pink palace).

The film is widely recognized as a classic of its genre. This refers specifically to the courtesan-based Bombay film as well as films featuring a world of Muslim relationships and an Urdu-based culture. Prominent courtesan-based Bombay films include *Devdas* (1955; 2002), *Muqaddar ka Sikandar* (The Emperor of Fate, 1978), *Umrao Jaan* (1981; 2006), and *Tawaif* (Courtesan, 1985). Films featuring an intricate world of Muslim relationships and an Urdu-based domestic and public culture include *Chaudhvin ka Chand* (New Moon, 1960), *Mere Mehboob* (My Beloved, 1963), *Bahu Begum* (Lady of the House, 1967), *Mehboob ki Mehndi* (Lover's Henna, 1971) and *Nikaah* (Marriage, 1982). More generally, the word classic when applied to *Pakeezah* also refers to the film's scale and its collection of stars, musicians, lyricists, and expert technicians, whose talents and production values coalesce in the film.

Pakeezah's world does not clearly specify its exact age or time; there hangs over its wonderful sets, its glittering palatial interiors, its winding *bazaar* streets, and the hum of its horse-drawn carriages a suggestion of a pre-Independence era, a world where modernity has not yet settled and tradition is more or less seamless. Courtesans sing and dance before nobles in this world, the feudal elite are born to privilege, passion is permitted but powerfully circumscribed, and appearances are

maintained at all costs. However, there are sudden disruptions and contradictions in this world, each signifying challenge, movement, entangled histories and emerging futures that penetrate the setting and its established knowledge. Each challenge, each gap, and each possibility glitters in the polished lamps of *Pakeezah*, flashes forth in its colored glass panes, appears mischievously and tragically in its scenes set in *haveli*s (mansions), trains, police stations, and on railway platforms. *Pakeezah* is a strange and disordered world where several time-zones intercut, the precolonial, the feudal, and the pleasurable facing the post-Partition, the modern, the divided and free. From this meeting, the world of the colonial and the point of change in mindsets, possibilities, and political economy are noticeably absent, an absence that is deeply significant, a silence that speaks enormously.

Pakeezah opens with a woman, a courtesan, dancing in darkness. The woman dances around a flickering flame until a door opens, framing a man in light. The light, bright against the darkness but still unclear, brings to mind Blanchot (1995, 39): "Light breaks forth … and in clarity clamors but does not clarify." The figure in this dazzling, yet indistinct light is Shahab, come to take his beloved Nargis away from the *dozakh* (hell) she inhabits. As she rushes to him, a heavy male voice intones over the scene that Shahab intends to rescue Nargis and take her away from this *napaak mahaul* (impure atmosphere). The word *napaak*, inset into the film's introduction itself, is deeply significant.

Publicity poster for *Pakeezah*: Opening scene with a gloomy Nargis in the foreground of the dark *kotha* (courtesan's abode). Shahab, framed against the *kotha* door, set in a pool of hazy light, stands in the background.

The creation of Pakistan was marked by much rhetoric concerning the birth of a *paak* (pure) land that would be home to the subcontinent's Muslims and separate from Hindu India (Page 1982, Shakir 1983, Singh 1987, Hasan 1993, 2000, Talbot 1996, 1998, Pandey 1999). The process of Pakistan's splitting from India was extraordinarily violent and accompanied by anguished discussions about the nature of and necessity for such "purity". In just two months, more than twelve million people switched countries across divided Punjab alone while another eight million moved over the rest of the subcontinent. Lynching, looting, kidnappings, and forced conversions broke out among

the three major communities affected directly by Partition: Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs (Veena Das 1995, Menon and Bhasin 1998, Butalia 2000, Pandey 2001, Khan 2007).

Terrible violence was inflicted in particular upon women of opposing sides. Women of all ages were abducted, gang-raped, bought and sold into prostitution, converted, married forcibly, paraded naked, had breasts cut off, foetuses ripped out of wombs. Violence often began at home; many took female relations' lives themselves rather than risk their violation (bringing familial dishonor) by those of an "enemy" faith. Once Partition became an established fact, there were governmental discussions in independent India and Pakistan about the "impurity" of its process and the need for each side to recover women abducted by the other.

The families and communities of these women, implored political leaders in India, must see them as "pure" and not mete out contempt for the degrading atrocities they had suffered (Menon and Bhasin 1998, Hasan 2000, Butalia 2000, Das 2007). In 1948, India's Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, appealed in the nation's newspapers (Menon and Bhasin 1998, 99): "There is … unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women [who had been abducted] back in their homes. This is … most objectionable … These girls and women require our tender and loving care … their relatives should be proud to take them back." The same source quotes Mahatma Gandhi expressing his views on the issue of "reinserting" abducted women back into their legitimate communities, the Mahatma commenting that abducted/recovered women's families, "are not willing to accept back the recovered women because they say that they have become impure … this is a matter of great shame. That woman is as pure as the girls sitting by my side … if any of those recovered women should come to me, then I will give them as much respect and honour as I accord to these young maidens."

The discourse concerning the recovery and reinsertion of abducted women post-Partition was framed heavily using ideas of purity, legitimacy, and honor. The discourse was deeply patriarchal, evident from Gandhi's words where "purity" was a quality of the "young maidens" sitting with him, somewhat patronizingly extended to women who had suffered extraordinary trauma and violation during Partition. In this discourse, centered on closure and moving ahead, there was no mention of the gravely illegal that had occurred during Partition's gendered communal violence. Evidently, there was no notion of culpability. The discourse of female recovery and reinsertion was pegged firmly on ideas of female purity and social expansions and contractions around the same. The onus of purity thus hung entirely on women while the purity of men, families, and groups who had perpetrated or supported such atrocities was not questioned.

In *Pakeezah*, Nargis does escape the courtesan's "impure" abode with Shahab but is then cruelly rejected by his respectable family who are absolutely unwilling to accept an impure woman. Even as Shahab tries to argue with his domineering father, a heartbroken Nargis flees his home, choosing to hide in a graveyard where she lives in isolation for months, dying after giving birth to Shahab's daughter. The setting is rich with deeply political implications. A strident call by Hindu communalists against Muslims in India, heard both during and after Partition, has been, "*Musalmaan ke do hi sthaan, Pakistan ya kabrastan*" (the Muslim has only two places to go, Pakistan or the graveyard). Gyanendra Pandey (1992) found contemporary resonances of this phrase in his investigation of communal pogroms in Bhagalpur. In *Pakeezah*, the female Muslim protagonist places herself in the graveyard, choosing a living death, symbolizing her utter helplessness. The film frames the heaviness of rejection itself; where do those go who are rejected by their own? Where can the "others" of a nation go when the nation demands their exit? Can a vulnerable person's stepping

out of strongly determined bounds lead to a location between life and death, a liminal existence between being and non-being?

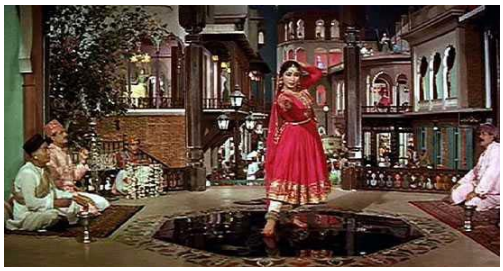
The film's posing of such questions, implicit in its shots, its movement, and the unfolding of Nargis's life and death, is hard to escape. Interestingly, these questions are asked by a director who was marginal within the entire discourse concerning Pakistan, a Shi'i Muslim outnumbered by Sunni voices in the debate over Partition. The sectarian aspect to Partition in South Asia is somewhat under-researched. Some Shi'i Muslims chose to remain in India at Partition rather than migrate to Pakistan where they feared domination by Sunni groups. *Pakeezah*'s director, Kamal Amrohi, belonged to one such family. Amrohi was a Shi'i Muslim from eastern India. Born in 1918, he must have undergone some of Partition's pulls and pushes, eventually having to choose between India and Pakistan. Amrohi chose India and worked in Bombay as a commercial filmmaker, the deeply traditional and the vibrantly modern blending in his life, evident in his art and business. The opening moments of *Pakeezah*, however, probe the fate of those who stepped out, having made decisions under tremendous stress, who escaped from the known and limited to the dreamed-of but unknown. Amrohi seems to ponder what happened to them. Could escape be possible when made by compulsion and little knowledge? Could enormous pressures on judgment, timing, and choice in fact lead characters from one "hell" to another, eventually entering what *Pakeezah* describes as "*maut ka bhayanak jungal*," a dreadful forest of death?

It is in this "forest of death" that Nargis breathes her last, strangely calm, oddly passive. This passivity has its story to tell. Blanchot (1995, 28) writes: "Passive are the throes of dying … which we cannot evoke except as wild, unnarratable history." Nargis becomes what Blanchot (1995, 28) calls an "un-story" of history and dies unsung, unaccepted, unacknowledged. Only her sister, Nawabjaan, seeks her, arriving too late for Nargis to voice her pain. Heartbroken by Nargis's death, Nawabjaan has her buried and takes her infant daughter away, back into the familiar world of the *bazaar* and *kotha* from which Nargis had attempted to escape. Interestingly, the character of Nawabjaan resembles the courtesans of Lucknow described by Oldenburg (1991) who writes of such women being self-aware property-holders (owning, apart from their own and others' bodies, buildings, jewelry, land, etc.), knowledgeable about literature, art, and politics, powerful within their families, and exercising agency in their lives.

Several years pass. Shahab is now tired and ill but has left his home for good and is searching for Nargis. He receives a letter from her, gone astray many years ago, written just before her death. In this, Nargis asks him to look after their child. Shahab tracks his daughter down to Nawabjaan's *kotha* in Delhi but it is a little late. The young girl, Sahibjaan, has become a courtesan and her aunt sarcastically requests Shahab to "rescue" his daughter after her evening's performance. When Shahab arrives the next morning, he finds the girl and her aunt have left for an undisclosed location.

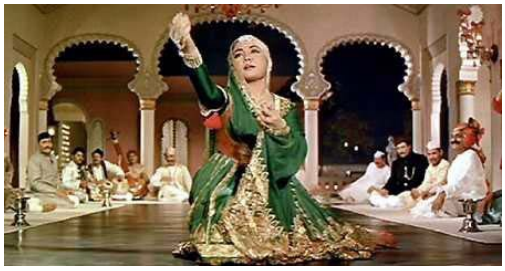
The previous evening however, the young Sahibjaan sings a devastating song at her *mujra* (musical performance), blaming the onlookers for her disrobing and dishonor. The song, "*Inhi logon ne le leena dupatta mera*" (these are the people who snatched at my veil), is seemingly flirtatious but carries a certain ominous quality as Sahibjaan points out a dyer, a shop-keeper, and a policeman as among those who tore at her veil. The allegations are explosive in the context of Partition and the mass violations of women that occurred. Veena Das (2007, 24) quotes, "In her memoirs of this period Kamlabehn Patel reports … 'in those days it wasn't prudent to trust any male, not even policemen as far as the safety of women was concerned'." Within *Pakeezah*, Sahibjaan's song suggests ordinary, regular folk could dishonor a woman and enjoy the spectacle made. If the woman played along, she

held a besmirched sexual power. If she resisted, she attained the victimhood of violation. Either way, the dishonor and impurity involved were entirely hers. The implications of "*Inhi logon ne*," coming on the heels of Partition, its gendered violence and the post-facto debate around the recovery of dishonored women and their reinsertion into their legitimate communities, are radical in their suggestion, extraordinary in their mutedness.



Pakeezah (still): Sahibjaan singing and dancing in a Delhi *kotha*. The scene is remarkable for its coordination between Meena Kumari's twirling and the simultaneous twirling of other anonymous courtesans in various parts of the *bazaar* background.

Sahibjaan does not sing for long in Delhi. Fearing another crushing social rejection in store, her aunt takes her to Lucknow where the young courtesan's beauty catches the fancy of a rich *nawab* (feudal lord). Most interestingly, this *nawab* is not an Awadhi local; he is Sardar Hashim Khan, "*raees-e-alam Panipat*," a wealthy dignitary from the Punjab. Fought over in the run-up to Partition-Independence, Panipat was among areas partitioned in 1966 from post-independence Indian Punjab to create the Hindi-speaking state of Haryana in India. The choice of Panipat as the *nawab*'s home is significant considering that three major battles were fought there, each considered decisive for India coming conclusively under Mughal rule. The weaving of *Pakeezah*'s plot along locations central to Partition (Delhi, Lucknow, Punjab) and a deeply disputed Indo-Islamic history is an unmistakable thread running through the entire film.



Pakeezah (still): Sahibjaan performs at a *mujra* in Lucknow. Housed in an exclusive *haveli*, Sahibjaan is now a much more solitary figure than when located in the Delhi *bazaar*.

There is another unambiguous thread running through the story of *Pakeezah*: this is of modernity, freedom, and possibility. In *Pakeezah*, these are symbolized by a train and all its paraphernalia, railways stations, rail tracks, bridges, and train carriages. Each of these becomes a site for the meeting between a world of Muslim tradition, and its known religious-political economy, and a new world, which is apparently secular, legalized, mapped, yet free. Significantly, the train became an ambiguous symbol for Partition itself, transporting masses across new borders towards and away

from home, becoming battlegrounds for murder, rape, looting, and sabotage, stages for attack, protection, and relief.

In the train's world of motion and flux, Sahibjaan longs to escape the known. While asleep on the train from Delhi to Lucknow, she is seen by a stranger who, unaware of her courtesan status, writes her a note complimenting the beauty of her feet. Patricia Uberoi (1997) analyzes the "podo-erotics" of popular Bombay cinema from the 1950s onwards, when kissing and other physical displays of passion were not allowed on screen by the Censor Board. The depiction of feet took on an especially tantalizing aspect and Uberoi analyzes another prominent Meena Kumari film, *Sahib, Bibi aur Ghulam* (The Master, the Lady and the Slave, 1962) in this light. In *Pakeezah*, this event shakes Sahibjaan's world, making her aware of its tight limitations while suddenly introducing her to the romance of the unknown.

Pakeezah (still): Sahibjaan reads the note left in her train carriage by a stranger. Significantly, the station her train has stopped at is Suhagpur, literally translated as "marriage town."

While previously content to be pretty and petulantly appreciative of the attentions showered upon her, Sahibjaan changes. Her aspect becomes restless, her manner distracted. Sahibjaan is enchanted by modernity's metaphor, the train. While dancing before the Panipat *nawab* in Lucknow, she breaks off mid-song and rushes to a terrace to see a train making its way across the horizon, puffing clouds of dark smoke into an orange sky, shrieking triumphantly. When her cousin points out the futility of her dreams, Sahibjaan tries to accept the fate of the courtesan and is sent on a pleasure cruise with the *nawab*. However, his boat is destroyed by rampaging elephants and she is the sole survivor of the episode and floats, untouched and unconscious, to the riverbank.

Here, she finds a well-appointed tent containing no people but books with the handwriting of the man who had penned the note in the train. She is delighted and stays, expectant of his return, singing to herself of "climes of love," enjoying, for the first time, the delights of solitude and space. Eventually, the man returns; he is a forest officer called Salim. A noble youth in love with the beautiful stranger he had earlier glimpsed, Salim accepts Sahibjaan's story of having lost her memory along with the responsibility of protecting her. That Salim is a forest officer is significant. He is a government officer, a citizen with the duties of a modern, technocratic, secular state. He is entrusted with the responsibility of forests, with mapping and controlling jungles, a task that could not hold more meaning against the backdrop of Partition and the wildness that ensued over territory, the turning of man into beast. Salim stands for the precise opposite and aftermath of Partition, for an identity based on legality and order, a mind that appreciates romance but abhors a loss of control, a lack of cleanness, an end to calmness.

Linked together by trains, reading, writing, and the poetic silence of glimpses, Salim's postcolonial perfection meets Sahibjaan's precolonial passion. Such is the devotion she arouses in him that he refuses to abandon her even as his family (not knowing that Sahibjaan is Salim's uncle Shahab's daughter) rebukes him for escorting an unknown woman. Salim is not discouraged even when Sahibjaan confesses the truth about being a courtesan. There occurs a messy scene on a street when Sahibjaan is molested by a former client. Salim fights the man, the fracas culminating in a crowd jeering the couple as they are led to a police station. The officer in charge lets Salim off, regretfully noting a government official's involvement in the "lowly" matter. Sahibjaan is utterly traumatized by the incident. Salim's desire to marry her, and his renaming her as Pakeezah, further fuel her confusion and self-hatred. Abandoning Salim at a mosque, she runs away hysterically, shrieking her refusal to marry him, leaving him bereft, her veil caught on a tree.

Pakeezah (still): Sahibjaan is taunted by a mob on the street.

Pakeezah (still): Salim is left desolate after Sahibjaan abandons him before their marriage in a mosque.

Sahibjaan re-enters the known world of the *kotha*. Her trauma has barely subsided when she receives a note from Salim. He has also re-entered the traditional world of his family and acquiesced to an arranged marriage. In a note dripping anguished sarcasm, he requests her, a famous courtesan, to dance at his wedding. The next scene shows Salim, bedecked as a bridegroom, presumably awaiting his marriage, wondering if he can bear the sight of Sahibjaan's feet pirouetting before an audience in his home. Sahibjaan, however, is resplendent in her vengefulness. She sings and dances to perfection initially, mocking Salim with words of terrible love, challenging him to see "a wounded heart," to face "this awful night of killing passion." Once again, Sahibjaan sings brightly of that which cannot be mentioned, of the liminal, of transgression and heart-searing punishment. Salim cannot bear her song and melts away into the homestead.

Devastated by his exit (into a place she cannot enter), Sahibjaan goes into a dervish-like state and twirls madly before the audience, her feet, cut by broken glass, leaving bloodied imprints in the courtyard. In her troupe, her aunt cannot tolerate the sight. As Sahibjaan collapses, an angered Nawabjaan reveals Sahibjaan's antecedents to Salim's assembled relations including his uncle Shahab and the family patriarch, Baba-jaani. Shahab rushes to his daughter but the patriarch cannot bear this insult to the family's honor and tries to shoot Sahibjaan. Shahab takes the shot; as he lies dying, Salim promises to wed his daughter honorably. For this, Nawabjaan insists the marriage party must come to the *kotha* itself.

The film ends with a tremendous scene. The bustling *bazaar* is hushed for once as Salim's marriage party walks through it, accompanied by his grandfather led in chains by the police and a flower-covered bier bearing the body of Shahab. The marriage takes place with Sahibjaan, now voiceless, tucked away in a palanquin. Salim leads the procession away after a *qazi* (Islamic judge) has recited a prayer over the entire street. Thus, Sahibjaan is finally given the honor her mother had yearned for, the recognition that, Indian politicians argued post-Partition, was due to women who had been "recovered," the respectful reclaiming by society of a "dishonored" woman as "pure." This is seemingly a happy ending.

Yet, *Pakeezah* carries with it a final dilemma. Why is Sahibjaan, the famous songstress, the glorious singer of the unspeakable, made silent at the end, at her wedding, at her departure? Why does the woman who could shriek her refusal at her lover and charm the world with her music remain silent on the happiest and saddest day of her life? Does her new status as Pakeezah, the pure one, demand her silence?

Pakeezah (still): Sahibjaan sings provokingly of the 'wounds' of love in Salim's courtyard, mentioning all that cannot be said.

Pakeezah (still): Sahibjaan is now the married and voiceless Pakeezah.

"Modesty" does indeed demand the end of Sahibjaan and her songs, suggests the film, depicting the heavy sanction given by religion, law, the state, and society to this wedding conducted by men in a *kotha*. But *Pakeezah* provides a final bit of double-speak, as it were. In Sahibjaan's silence, we see a reflection of Blanchot's words (1995, 4): "It is not you who will speak; let the disaster speak in you, even if it be by your … silence." Sahibjaan's silence, as she is taken from the *kotha* to a presumed life of honor, does not erase the disasters that befell her (and by extension, her mother). Her silence marks these even more strongly, distributing culpability while also fearing reception. Sahibjaan's silence and Pakeezah's muteness are inaudible cinematic memoirs resonating with the injustice of disasters that befell women, "dishonored" by men, removed from and reinserted at will into "honorable" society. In this way, *Pakeezah*, apparently set in a perfumed world of courtesans, *nawab*s, poetry and *haveli*s, is in fact constantly shaken by the shadows of Partition, presenting a powerful, ambiguous, and silent interpretation of the same. In this way also, perhaps, part of the ghostly dynamics of Partition within the Bombay cinema industry can be explained as "voiced" by silence and characterized by "the unspeakable," depicted thus in a cinematic culture marked by speech, celebration, ethics, and song.

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Representations: Memoirs, Autobiographies, Biographies: Writing in Another Language: Iranians Writing in English

INTRODUCTION

Memoirs by Iranian women in exile began to appear in the West shortly after the 1979 Revolution. Many of the earliest of these memoirs were accounts by Iranian women who were either members of prominent families or (in)famous in their own right. These include *My Thousand and One Days* (1978) by Farah Pahlavi, the former Empress of Iran; *Faces in the Mirror: Memoirs from Exile* (1980) by Ashraf Pahlavi, the late Shah's twin sister; singer Shusha Guppy's *The Blindfold Horse: Memories of a Persian Childhood* (1988); *A Persian Childhood* (1990) by Pari Courtauld, daughter of a famous political figure; *Le Palais des solitudes* (1991) by Soraya Esfandiari Bakhtiari, the second wife of Mohammad Reza Shah; and *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey From Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution* (1992) by Sattareh Farman Farmaian, who was a daughter of a prominent Qajar nobleman. By the mid-1990s, a series of memoirs by Iranian women, neither famous nor infamous, began to appear, including Mehry M. Reid and Thomas R. Reid's *Snake's Marble: A Persian Memoir* (1996), Rouhi Shafii's *Scent of Saffron: Three Generations of an Iranian Family* (1997), Tara Bahrampour's *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America* (1999), Gelareh Asayesh's *Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America* (1999), Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* series (the first of which was published in 2001), Nesta Ramazani's *The Dance of the Rose and the Nightingale* (2002), and Firoozeh Dumas's *Funny in Farsi* (2003). These diasporic memoirs and autobiographies began to receive a great deal of critical attention, as a distinct genre, mostly after the publication and unprecedented popularity of Azar Nafisi's 2003 *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, a memoir focused on a clandestine book club devoted to canonical texts of Western literature, run by Nafisi at her Tehran home and attended by seven of her former students. Nafisi's memoir was translated into more than thirty languages and remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for over one hundred weeks. It encouraged a great deal of focus on Islamic women's memoirs, ranging from accolades to outright indictments.

MARKETING, RECEPTION, CONSUMPTION

The publishing industry has taken notice of Nafisi's success and greenlighted a host of diasporic Iranian women's memoirs. Among these are Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (2004), Farideh Goldin's *Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (2004), Azadeh Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005) and *Honeymoon in Tehran: Two Years of Love and Danger in Iran* (2009), Afschineh Latifi's *Even After All This Time: A Story of Love, Revolution, and Leaving Iran* (2005), Nahid Rachlin's *Persian Girls* (2006), Fatemeh Keshavarz's *Jasmine and Stars: Reading More Than Lolita in Tehran* (2007), Azar Nafisi's *Things I've been Silent About: Memories* (2008), and Firoozeh Dumas's *Laughing Without an Accent: Adventures of an Iranian-American, at Home and Abroad* (2008).

Marketing blurbs as well as coverage of the memoirs by a range of press sources highlight the ways in which these works are being marketed and read as sites of knowledge formation about Iran and the treatment of women under the Islamic regime, and through a further series of logical slippages, as accounts of the role of women within the "Islamic world" more generally. The Random House catalog description of Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No* notes that Hakakian relates "what life was like for women after the country fell into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists who had declared an insidious war against them." The blurb offered on Public Affairs Books, the publisher of Azadeh Moaveni's first memoir, indicates that the book "is also the story of Iran, a restive land lost

in the twilight of its revolution" and that "Moaveni paints a rare portrait of Iran's rebellious next generation." Reviews of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* also betray the tendency for American reviewers to take the singular personal account of one woman's experiences of living in Iran as an authoritative report on women's lives in the Islamic Republic. The *Yale Review of Books* indicates that Nafisi's account helps "place the reader into the context of Iranian history." The *New York Times Book Review* indicates that Nafisi's text clearly shows that "the government and its morality police told people what they could read, what they could wear, how they should behave." *USA Today* most problematically declares, based solely on Nafisi's text: "Here, young women are often rounded up for humiliating virginity checks at local clinics. Girls can be married off at the age of 9, and in the rare case of a divorce, men always get custody of the children." The paperback edition of *Reading Lolita in Tehran* now includes a reading guide with discussion questions, soliciting responses from readers and students based on the contents of Nafisi's personal account. One of the questions asks, and thus seems to assume that the contents of the memoir provide readers with a basis to answer: "To what extent are the supporters of a revolution responsible for its unintended results?"

Though the memoir, as genre, is very much the inscription of personal memories in narrative form, necessarily limited, contingent, and entirely subjective, the marketing, reception, and consumption of diasporic Iranian women's memoirs have largely represented them as definitive or "authentic" invocations of a particular culture, nation, or religious formation. These memoirs are often read as the narrative of not only the self that writes, but as representative of the ultimate social, cultural, and political context of an Other. The readiness with which articles on and reviews of Iranian-American women's memoirs read these singular accounts as objective accounts of events, testifies to a willingness or desire for an imagined monolithic and homogenous Other, or to put it more simply, for the singular account to provide an entrée into an "authentic" perspective on Iran or the Islamic world and its relation to women. Ironically, this desire for authenticity is not complemented with a parallel curiosity about what is published in Persian in or outside Iran.

A few theorists and writers have recently provided critiques of the ways in which the singular accounts of Iranian or Muslim women, particularly those written in English, have become privileged sites of knowledge production about territories deemed unfamiliar and through which the imagined and static Other is inscribed as knowable. While some critiques have challenged the authenticity of these accounts, others have decried the uses that have been made of them for political, and indeed imperial, objectives, and accused the writers of performing the role of comprador intellectuals, whose accounts provide ready tools in the hands of empire.

CRITIQUES OF IRANIAN WOMEN'S MEMOIRS

In a 2004 article entitled "Off the Grid: Reading Iranian Memoirs in Our Time of Total War," published in *Middle East Report*, Negar Mottahedeh argues that "it cannot be coincidental that the memoirs by Iranian female authors now living in the West, such as those of Firoozeh Dumas, Marjane Satrapi and Azar Nafisi, have found such phenomenal commercial success at a time when Washington hawks would like these authors' country of birth to be the next battleground in the total war of the twenty-first century." She goes further: "it seems undeniable that *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and its author have been promoted, at least in part, to fulfill the ends of total war." Clearly concerned about the appropriation of these accounts for political purposes, Mottahedeh's argument operates not as an indictment of the genre, but as a critique of the use of women's narratives as representative of a static state of affairs, and the appropriation of these memoirs and accounts of women's oppression in the promotion of "total war."

In a June 2006 article published in *al-Ahram*, Hamid Dabashi provides a bitter indictment of memoirs written by individuals from Islamic backgrounds since 11 September 2001, taking Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* as an emblematic case. Pointing to memoirs as a site for the formation of selective memory, he argues that particular accounts by individuals lacking any formal credibility, except for the blood-ties to the nation they critique, frame "legitimate concerns about the plight of Muslim women in the Islamic world and yet put that predicament squarely at the service of the US ideological psy-op, militarily stipulated in the US global warmongering." He argues that these "native informers turned comprador intellectuals" perform the labor of constructing totalizing narratives of oppression that justify United States imperial designs abroad, and by selectively drawing upon personal accounts divorced of history or context of any kind, occlude genuine sites and histories of (local) resistance and erase them in favor of simplified and entertaining stories of oppressed masses passively awaiting their rescue by benevolent forces from without." Specifically, Dabashi accuses Azar Nafisi's text of denigrating the history of revolutionary resistance in Iran and provoking the "Oriental fantasies" of her readers by foregrounding the "liberatory" power of "Western Classics" for the exoticized figure of the native in desperate need of Western intervention. Perhaps most importantly, Dabashi notes that the "comprador intellectual speaks with the voice of authenticity, nativity, Orientalized oddity. He is from 'there,' and she 'knows what she is talking about,' and thus their voices carry the authority of a native informer." Though Dabashi's specific critiques are exclusively based on Nafisi's text and her personal connections to the upper echelon of the neoconservative elite, he performs a totalizing gesture indicting the genre *en masse* as a "strategy of selective memory," which bolsters and is bolstered by the collective amnesia that facilitates the labor and expansion of an imperial war.

Shortly after Dabashi's article appeared in *al-Ahram*, a manifesto was published by Niki Akhavan, Golbarg Bashi, Mana Kia and Sima Shakhsari on *ZNet* entitled "A Genre in the Service of Empire: An Iranian Feminist Critique of Diasporic Memoirs." In it the authors decry Iranian women's memoirs: "These women's memoirs have assumed center-stage in appropriating the legitimate cause of women's rights and placing it squarely in the service of Empire building projects, disguised under the rhetoric of the 'war on terror.'" While questioning the degree to which the memoirs are complicit with larger United States imperial projects, the authors of the article identify the genre as "a part of industries of knowledge-production that reinforce and fuel the gendered and raced context of global capitalist relations, where the binarized notions of 'freedom' and 'progress' in the 'West' are juxtaposed to 'backwardness' and 'barbarism' in Iran and in the rest of the Muslim world." The authors of the article argue that the rescue fantasy of colonial "civilizing missions" have been replaced by the fantasy that the international publishing industry has provided a forum for the "silenced" Iranian woman and given her a voice with which to speak. The authors note that "women selected according to the resonance of their experience within this narrative become the mouthpiece for the 'authentic' Iranian experience, making the current construction of the 'rescue fantasy' more insidious than ever."

CRITIQUES OF MEMOIR GENRE

These critiques cannot easily be unpacked from critiques of the memoir genre more generally. Much has recently been written about the surge in the publication and popularity of memoirs in the United States over the last decade and as Lorraine Adams points out in an article in *Washington Monthly*, there are more and more memoirs being published about "nobodies" – "those who are neither generals, statesmen, celebrities nor their kin." In an article entitled *What Memoir Forgets* that appeared

in the *Nation*, Patrick Smith offers a denunciation of memoirs, especially those that embrace the personal over the historical. He refers to the memoir trend as not only a publishing ruse to gain readership but as an intellectual and cultural fraud. Smith's critique is a condemnation of memoirs that are overly self-reflective and celebrate the author's singularity with a "pretense of historical commentary," which he argues thereby devalue history by making it private (Smith 1998, 31). His claim is that this exhibits a particularly American anxiety about history that does violence to it by cordoning it off within the narrative of the private – a tendency to provide a history without memory – "a grand but incomplete postwar narrative" that eschews the "exchange implicit in artistic creation in favor of passivity and voyeurism" (Smith 1998, 32). Finally, he concludes that the "purely personal is not the stuff of the memoir but its enemy" and that the "trick is to embrace history, not oneself" (Smith 1998, 33).

Clearly, Smith's critique shows a particular kind of anxiety about a genre that is neither exclusively fiction nor evokes history. He decries the lack of historicity of the memoir, taking for granted what an authentically historical narrative would entail. We can see a similar ambiguity in Dabashi's critique of memoirs of individuals from Islamic backgrounds. In an interview published in *ZNet* entitled *Lolita and Beyond*, Dabashi says:

In the "Native Informer" essay in particular, I wanted to see how the notion of an empire with no hegemony operates, and it seems to me that dismantling the very notion of history and the fabrication of instant stories to fill its vacuum is one way of sustaining the imperial momentum. This to me in part explains the dearth of historical narratives and abundance of personal memoirs which remains at a very superficial and entirely self-indulgent level.

The generalized and uncritical valorization of historical narrative deployed as a critique of the memoir is a most curious rhetorical move on the part of each commentator: Smith critiques the memoir that is not historical enough, while Dabashi takes issue with how the memoir has filled out the space of the historical narrative. There seem to be two underlying assumptions in both critiques: that there is an authentic historical account that ought to be represented; and the memoir, as a genre, fails to provide it. What is interesting to note here is that it is precisely when the memoir is read as generalized historical account, thus when it coheres to Smith's demands of the genre, that the memoir genre runs against Dabashi's critique – that, indeed, the attempt to universalize the individual account of the memoir leads to a reading of the work as that of a native informant.

In an article entitled *American Memoirs*, Carolyn Heilbrun notes that rarely has a genre inspired the kind of rhetorical abuse hurled at the contemporary memoir, suggesting that the predominance of women in the genre may have something to do with the vitriol against it. She connects these critiques to a general suspicion that the autobiography has become feminized – "plaintive and excessively personal, and therefore threatening" (Heilbrun 1999, 35). Against these critiques, she argues that the memoir is a way in which the untold truths of women's lives are finally recorded, offering compelling shared narratives to women from otherwise different situations. She concludes: "because many current women's memoirs deal with questions that society has preferred to leave unexamined, some of these memoirs shock us, and, becoming best-sellers, provoke male disgust and impatience" (Heilbrun 1999, 39). Following Heilbrun's argument, it is not too far-fetched to suppose that at least some of the scrutiny that Iranian women's memoirs have received is not entirely unrelated to the fact that it remains a genre filled out by women and women's voices.

WOMEN'S VOICES

Writing in 1990, a few years before the proliferation of Iranian women's memoirs in the West, Farzaneh Milani argues that "Iranians, who have been fascinated with Western literary traditions for the last hundred and fifty years, have basically turned their backs on autobiographies" despite the fact that Persian literature abounds in the self-reflexivity of the genre (Milani 1990, 2). A few pages later she notes: "By the same token that autobiographies are a conspicuously lacking commodity, women, who have been deliberately, if not obsessively, kept away from the arena of public life and discourse, have a still more restrained relation to public self-representation" (Milani 1990, 4). By drawing a relationship between veiling as a practice and the metaphoric veiling of women's voices and perspectives, Milani notes that "[i]n a culture where walls and veils abound, where a woman is expected to cover her body as she is presumed to conceal her voice, in a sexually segregated society where access to her world and words is rather limited—in short, in a society where the concept of honor is built around a woman's virginity, the token of her inaccessibility—autobiographies with their assertive self-displays and self-attention cannot easily flourish" (Milani 1990, 5-6).

Regardless of whether we are willing to read the emergence of diasporic Iranian women's memoirs as a kind of release from a mandated cultural silence, the popularity of the genre and the increasing demand for accounts of women from various religious and economic strata of Iranian-American society can be read as an important means by which women have been increasingly able to control their voices and share their intimate accounts with a wider audience. The central problem with the appropriation of these voices is not necessarily the quality or content of the accounts themselves, but the willingness of audiences and critics alike to read the singularity of each account as representative of larger, static cultural norms and national political formations. The diasporic memoir is merely another site in which the Other is constructed – through which the territory of the imagined homogenous and static Other is inscribed. Indeed, without either the screen of fiction that accompanies the novel or the citational demands of history, the memoir remains a medium, but by no means the exclusive site, through which an account of the self is read as the narrative of larger political and cultural contexts. In indicting the genre as a whole critics fail to recognize that Iranian women's memoirs, like all literature, are incredibly diverse, ranging from the poorly-written and melodramatic to the nuanced, thoughtful, and gracefully constructed. What seems to be homogenous is not the genre itself, but the way in which these memoirs are read and sold as the narrative of not only the self that writes, but as a caption for the always imagined Other.

> Note: Parts of this entry appear in S. F. Bennett, The politics of appropriation. Writing, responsibility, and the specter of the native informant, in *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 54 (forthcoming).

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Laboring Practices: Southeast Asia

INTRODUCTION

The relatively high level of economic activity of women in Southeast Asia is invariably contrasted with women's low level of engagement in work outside the home in the predominantly Muslim societies of the Middle East. Although mainstream Islamic teachings do not forbid work outside the home, many Muslims believe that women's main focus must be on caring for their families. Yet while religiously-inspired discourses about women's primary roles as wives and mothers have influenced the way Muslim women in Southeast Asia think about paid work, Muslim women's sustained engagement in all kinds of economic activity outside the home suggests that this is not necessarily any more the case than for other religious and ethnic groups in the region.
The Malay communities of Southeast Asia constitute a substantial proportion of the world's Muslim population. The Philippines and Thailand have significant Muslim minorities, and tiny Brunei is effectively a Malay-Muslim society. However, the three countries that constitute the heartland of Muslim Southeast Asia are Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, and neighboring Malaysia and Singapore. Around 86 percent of Indonesians, 60 percent of Malaysians and 15 percent of Singaporeans are Muslim. Although Malay Muslims represent only a relatively small proportion of the population of Singapore, they have a structurally prominent role as the recognized "first inhabitants" of the island and the second largest of three main ethnic communities in the modern city-state.

INDONESIA

Most Muslim women in Southeast Asia live in Indonesia. Of a total working-age female population of over 82 million in 2008, 42.7 million Indonesian women were in the workforce, broken down as 38.7 million in jobs and about 4 million looking for work. This represented a labor force participation rate of around 52 percent for women, significantly lower than the male participation rate of 83.8 percent. In 2008, 43 percent of all employed women in Indonesia were engaged in agricultural work; around 27 percent were involved in trade; and around 14 percent in manufacturing. Despite their considerably lower workforce participation rate, according to government figures, women represented over one third of agricultural workers, over a half of all those involved in trade, and almost 43 percent of manufacturing workers.

Importantly, the difference in workforce participation rates by sex in Indonesia cannot be attributed to differences in educational attainment. Although around 54 percent of all Indonesian women of working age did not have a junior high school education, 49 percent of all Indonesian men in the same age group also had not completed junior high school. In terms of post-school education, women and men were almost equally represented among those with some kind of tertiary training. This remarkable level of educational equality at the higher levels flows on to occupational spread. In 2008, more than 45 percent of all those employed in professional or technical occupations were female, representing 5.6 percent of all employed women (as opposed to just 4 percent of all employed men).

These statistics reflect a significant shift over the second half of the twentieth century in the paid work women do in Indonesia from subsistence agriculture to secondary industry and services. From precolonial times, women have had a relatively high level of involvement in remunerative activities through agriculture, cottage industry, and trade. Although there were significant regional variations,

it was not unusual for aristocratic and wealthy women and the wives of bureaucrats, as well as peasants, to be involved in a range of economic activities. The most remarkable change in women's work since independence (1945) has been the rapid shift from these traditional forms of remunerative activity to waged work. For women, this shift was particularly noticeable after the introduction of export-oriented industrialization policies in the mid to late 1980s, when the feminized labor-intensive light manufacturing sector began to grow. Of the 8.2 million workers employed in manufacturing in 1990, 3.6 million were women, whereas in the same year, the total workforce in Indonesia numbered 46 million men and just 25 million women. A large number of poorer women also work in the urban informal sector, earning money through activities such as petty trade.

It should be noted, however, that women's involvement in the paid workforce continues to vary considerably by region in Indonesia, as indeed it does in Malaysia. However, variations in female labor participation patterns across the archipelago reflect local economic circumstances and cultural patterns more systematically than religion. During the New Order period (1966–98), historically poor provinces with a traditionally high level of female labor market participation maintained those levels while wealthier regions with a history of fewer females participating in the labor market tended to preserve those patterns. As of 2003, female labor force participation varied from 31 percent in Sulawesi to 57 percent in the areas of Indonesia outside of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. In that year, females comprised only 28 percent of all employed persons in Sulawesi, around 34 percent of all employed persons in Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan and 41 percent of all employed persons in the other islands of Indonesia. These differences do not follow religious lines. For example, the historically low participation rates of Muslim Sundanese (West Java) and Betawi (from the region around Jakarta) women in non-domestic work are mirrored in the low contemporary female labor participation rates of local women in the Greater Jakarta area, despite the strong presence of female-dominated export-oriented industries in that region. By contrast, Javanese and Minangkabau women from West Sumatra – the majority of whom are also Muslim – have traditionally been very active economically and, in many cases, continue to provide the primary source of income for their families.

MALAYSIA

Malaysia has a much smaller labor market than its giant neighbor, with a total workforce that numbered just under 10.3 million in 2006. The female labor force participation rate has grown significantly over the years, from 26 percent in 1957–60 to 45.7 percent in 2006, compared to a labor force participation rate of 79.9 percent for men in that year. Writing in the early 1990s, Lim (1992) has argued that the patriarchal heritage of all major cultural groups in Malaysia means that it is rare for women of any religious community to be expected to become the main breadwinner. She notes also that until industrialization gained pace in the 1980s, the Malays were also the least sex-segregated in terms of occupation. Indeed, Lim claims that the Chinese community not only had the lowest rates of female labor participation historically but continued to be the most gender-biased of the major ethnic groups in Malaysia when it came to paid work.

As of 2002, the labor force participation rate for Malaysian women of all ethnic groups peaked between the ages of 24 and 29, reflecting a national tendency for women to cease work after marriage. Of *bumiputera* women – a category that includes Malay-Muslim women but also other "indigenous" groups – in the 24–29 age bracket, 61.9 percent were active in the labor market, as compared to 73.4 percent of Chinese women, 60.8 percent of Indian women and 96.7 percent of

Malay men. Using data from the 1988 Family Life Survey, Amin and Alam (2008) found that at that time 31.7 percent of all married Muslim women and 64.8 percent of all single Muslim women living in Malaysia were in paid employment, compared with 36.5 percent of married Buddhist women and 88.8 percent of single Buddhist women (who are predominantly Chinese) and 47.7 percent of married Hindu women and 66.3 percent of single Hindu women (most of whom are Indian).

Of the approximately 3.8 million women in the Malaysian labor force in 2006, 96.6 percent were currently employed. The greatest number of women worked in manufacturing, where they represented 39 percent of the workforce. However, the most female-dominated sectors were education, health and social work, and home-based employment. This compares with the late 1950s, when over 80 percent of women were employed in agriculture and women represented just 16.4 percent of manufacturing workers.

As in Indonesia, women's improved access to education in recent decades is reflected in their vastly improved representation in professional and technical positions. Data from the Second Malaysian Family Life Survey of 1988 suggests that, among Malaysian women, Muslims have undergone the highest number of years of education of any religious group. In 2006, 26.1 percent of all working women were employed in professional or technical occupations, a figure virtually on a par with the percentage of working men in those same categories. Of all working women in Malaysia, 23.8 percent had a primary school education or less, while 24.5 percent had some tertiary education. By comparison, 25 percent of working Malaysian men had no more than a primary school education and 16.3 percent had attended a tertiary institution.

SINGAPORE

In 2008, the tiny island nation of Singapore had a resident population of around 3.6 million, just under a half a million of whom were Malays. Malay women, who represent the vast majority of Muslim women in Singapore, had a workforce participation rate of 43.4 percent as of 2005. In the same year, the workforce participation rate of Malay males was 73.6 percent, while the workforce participation rates of Chinese and Indian women were 53.9 percent and 47.1 percent respectively. The greatest gap between the labor force participation rates of men and women in any ethnic category was among Indians, while the smallest gap existed between Chinese men and women. Almost 30 percent of Malay women were employed in occupations associated with community, social, and personal services, followed by manufacturing, business services, and retail and wholesale trade, while the largest numbers of Malay men were employed in community, social, and personal services, followed by transport and storage, business services, and manufacturing.

Singaporean Malays of both sexes have a lower rate of educational attainment than either Chinese or Indians resident in the city-state. Around 35.6 percent of Malay women over the age of 15 had failed to complete junior high school (as opposed to one quarter of Malay men). Of Malay women over 15 years old, 10.9 percent had a post-secondary education, a figure that suggests that 3 percent more Malay women go on to further study than Malay men. By comparison, 31.5 percent of Chinese women and 26.2 percent of Indian women had less than a junior high school education, while 29.1 percent of Chinese women and 32.5 percent of Indian women held post-secondary qualifications. Although Chinese women obtain a much higher level of education than Malay women, the greatest gap by sex in the completion of post-secondary education within a single ethnic group was amongst the Chinese resident population, where 13 percent fewer women were represented than men.

These educational differences between women of different ethnic groups are reflected in their occupational spread. As of 2005, 25 percent of working Malay women were employed as senior officials, managers, professionals, and technicians in comparison to 46 percent of working Chinese women and 41 percent of working Indian women. The proportion of Malay, Chinese, and Indian men working in these occupational categories were 19 percent, 48 percent, and 50 percent respectively. As these figures also suggest, however, Malay women are better-represented in more prestigious occupational categories than Malay men.

EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

Over the last few decades, women of all ethnic and religious backgrounds in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have made the shift from traditional forms of economic activity to waged work, increasingly finding employment in traditionally male-dominated sectors of the economy and in new kinds of occupations. Of particular importance in the Indonesian and Malaysian contexts was the rapid industrialization that took place in the late twentieth century. At a time when the green revolution and increased mechanization of wet rice agriculture had eliminated many of the tasks traditionally undertaken by rural women, foreign investors began establishing the factories that drew many Muslim women away from the villages into the urban industrial workforce for the first time.

These working-class women were employed predominantly in low-skilled positions in the light manufacturing industries, and in particular garments and footwear, the industries that underpinned both Indonesia's and Malaysia's forays into export-oriented industrialization in the last three decades of the twentieth century. Hours were long and working conditions poor, but paid work far from the protective influence of their families gave hundreds of thousands of young Muslim women economic independence and access to the trappings of modernity in the industrial heartlands of Indonesia and Malaysia. For some women, work in the factories provided a transition to marriage or to other kinds of work. However, for some, including a number of single women interviewed by Vicki Crinis (2004) between 1995 and 2000, factory work provided a career, as they progressed from operator to floor manager or supervisor, and provided sufficient savings that they were able to independently purchase a home.

During the early years of industrialization, the increased independence of young women working in factories in Indonesia and Malaysia gave rise to a public discourse concerning their behavior and morality. Although unmarried Malay women have a long tradition of working in the public sphere in both countries, anxieties developed in rural communities and industrial dormitory suburbs regarding the dress and behavior of single women living and working away from home. In Malaysia, young single Malay women who left their villages to work in the factories came to be described in sexualizing terms, which some scholars have ascribed to a sense of emasculation among Malay men in response to women's increasing economic and social independence. In Indonesia, similar anxieties about factory workers' sexuality were regularly reflected in media reports in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as a special report published in 1991 in the respected news magazine *Tempo* that included assertions that two thousand women became lesbians because they were locked up in their factory dormitories at night.

Export processing zones have played a special role in the production of these images. In the Indonesian case, Johan Lindquist (2008) argues that the island of Batam, the site of large-scale Singaporean investment in the 1990s as part of the Indonesia Malaysia Singapore Growth Triangle initiative (IMS-GT) – which also generated a sizeable sex industry reliant on Singaporean and

Malaysian sex tourists – has been an emblematic site of contestations over female factory workers' sexuality. Export processing zones elsewhere in Indonesia and in Malaysia have also drawn criticisms from religious and community leaders convinced that the large concentrations of single women living in or near them represented a threat to the moral well-being of the community.

Changes in the economy as a result of industrialization and the subsequent growth of tertiary industries also created new white-collar opportunities for women and, as the country figures cited suggest, women are now well-represented in professional and technical occupations. Although they undoubtedly experience a "glass ceiling," women's levels of participation in the senior levels of public service and the private sector – in Malaysia and Singapore at least – are not greatly different from those in many countries in the Anglophone world. In Malaysia, statistics on women in leadership positions suggest that women occupy just under 12 percent of senior decision-making roles in the public sector and 24 percent of executive positions in companies listed with the Malaysian stock exchange. In Australia, a country of a similar size, women hold 36.1 percent of senior executive positions in the public service but only 12 percent of executive managerial positions in the top 200 listed companies. In 2007 in Singapore, 63 percent of senior civil servants were women, who held 22 percent of permanent secretary positions. However, women occupied senior management positions in just 28 percent of the 150 Singaporean corporations included in an international business survey conducted by the company Grant Thornton in the same year. While ethnically differentiated statistics on these groups are not readily available, it is safe to assume that the majority of women in both these leadership groups in Singapore are ethnic Chinese.

FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

One of the factors that makes it possible for educated women in all three countries to achieve a relatively high rate of labor force participation is the fact that wealthier women of all religious backgrounds benefit from high levels of inequality either within their own society, in the case of Indonesia, or within the region, in the case of Singapore and Malaysia. Vast gaps in income and massive unemployment in Indonesia and in other poor Asian countries such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka mean that even the moderately well-off can afford to engage full-time domestic help. As a result, large numbers of poorer women move within their own country or abroad in order to find work not only in the manufacturing sector but also in private homes. As of 2005, there were approximately 150,000 foreign women employed on temporary contracts as domestic workers in Singapore. In December 2002, 209,473 women were officially employed as foreign domestic workers in Malaysia, most of whom were from Indonesia. By June 2006, there were 460,000 documented foreign workers employed in the service sector in Malaysia, the vast majority of whom were domestic workers. In the Malaysian context, many more foreign women are employed in households who have entered Malaysia by channels other than the formal temporary labor migration system.

For wealthier women, the ability to employ a domestic worker diffuses tensions commonly experienced by married working women in less economically differentiated contexts over the division of labor within the household. Unlike women in countries such as Australia, where income disparities are much smaller and there is no mechanism for importing cheap domestic labor, middle-class Indonesians, Malaysians, and Singaporeans do not have to personally undertake day-to-day tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare, instead delegating them to a live-in helper (or helpers). This ability to delegate household tasks makes it possible for women to avoid the repeated arguments over housework often found in two-income households in those industrialized countries

where there is little access to paid domestic labor. It also allows middle-class Muslim women to work outside the home while still formally taking responsibility for the management of the household, as mandated within Islam, but without taking on a "second shift."

By contrast, poorer working women with families must rely on extended family and neighbors for childcare and must complete the bulk of household tasks before they go to work or on their return to the home. Even when their partners accompany them, many Indonesian women who have migrated to the cities for work leave their children with grandparents or other members of their extended family, visiting only irregularly outside the holiday period that surrounds the celebrations at the end of the Muslim fasting month. Given the subsistence level of wages in Indonesian factories and the extremely low payments made to domestic workers within Indonesia, these women often have little money to send home, relying instead on their parents or other relatives to provide for their children and even subsidize their lives in the cities – a practice that was not the case in Malaysia, where Maila Stivens (1987) has argued remittances from the factories supported peasant agriculture.

The situation is both different and similar for those Indonesian women who travel overseas to work on short-term contracts in factories in Malaysia or as domestic workers in Asia or the Middle East. Like internal labor migrants, these women rely on their extended family for childcare, not least because in many cases their spouses are unwilling to take care of their children in their absence. However, although these women are paid very poorly by destination-country standards, their remittances represent a significant economic resource in Indonesia. While some workers return with little or no savings, others – often over the life of several contracts – earn enough to fund new houses and other forms of conspicuous consumption as well as providing an education for their children and, in some cases, sufficient capital to establish a small business on their return to Indonesia.

This dramatic increase in women's earning capacity has the potential to create an equally dramatic shift in the balance of power within working-class households. But women's new-found wealth also brings with it new tensions, including struggles over decisions about how to manage resources and disruptions in relationships between spouses and within extended families caused by women's extended absences. Foreign domestic workers have also been the focus of discourses not dissimilar to those concerning factory workers both because of the risks women face living and working in private households and because of the freedom and anonymity women have when they work overseas. Many returned female labor migrants report that they have been subjected to vicious gossip in their villages as neighbors speculate about their activities abroad.

The morality of these foreign domestic workers is also a matter for comment in the countries where they work. In both Singapore and Malaysia, foreign domestic workers are considered a threat to the moral well-being of the family by seducing male members of the household or by admitting strangers into its private space. Such is the concern about foreign domestic workers' sexuality that Singaporean employers forfeit a security bond if a foreign domestic worker employed by them is found to have become pregnant or to have contracted a sexually transmitted disease while working in Singapore. Many Indonesian women working in Malaysia and Singapore do indeed have relationships while overseas, often with migrant workers from other countries. As Rosslyn von der Borch (2008) has shown in her work on Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore, women often experience deep personal change, which may include some form of sexual awakening, during their

time abroad. These experiences can be personally very fulfilling but also difficult in terms of their effects on their relationships with their families and communities when they finally return home.

CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges that all these forms of paid work bring for the women who engage in them, the fact that so many women have made the transition from traditional forms of economic activity to paid employment has yielded great benefits to them as individuals and to the societies in which they live and work. Wealthy and even lower middle-class Muslim women in the region can achieve a work–life balance that many in the West would envy, given their relatively high access to education and to professional and technical occupations on the one hand and to domestic help on the other. This freedom has given many middle-class women the opportunity to make significant contributions in the public sphere. Ironically, however, this work–life balance can be achieved with relatively little disruption to socially-accepted gender norms and roles within the home itself because of the availability and affordability of domestic help.

Entrenched social inequalities in Southeast Asia mean that working-class women in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines continue to have a very different experience of the work–life balance from wealthier women in their own societies and in richer countries in the region. Many working-class women continue to carry the double burden of paid employment and work within the household under difficult conditions. Yet, in contrast to many of their wealthier counterparts, for some of these women at least, ultimately paid work may provide the life experience and the economic resources necessary to at least begin to renegotiate their gender roles at home as well as in the public sphere.

MICHELE FORD

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