

Abstract

My paper will examine the production of how Islam has been created in discourses of sexuality in its portrayal as a homophobic and an anti feminist religion during the ‘War on Terror.’ My aim is not to delve into the historical, anthropological examination of Islam in its treatment of sexualities. Instead I want to elucidate how the definition of ‘liberalism’ within the Western framework acts as a perpetuation of a stereotype against Islam. In the section titled, “Islamophobia and the Liberal State” and “Disciplining Sexualities,” I will elucidate how women and gay Muslims are the latest symbol of a so called ‘liberal’ West identity. They are the ideological token victims who must be liberated from their ‘barbaric backwards societies’, by means that include political and military violence. In this, Muslim gays are joining Muslim women whose ‘liberation’ as a postcolonial feminists have long argued, has traditionally provided the justification for imperialism.

I will go on in my conclusion to a discussion of bodies as a site for materialization of power and resistance, as it relates to Irigaray’s notion of an ‘Ethics of Sexual Difference.’ This redefinition of politics allows us to encounter ethics not outside the polemos but in the midst of what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls, “differend” (Lyotard, Jean-Francois 1988). By transcending the dilemmas of equality vs. difference, this opposes disembodied character of liberal citizenship. Yet it allows us to put forth a theory of sexual difference that has a political function and ethical relevance for post colonial feminists. By eroticizing ethics into a process that retains duplicity and difference, Irigaray opens the possibility of a postcolonial culture that can retain difference with

Islam, Sexuality and the War on Terror: Luce Irigaray's Post-Colonial Ethics of Difference

The image of a veiled woman captioned, ‘Face of Islam’ appears in juxtaposition to the photos of the crumbling twin towers of the world trade center. Featured in the NY Times photo essay of the year 2001, those often repeated media images link the oppression of Muslim women to terrorist violence (December 31, 2001). They also point to the gender politics on the war on terror. And the ways gender has been manipulated to reinforce a clash of civilizations of Islam vs. the West (Huntington, 1996). In his 9/11 anniversary speech in 2006 Bush said that we are fighting a war ‘against a radical Islam empire where women are prisoners in their own home.’ Women’s interests have been the civilizing mission in this war on terror. And the veil continues to take the center stage to this discourse. The U.S invasion of Afghanistan was termed ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ as the fight was for the ‘liberation of Afghani women’ whose ‘oppression was seen as epitomized by the veil and the burqa under the Taliban rule. A Times photo essay entitled “Kabul Unveiled” shows a woman in a traditional burqa walking through the urban streets of Kabul. In spite of criticisms from the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (RAWA) who have argued that Afghan women’s rights have brought with them different disciplinary restrictions under the new regime, discourses surrounding the oppression of Muslim woman have become the yardstick to measure the West’s secular stand on liberal rights, especially in the manifestation of rights pertaining to Muslim women’s sexuality. (Kolhatkar, 2002; Abu-Lughod, 1998; Cloud, 2003; Luthra, 2007).

My paper will further examine the production of how Islam has been created in discourses of sexuality in its portrayal as a homophobic and an anti feminist religion. My aim in is not to delve into the historical, anthropological examination of Islam in its treatment of sexualities. Instead I am interested in examining how Western representations of ‘sexuality’ within an Islamophobic context reinscribes the West as the global champion of civilization, modernity and development. As I will elucidate women and gay Muslims are the latest symbol of this identity. They are the ideological token victims who must be liberated from their ‘barbaric backwards societies’, by means that include political and military violence. In this, Muslim gays are joining Muslim women whose ‘liberation’ as a postcolonial feminists have long argued, has traditionally provided the justification for imperialism.

To facilitate a notion of an alternative discourse, feminist scholarship and practice must continue to reinforce a splitting that is happening within the Western discourses surrounding Muslim sexual identity. Deconstructing racist discourses, particularly those that emphasize the need to modernize traditional culture and religion, will generate a view of culture, religion, sexuality and race as interconnected. Where the Muslim identity is not a homogeneous, monolithic identity but one that is shifting, changing and contradictory. (Khan, 2002)

By exploring Luce Irigaray’s ethics of sexual difference I will attempt to provide the phenomenological conditions of an ‘alternative space’, under which the Muslim as other can be heard . The critical role of such a methodology will be precisely not to undertake to restore a lost historical native that has been obliterated but to let her emerge in her difference. The task of such an ontology is to study the varying ontic meanings of localized phenomenon, their constitution as different kinds of realities and objectivities; that is as entities, occurrences, processes, events,

facts, so that the question concerning the objectification of the Muslim other ‘‘who is the Muslim other’ but rather ‘‘how is it that we experience the Muslim other as other.’’

My paper will examine the production of how Islam has been created in discourses of sexuality in its portrayal as a homophobic and an anti feminist religion during the ‘War on Terror.’ My aim in is not to delve into the historical, anthropological examination of Islam in its treatment of sexualities. Instead I want to elucidate how the definition of ‘liberalism’ within the Western framework acts as a perpetuation of a stereotype against Islam. In the section titled, ‘‘Islamophobia and the Liberal State’’ and ‘‘Disciplining Sexualities,’’ I will elucidate how women and gay Muslims are the latest symbol of a so called ‘liberal’ West identity. They are the ideological token victims who must be liberated from their ‘barbaric backwards societies’, by means that include political and military violence. In this, Muslim gays are joining Muslim women whose ‘liberation’ as a postcolonial feminists have long argued, has traditionally provided the justification for imperialism. I will go on in my conclusion to a discussion of bodies as a site for materialization of power and resistance, as it relates to Irigaray’s notion of an ‘Ethics of Sexual Difference.’ Luce Irigaray articulates that such a new ethics entails opening up a transcendental that is sensuous, one that is disclosed to a being who understands itself as immanent to its sensuous horizons. The sensuous transcendence of which Irigaray speaks about is only possible from the sphere of imminence, from a place that is not initially posited as standing against an excluded background, from a place that has not wrenched itself free from its sensuous embodiment and environment through the workings of an illusion of autonomy.

I

Islamophobia and the Liberal State

Global freedom as defined within the context of the ‘War on Terror,’ has been defined as sexual freedom. Women’s bodies in particular have become the site of a “symbolic confrontations between a re-essentialized understanding of religious and cultural difference and the force of state power, whether in their civic-republican, liberal-democratic or multicultural form. ‘ (Benhabib, 2010 36:453) Recent rhetoric in the U.S and Europe surrounding notions of patriotism, liberalism, secularism, freedom have been couched within the discourse of sexual rights. Whether it is the right to manifest your sexual identity or taking off the veil and asserting ones right as a woman ‘to bare ones arms (Oliver 2007: 51), the role of Muslim agency in these discourses is circumscribed by social forces that discipline even as they liberate.

For the liberal state, these restrictions and forms of power, along with the neoliberal economy that allows global capital to accumulate centrally among an elite few, serve to subdue and further marginalize the citizens whose difference makes them threatening and for whom structural violence limits access to resources of all kinds. “How do we then understand sexualities in Islam within a normalized Western context of liberalism? This paper will discuss how the interest in Muslim women, gays and lesbians has emerged from a global context of violent Islamophobia. And as a result I hope to elucidate how the production of such regulatory forces within the liberal Western state restrict and regulate the Muslim expression of sexuality.

A principal reason for the emergence of these public debates, with their constantly shifting terms, according to Seyla Benhabib is a sociological one, one which she characterizes as ‘reverse globalization.’ (Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Difference in the Global Era*, 2002) According to Benhabib the distinction between the culture and the religious as well as the identification of actions and customs as being one or the other is occurring against a back

ground of the history of colonialism and of the West's encounter with 'the rest.' Whereas at one time it was the historical experience of Western colonialism in facing its cultural and religious 'others' that forced European political thought to clarify and solidify the line between the religious and the cultural, today it is mass migration from Africa, Asia and the Middle East to the shores of resource-rich liberal democracies-The EU, USA, Canada and Australia-that is leading to the reframing of the distinction between the cultural, the religious and the political. Under conditions of immigration, a destabilization of identities and traditions is taking place and tradition as we know it is being 're-invented'. (Benhabib, 454)

In Carl Schmitt's theory of Political Theology, his theory of the exception has important ramifications for the liberal states policies concerning Islamophobia and the war on terror. According to him, "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception." The exception, in the technical language of the law implies when liberties are suspended and a emergency situation develops. But the state of exception ,unlike the state of emergency ,is not about the constitutional suspension of liberties and the assuming by the state of extraordinary power alone; rather the state of exception is a moment of utmost crises when the very foundation of the order of the political as such are challenged. This wide ranging ambivalence of the 'exception,' vacillating between a theory of the particular and the unique in the context of legal hermeneutics on the one hand, and a situation in constitutional law and state theory of the suspension of the law of the liberties on the other, is retained and well articulated.(Schmitt, 1995)

Reflecting a transformation of European identities, which besides democracy, now claim 'women's equality' and 'gay rights' as symbols of their superior 'modernity' and 'civilization.' This elevates gender and sexuality to mainstream political status. 'While we

welcome this development, we find it is vital to note that its main basis is not a progress in gender and sexual politics but as we saw in part one the paper it is a regression in the representation of racial politics. While the majority of Muslim women and queers are becoming more and more marginalized, a handful has been able to draw personal gain from the new politics of misrepresentation. In colonial tokenizing fashion individuals are invited to support the hegemonic agenda with hyper assimilationist arguments. At first sight this appears to be a welcome recognition of a varied minority agency. This recognition is part and becomes part of a politics of exceptionalism. (See Paur, 2007) Individual Muslim women and gays are described as having emancipated or liberated themselves from their repressive culture, by embracing the gender-progressive culture of the liberated West. Not only do they thereby conform the exceptionality of the West, they also emerge as exceptions to the rule that most women and gays ‘from this culture’ are in fact repressed. This confirms rather than contests the view that Islam is the most sexist and homophobic culture of all. It also constructs ‘Europe’ or the ‘West’ as a safe haven for Muslim women and gays, which includes them, protects them from the violence of their communities, and gives them opportunities to make their voices heard. (Haritaworn, J, Tauqir, T & Erdem, 2008)

II

Disciplining Sexualities

Whether it is a struggle for nationhood or cultural identity, how a Muslim woman generates life, how she lives, what she reads is secondary, what she does with her body becomes the most crucial of all her debates. An example of such a debate within the gamut of civil rights is the current ruling by Sarkozy to impose a fine of \$185 on women who wear a full-face veil in public, pushing forward a controversial ban despite signs of tension between France’s Muslims

and the Christian-tradition majority. (The Washington Post, May 20, 2010) President Nicolas Sarkozy said his government was forwarding the legislation to parliament because it had a “moral responsibility” to uphold the traditional European values in the face of an increasingly visible Muslim population, estimated at more than 5 million, the largest in Western Europe. He called the move ‘just’ and the law was not intended to stigmatize Muslims. Currently there are fewer than 2,000 Muslim women in a country of 64 million inhabitants. France is one of several Western European countries seeking to forbid the full-face veil, called the niqab. Belgium’s Chamber of Representatives last month approved a nationwide ban, which must now be considered by the Senate. The Swiss government amongst several others has vowed to impose the ban as well. And the recent move in by the Netherlands to require Muslim immigrants to watch a film showing two Dutch men kissing in a sexual embrace, in preparation for their immigration exams and demonstrates thus ‘that their value systems is in keeping with Dutch society’s liberal values. Consequently the objections to such examples of International solidarity according to Joseph Massad include a struggle against the victims under the pretext that the victims are unable to identify and defend themselves and need a liberal voice of authority on the subject to speak for themselves. (Massad, 2007)

In February 2004, French legislators overwhelmingly approved a law banning conspicuous signs of religion in public schools. Although Jewish yarmulkes and ‘‘excessively large’’ crucifixes are also mentioned, it clearly targets the *hijab*. This ban was the culmination of a long and intense debate including a five month investigation by the nonpartisan Stasi Commission appointed by President Jacques Chirac in July 2003. (Ezekeil, 2006). The law went into effect in the autumn of 2004. In its first year, only 48 girls and three Sikhs boys were expelled, but the debate has rocked the nation and caused tremors around the world.

At the core of this culture lies an apparent near-consensus around a resuscitated national identity and model for humanity: That of la France *laïque et républicaine*, the universal, secular republican France. This model has replaced the 1989 resolution issued by the French state council (the country's top judicial body), who stated, unless worn deliberately to offend others, Islamic headscarves did not violate secularism.

“The Affair of the Scarf,” eventually came to stand for all dilemmas of French national identity in the age of globalization and multiculturalism: how to retain French traditions of laicete, republican equality and democratic citizenship in view of France's integration into the European Union on the one hand and the pressures of integration generated through the presence of second-and third-generation immigrants from Muslim countries on French soil on the other hand.ⁱ

The *hijab*, often little more than small piece of cloth, but sometimes encompassing a full-length veil, has become a measuring stick the West uses to determine the degree of modernity and the potential pluralism in Islam countries. Those who favor this ban put forth four main arguments. First, the veil shows a refusal by Muslim women to integrate into society in the broader sense. Second, such clothing is testimony to a women's oppression. Third, display of religious symbols is an affront to secular societies. Fourth, in settings such as schoolrooms and courthouses, wearing of Muslim veils can be intimidating to pupils or juries.

The four reasons aside, there is another factor fueling Muslim outrage over the current ban on the veil that touches the heart of the East-West schism: That the West is defining the rights of its Muslim citizens based on its notions of liberal secularism and modernity. Could the effect of a school girl wearing a veil be so powerful that others will follow in her footsteps,

giving momentum to an Islamic revival that is already making the staunchly secular French feel uncomfortable?

Seyla Benhabib asks a similar question as she grapples with the changing role of the significance of the hijab in our current society. To discussing the ‘Affair of the Scarf’ in France she says, “What exactly was the meaning of the girl’s actions? Was this an act of religious observance and subservience, or one of cultural defiance, or of an adolescent acting out to gain attention and prominence? Were the girls acting from fear, conviction or narcissism? ... The girls’ voices weren’t heard much in these debates. Had their voices been listened to it would’ve become clear that the meaning of wearing the hijab was changing from being a religious act to one of cultural defiance and increasing politicization.”(Benhabib, 2010:459)

Benhabib goes on to emphasize the split in the women’s movements in France in their assessment of the ban against wearing of the scarf: while the members of the organizations Ni Putes Soumises (Neither Whores nor Downtrodden) celebrated the ban, organizations such as the Parent-Teacher Federation, SOS Racisme, Une Ecole pour Toutes et Tous, argued that the girls’ human rights to freedom of religion, to education, to freedom from discrimination, were violated. Outside observers, including the Human Rights Watch, the Islamic Human Rights Commission, and the US based KARAMAH, Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, agreed.(Benhabib, 2010:459).

The German public and courts have also dealt with a similar challenge to that of France in the headscarf debate. In discussing the German ‘scarf affair’ Benhabib discusses the case of Feresta Ludin. An elementary school teacher in Baden-Wuttemberg, Fereshta Ludin, of Afghani origin and a German citizen, who wanted to teach her classes with her head covered. The school denied her request. Case went to the German Supreme Court and the ruling was that

wearing a headscarf in the context presented to the court, expresses that the claimant belongs to the 'Muslim community of faith'. In accordance with article 33, paragraph 2 of the Basic Law, that to describe such behavior as lack of qualification for the position of the teacher in elementary schools, clashed with the right of the claimant to equal access to all public offices, and also clashed with her rights to freedom of conscience, as protected by article 4, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Basic Law, without providing the required lawful reasons for doing so. While acknowledging the fundamental rights of Ms Fereshta Ludin, the court nevertheless ruled against the claimant and transferred the final say on the matter to democratic legislatures. (Benhabib, 2010:460)

Benhabib points out in her article, in the German case the ban applies only to teachers as they are civil servants, whereas the students are protected by religious liberty rights under articles 4 and 2 of the German basic law. She goes to state:

by not leaving the matter in the exclusive jurisdiction of the school authorities, and by stressing the necessity for the state to maintain religious and worldview neutrality, the court signaled to democratic law-makers the importance of respecting legitimate pluralism of worldviews in a liberal democracy. Still the court did not see itself justified in positively intervening to shield such pluralism, but considered this to be the jurisdiction of the 'Lander.' ..The real worry of the court was the more substantive one rather than the procedural one as to whether a woman who wears an object representing her as belonging to 'the traditions of her community or origin' could carry out the duties of the German state. As Baden-Wuttemberg's Minister of Education, Annete Schaven, argued in the opening salvo of the German headscarf controversy: 'the headscarf... also stands for cultural segregation (Abgrenzung, and thus it is a political symbol (which puts

at risk) social peace.(Benhabib, 2010:461. Quoted by Joppke, *Veil:Mirror of Identity*, 2009:53)

Within the context of the hijab controversy the court's decision as Benhabib articulates had contradictory consequences: on the one hand "all existing regulations protecting or banning religious symbols in public schools were immediately nullified, and the states governments intent on prohibiting the headscarves for teachers were required to pass legislation to that effect in that respect instantly." (ibid)

Petra Rostock and Sabine Berghahn in their article, "The ambivalent role of gender in redefining the German nation," (Rostock and Berghahn 2008) draw notice to the fact that honor crimes and arranged marriages in Muslim communities have recently become an integral point of focus on the German political agenda. Their article elucidates the importance of this sudden interest in the rights of Migrant and Muslim women needs to be understood in a broader perspective. They go on to say that when the maxim of Germany as a non-immigration country was finally relinquished at the end of the 20th century, a new self-definition of the German nation had to be articulated. Gender and sexuality has come to play a pivotal role in this process of redefining a 'German' identity. A renewed debate on integration and the role of immigrants is taking place, while the social and economic problems of migrants are being ignored. The perceived victimization of Muslim women, as evidenced by so-called honor crimes, forced marriages and the hijab, further legitimize the stereotype that "Islam in general and Muslims in particular are (yet) part of German society." (Ibid: 346) Gender and sexual equality serves as a marker of modern liberal German society even though it is far from being fully realized. The truth that the demand for Islamic religious education and the building of mosques have been a

point of contention in the German public mainstream accentuates the fact that Germany is far from accepting Islam as part of its society.

The changing migration policy and the recognition of immigrants as a political norm revealed a number of deficiencies concerning integration of migrants. These along with the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004, kindled a new debate on multiculturalism in Germany. It had failed even though it never been implemented as a policy. (Rostock and Berghahn 2008) It was used as a failed concept on which to blame any malfunction in the cohabitation of minority and majority societies. The results of previous German policy on foreigners- a 'kind of benevolent, paternalistic, and egalitarian apartheid, an institutionalized separateness (Brubaker,2001:538)-were blamed on the few multiculturalist ideas who advocated for the rights of immigrants.

The official end of the no-immigration maxim and the now obsolete definition of Germany as a delegitimized, incomplete nation state, necessitated a new definition of 'German' identity. Arguments formally brought forward to establish that Germany was not a country of immigration are now employed in the process of forming a new identity. The majority society seems to find the oriental and patriarchal other essential for its own self definition, using it to preserve the fiction of a national homogeneity. Constructing cultural differences between the Christian occidental 'us' and the Muslim other, a difference seen as manifesting itself both in the alien religion of Islam and in the field of gender relations. Central to the debates on the migrants and their religion into the German society is the social position of Muslim women. (Rostock and Berghahn 2008)

The current representation of Muslim women in the public discourse is that of victims. And when they are it's as an exception to the rule. This then becomes the screen through

which the Christian European women and society is distinguished as progressive and emancipated. (Dhawan 2006) The anti headscarves always being one indication of the us and Muslims as others divide. Following the Federal Constitutional Court ruling in September of 2003, the main argument put forth for banning the headscarf and no other religious symbol, is that it is a political symbol for oppression of women in Islam. Through this teachers are prohibited from wearing headscarves or any outward religious display that express adherence to a specific religion or ideology. Yet the laws include an exception clause for the display of Christian-Occidental values and traditions. (Rostock and Berghahn 2008) The hijab has created strange alliances because it enables various public groups to instrumentalise gender against the civic recognition of Muslims. It is depicted as a symbol of oppression or as a symbol of neo Muslims (S 2002) to emancipate themselves from their parents and participate in German society. Feminists such as Alice Schwarzer, Necla Kelek, Seyran Ates and other authors with Turkish background, cite the order to veil the female body or hair as evidence of the incompatibility of Islam with German values.

Baden-Wuttembegs anti-headscarf legislation which was contained in three new sentences introduced into paragraph 38 of the state's educational law is blatant in its discriminatory treatment of Islam: "The representation of Christian and occidental values and traditions corresponds to the educational mandate of the (regional) constitution and does not contradict the behavior required according to sentence 1" ' Sentence 1 in turn states that 'Teachers are allowed... to give external statements of a political, religious (or) ideological nature' which could endanger or disturb neutrality towards pupils and parents. (Benhabib, 2010:461). By turning over to the legislatures the regulation of the wearing of the heads carve

via statute, it failed to protect a fundamental human right and further more gave the green light to a series of highly discriminatory legislation singling out Islam in particular. (Chaudry, 2007)

In both these countries the headscarf is not simply a religious item of clothing, expressing a subjective choice but a political symbolic threat requiring state regulation. In this process of confrontation and negotiation, between state power and Muslims with the headscarves, the meaning of the symbol itself is undergoing changes: for all the actors involved, no longer expressions of Muslim humility but symbols of an embattled identity and signs of public defiance. The role of an ethics is required to rethink these issues within a democratic sphere.

Horitaworn, Tauqir and Ersdem's article "Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror,'" (Haritaworn, J, Tauqir, T & Erdem, 2008) focuses on the situation in Britain, where Muslims and 'homophobics' are increasingly treated as interchangeable signifiers. The central figure in this process the article discusses is that of Peter Tatchell who has successfully claimed the role of liberator of and expert about Muslim gays and lesbians, highlighting the problems of a single issue of politics of representation, which equates gay with whites and ethnic minority with heterosexual. At the same time the fact that Tatchell's group Outrage passes as the emblem of queer and hence post-identity politics in Britain shows that the problem of Islamophobia is not reducible to a critique of identity. The active participation of right as well as left wing, feminists as well as gay, official as well as civil powers in the Islamophobia industry proves racism more closely than ever to be a white problem, which crosses other social and political differences.

In her examination of the Lesbian and Gay Association Germany (LSVD), Jennifer Petzen (2005) argues that the integration of gay migrants is now a central goal of mainstream gay politics in Germany. Regarding this as new trend among white gays, who are staking their territory

in the lucrative integration game and entering mainstream politics. White homosexuals assert their equality with white heterosexuals by claiming their expert status in the civilizing of the 'homophobic migrant.' As Jasbir Puar the non-Muslim queer color theorist (Puar, 2006) and Leslie Feinberg (Feinberg 2006), the white Jewish queer and trans activist illustrate this is not a German phenomenon. The two authors examine the racial politics of the Australian-British activist Peter Tatchell and his group Outrage. He plays an important role not only for the British public, where he is treated as one of the main gay representatives. He has also established himself as an expert on gay issues in Muslim countries as well as in Zimbabwe and Jamaica. Feinberg describes him as a key actor in the 'international Day of Action Against Homophobic Persecution in Iran' on 19th June 2006. Even though his call for sanctions against the 'Islamofascists Iran' was based on ambiguous translations from Farsi, Tatchell has been able to expand his 'internationalist' project; most recently through his organization Peter Tatchell Human rights Fund (PTHRF).

However Eberhard Seidel (Seidel n.d.) left wing German journalist has drawn our attention to the Orientalist representations inherent in the naturalization questionnaire. He argues that the interview does not reflect so much the social realities of the Germans or Germany, but rather 'how Germans would like to see themselves: their thinking free of sexism, anti-Semitism, racism; blind vis a vis gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity, acting according to the categorical imperative of Kant. (ibid) Racism is further the vehicle that transports white gays and feminists into the political mainstream. The amnesia at the basis of sudden assertion of a European 'tradition' of anti-homophobic and 'anti-sexist' core values the authors argue, is less a reflection of progressive gender relations than of regressive race relations.

The main tenor of the immigration act has been the combination of 'integrationist' demands towards migrants with an acknowledgement that Germany is a country of migration.

(Terkessidis 2006) Simultaneously the process of redefining Germany as an immigration society is accompanied by attempts of politicians of almost all persuasions to fill ‘Germanness’ with new content. As a result of the lessons learned from the National Socialist regime, ‘German is not referred to as an ethnic category. It is associated rather with secularity and gender equality, treated as general attributes of modern societies, and with a specific form of religious and religiosity and ‘German value system’ supposedly originating from Christian ethics. Although it is stated and even demanded that Islam must find its place within the German value system, it remains unclear where this place is and what ‘German values’ encompass.

III

Ethics of Sexual Difference

For Irigaray, sexual difference stipulates alterity as a pre-condition for the possibility of an intersubjectivity that can never be taken for granted as apparent. The finitude inscribed naturally on each person by virtue of sexual difference ensures that no subject will assume that the position of the other is self-evident, that “he is just like me.” In her book, *Between East and West*, (Irigaray 2005) Irigaray, by insisting on sexual difference as the impetus for the ethical apprehension of the Other, moves beyond the feminine as a critical space of possibility to talk about actual breathing, stretching, orgasmic female bodies (Chute 2004). Most commentators regard Luce Irigaray as primarily a thinker of subjectivity, identity, sexuality, and desire, and rarely consider her as a political theorist or an analyst of social and cultural life. I want to rethink an ethics of difference within Irigaray’s prism of a ethics of sexual difference by ultimately putting forward a theory of sexual difference that still has a political function and ethical relevance for feminism and post colonial and political

thought. Thus, by reconceptualizing the erotic into a process that retains duplicity and difference, Irigaray opens the possibility of a culture that can retain difference without always seeking to encompass, overcome and incorporate it and moving toward a grand synthesis. This inclusion of difference, right at the very source of being might point to a way to promote peaceful, mutual renewal through the interaction of diverse influences. Because sexual difference negates any attempt to posit the particular as the universal or to consolidate it into a universal norm, it both affirms the futurity of becoming and fosters respect for ‘‘differences everywhere: differences between other races, differences between generations, and so on,’’ (Irigaray 1995: 110).

By relegating all the differences and particularisms, such as race, sex, class and ethnicity to the private sphere, liberalism supports the notion of the abstract public, and the disembodied political subject separated from the body, race and sexuality. Yet Irigaray argues that the political diversity of women cannot be affirmed without challenging the abstraction of the liberal citizenship, she also claims that the opposite solution, the affirmation of unmediated differences risks complicity with the traditional positioning of women in the polis as an assembly of particulars incapable of acquiring a political identity. To avoid the either/or alternatives of the liberal citizenship abstracted from all differences and its opposites, the affirmation of the differences as unmediated particulars, I would like to consider the political significance of sexual difference within the context of the contradictory logic of radical democracy suspended between equivalence and difference (Ziarek, P. E 2001). What is most important for politics if we contextualize the discussion within Irigaray’s philosophy is the contestation of binary oppositions between the abstract concept of liberal

citizenship and its opposite, the reification of proliferating differences as unmediated particulars.

That in the light of sexual difference this interpretation of the missing universality not only stresses the impossibility of its realization but in fact, splits it into two' (Irigaray, Luce 1996:50). Such a negative and fractured notion of the universal at work in sexual difference negates any particularity positing itself as the universal. By exposing the impossibility of the full actualization of any universal, the political significance of sexual difference lies precisely in the fact that it underscores the radical futurity of democracy, which Irigaray associates with the defense of the impossible. As she claims in *I Love to You*, 'I am therefore a political militant of the impossible, which is not to say a utopian, rather I want what is yet to be as the only possibility of a future'' (10). Within the horizon of the impossible, the inscriptions of sexual difference into democratic citizenship exposes a 'groundless ground' of democracy and the unresolved tension between the constituted and the constituting character of history. Irigaray clearly insists on the importance of negativity in the recognition of other as other. However, she also makes clear that to respect and offer hospitality to the others in invisibility, the dialectical process of what she describes as taking the negative upon oneself has to be supplemented with a new culture of energy, which 'sees' in invisibility an enabling energy, a relation that makes possible seeing, perhaps even seeing otherwise (Irigaray 2001, 15).

Consequently, one of our main purposes as 'postcolonial critics,' (borrowing Said's term) becomes one of considering the inversion effected when "others" and otherness occupy a subject position in educational accounts and accounting practices. "The question

then is ‘how do we talk about otherness without joining our voices to the canonical discourse but avoiding the potential pitfalls of the oppositional discourse?’” (Taubman n.d.)

Irigaray, in her refusal to submit to otherness of the other, maintain in her discourses of difference a space to think difference without resorting to sameness. She seeks the conditions of possibility of any particular ethics, which Jacques Derrida has called an “ethics of ethics,” in order to address not the transcendental conditions of ethical action but those sites that rupture the ethical coding and principles by pointing to that access. (Derrida 1978) Her ethics of the erotic bring to light this non appropriate relation to the other that is based on an ethics of responsibility rather than power. I negotiate between an obligation for the other and the agency, in this case of the Muslim subject. This redefinition of politics allows us to encounter ethics not outside the polis but in the midst of what Lyotard calls, ‘differend’ (*Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, 1988).’ By transcending the dilemmas of equality vs. difference, this opposes disembodied character of liberal citizenship. Yet putting forth a theory of sexual difference that has a political function and ethical relevance for post colonial feminists. By eroticizing ethics into a process that retains duplicity and difference, Irigaray opens the possibility of a postcolonial culture that can retain difference without always seeking to encompass, overcome, and incorporate it, moving toward a grand synthesis. Acknowledging this alterity in the other allows for ethical relations to exist between self and other.

-
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Remaking Women:Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Benhabib, Seyla. *The Claims of Culture:Equality and Difference in the Global Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Benhabib, Seyla. "The return of Political Theology:The Scarf Affair in Comparative Constitutional Perspective in France,Germany and Turkey." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 2010 36:453: 452-471.
- Brubaker, R. (2001). *The return os Assimilation?Changing Perspectives on Immigration and its sequel in France, Germany and the UnitedStates* (Vol. 24).
- Chaudry, Nusrat. "From the Staci Commision to the European Court of Human Rights:L'Affairw du Foulard and the Challenge of Protecting the Rights of Muslim Girls." *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 16, no. 1 (2007): 205.
- Chute, Hillary L. "Irigaray's Erotoc Ontology." *Postmodern Culture* 14, no. 2 (January 2004).
- Cloud, Dana. "To Veil the Threat of Terror." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, August 90.3, 2003: 285-306.
- Derrida, Jacques. " Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas." In *Writing and Difference*, by Jacques Derrida, translated by Alan Bass, 79-153. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Dhawan, N. and Castro Varela M. "Das Dilemma der Gerechtigkeit:Migration,Religion und Gender." *Argument* 266 (2006): 427-40.
- Ezekeil, Judith. *French Dressing: Race, Gender and the Hijab Story*. Vol. 32. 2 vols. 2006.
- Feinberg, Leslie. "Anti-Iran protests misdirects LGBT struggle." *Workers World* (<http://www.workers.org/2006/us/anti-iran-0720/index.html>), 2006.
- Haritaworn, Jin, Tauqir, Tamsila, & Erdem. (2008). *Queer Imperialism:The Role of Gender and Sexuality*
- Huntington, Samuel P.,. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996 .
- Irigaray, Luce. *Between East and West : From Singularity to Community*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- _____. *I love to You:Sketh of a Possible Felicity in History*. New Yor: Routledge, 1996:50.
- _____. "Je-Luce Irigaray:A Meeting with Luce Irigaray, Interview with Ellizabeth Hirsh and Gary O. Olson." *Hypatia* 10, 1995: 110: 93-114.
- Joppke, C. (2009). *Veil:Mirror of Identity*. London :Polity Press.

Khan, Shahnaz. "Muslim Women: Negotiations in the Third Space." In *Gender, Politics and Islam*, by Carolyn Allen and Judith A. Howard Therese Saliba, 305-336. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Kolhatkar, Sonali. "Saving Afghan Women." *Women in Action*, April 2002: 34.

Luthra, Rashmi. "Framing Gender in Afghanistan and Iraq: Unveiling the Gaze of Empire." In *Media and Political Violence*, by Hillel Nossek, and Prasun Sonwalkar Annabelle Sreberny, 325-339. Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 2007.

LYOTARD, JEAN-FRANÇOIS. Translated by George Van Den Abbeele. *Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988.

Massad, Joseph. *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Oliver, K. (2007). *Women as Weapons of War: Iran, Sex, and the Media*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Paur, J. (2007). *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.

ostock, Petra, and Sabine Berghahn. "The ambivalent role of gender in redefining the German nation." *Ethnicities* (SAGE Publications) 8, no. 3 (2008): 345-364.

Shmidt, C. (1995). *The Concept of the Political*. (T. B. Strong, Trans.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press

S, Nokel in Rostock and Berghahn 2008. "Die Tochter der Gastarbeiter und der Islam: zur Soziologie alltagsweltlicher Ankerkennungspolitiken; eine Fallstudie." *Bielefeld: Transcript*, 2002.

Seidal, Eberhard. "Selective Wahrnehmung." *Die Tageszeitung* 14/15 (March): 11.

Taubman, Peter. "Canonical Sins." In *Understanding Curriculum as a Racial Text*, edited by Castenell and Pina.

Terkessidis, Mark and Karakasoglu, Yasemin in Haritaworn, Tauqir and Erdam. "Gerechtigkeit für die Muslime!." *Die Zeit*, February 2006.

Ziarek, Ewa Plonowska. *An Ethics of Dissensus: Postmodernity, Feminism and the Politics of Radical Democracy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

word count including footnotes: 6,220.