MUSLIM WOMAN GOES ON-LINE: AN EXPRESSION OF SUBJECTIVITY

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Abstract

Purpose: In this research, I explore feminist activism in online space by group of Muslim women. Having tried to deconstruct the media construction of Muslim women, Muslim Women against Femen (MWAF) Facebook page offers Muslim women to express their freedom in embracing Islam as part of the belief embedded in their identities.

Methodology: This paper is using virtual ethnography in compiling data. My participation in this page was started on 8 April 2013, and I already observed the page since then. I limit my observation until 1st of September 2013, since the practical issue related to the time that I have to do this paper. I observe all the postings, comments, and pictures. The data collected will be coded and then categorized to answer the research questions.

Result: From the research, I find that two main issues that are being discussed on this page to express their subjectivity: celebration of subjectivity and the interpretation of covered and uncovered bodies. This paper is expected to enrich the perspective of multiculturalism. It is also expected to be one of the sources of an understanding of a culture in multicultural society.

Applications: In this page groups of women deliberately resist the stigma about the veiled as oppressed and backward. This research will see this feminist activism from the feminist post modern’s point of view, which questions about the concept of freedom and reconceptualise subjectivity.

Novelty/Originality: In this research, the model of the subject-subject model in the conditions of mixed learning is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: Muslim women, veiled body, subjectivity, online space.

INTRODUCTION

In 6th April 2013 group of Muslim women created an event on Facebook called Muslim Women Against Femen… Muslimah Pride Day. This event offered the opportunity for Muslim women to post their photos that depict their freedom of both being Muslim and wearing a headscarf. I joined this Facebook page myself on 8th April 2013. I found this event is interesting, as virtual event Muslim women are encouraged to add their photos which express their freedom in wearing headscarf is unusual. At the same time, the creator of the event created a Facebook group and community page, and again I joined both since they were established. Both the group and the community page entitled Muslim Women against Femen (MWAF) and both accounts are open for non-Muslims and non-Muslims.

For this purpose, I will use the community page as the subject of my research, instead of the Facebook group account. Within the community page, I found the members were engaged in interesting debates around the subject of the veil and freedom. Moreover, the basic thinking that makes this issue more interesting is that it also relates to other issues about the theory about self in postmodern theory, women and technology and how technology mediates to gain their agency. The use of technology becomes important since it becomes the site where their efforts are recognized and their voice is being heard.

The main aim of this this Facebook page is that they want to emphasize their resistance towards Islamophobic and racism declared by some White feminists. In short, this group also challenges Islamophobia and racism demonstrated by the feminist group, FEMEN. I argue that start at this aim as their standpoint of activism; some Muslim women do not want to be represented from the Western discourse, like what Mohanty said above. At the beginning of the group’s establishment, activism is the main aim, however many women were unhappy by being represented by Western discourses.

Further to those European discourses, in the United States, the veil represents the victimization of Muslim women by the regimes of Muslim countries. Shepered also argues, representation of the veil in the States has been shaped by the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001 and the invasion of the US to Afghanistan where the women were seen as being in need of care and protection from the Taliban. For example, the veil has been created as the marker of the barbaric behaviour of males in Afghanistan. Thus, the level of integration ability of Afghanistan’s women into public and political life is measured by the veil. Subsequently, this becomes the marker of the third world woman who is constructed as oppressed and in need of liberation (Yazdekhashi et al, 2015).

The construction of Muslim women as oppressed and in need of liberation was the source of conflict in debates between Muslim women and members of the Ukrainian feminist group, FEMEN. Debates between the two groups also centered on freedom to embrace Islam and FEMEN members’ naked activism which was seen as a disgrace to Islam. However, having discussed this conflict in previous assignment, here instead, I will consider some Muslim women achieve their agency through on-line debates (Bouclin, S. (2013).). I still find a question comes up in my mind: what are Muslim women thinking about their own selves? Therefore, I found the Facebook page Muslim Women against Femen is one of the efforts.
of some Muslim women in struggling to gain agency. In this Facebook page, they start to celebrate freedom, yet, in the meantime, they are quite being reflexive for not to be trapped in the single meaning of freedom. Thus, the borderline between the writing on the assignment before and this research is that the way women speak in the public space called Facebook. In the writing before, I only focused on the critique towards generalization made by Femen to Muslim women. In this research, I focused on how this page becomes the instrument for some Muslim women to speak about their self and identity.

My interest and engagement with the issues I found in this Facebook group is the reason why I decided to conduct research on it. Thus, when I began writing up my research, I came into the reflexive question: why does this research matter to me? In the context of social research, this reflexive question obviously will come up in terms of the way research products are affected by the personnel and process of doing research. This effect will reflect on the phases of the research from the beginning until the end. Therefore, I will admit that personally, this research is more than academic works for me.

The first experience that makes me interested in this topic is my background; I grew up in Indonesia, a third world county, in Muslim family and raised in Islam way. This family background obviously makes Islam embedded in my life. Wearing headscarves is the most obvious things that mark my identity as a Muslim. Wearing the headscarf has been my own personal choice and was not imposed upon me either my parents or my society impose me, although, I remember, one of my sisters telling me that wearing the headscarf is an obligation for Muslim women. This helped me to decide to wear it as the way I embrace Islam.

The fact that I wear the headscarf was questioned by one of my lecturers when I was studying gender issues during my Bachelor's degree. He asked me: “why I was doing gender research, while at the same time I was being docile by wearing the headscarf?” From his perspective at that time, being a feminist was not linked with piety, particularly in wearing headscarf and being led by men when praying since these are indication of submissiveness to the patriarchal regime. I was struck by this question at that time, since it made me doubtful that I could be a feminist, while at the same time, as being religious.

For as long as I can remember, my choice of wearing the headscarf was mere because I am a Muslim, although my parents and my society where I lived didn’t impose its use upon me. Yet, I realize practice of wearing the headscarf is never static. The first time I wore it because I want to be recognized as a Muslim, and become part of the Muslim movement in my school. But, now, I realize that the reason behind my wearing headscarves has shifted.

The second reason why this research matters to me is that I am studying in a Western country, where being a Muslim means I am part of minority. In my whole life, this is the first time I have been part of minority group. At first, I felt anxious, since a lot of people start asked me why I wear the headscarf while another Muslim does not and whether different wearing the headscarf in Indonesia than in Britain feels. As I mentioned previously, my reason for wearing headscarf has changed from when I first began to wear it. Judith Butler says that doing gender is not a single act. It is part of performativity where a subject negotiates the norm each day. I feel that during my period studying in the UK, I have negotiated between the norm in this country and the norm embedded into my life, to integrate with the society around.

The third reason why I feel passionate about this research topic is that I am working in the Islam education institution in Indonesia as an assistance Lecturer. In my workplace, being Muslim and wearing the headscarf for women are obligations for its staff. Thus, wearing the headscarf has empowered me, as a Muslim woman, to be employed.

These personal experiences have influenced and informed my engagement with the Facebook page Muslim Women against Femen. From the issue appearing on this page, I learned that feminism is not merely about the distinction of being religious or not, but also how we are not excluded by being religious. To give me a better understanding of how feminism criticizes the exclusion of some women, I use the postcolonial in talking about how women are represented and lost their agency because of representation, and also postmodern theories in seeing bodies. Both main issues are the crucial point in this research since MWAF page mostly talks about the veiled body and how the veiled body is a free agent.

I will argue about how post-colonial feminists see agency. In this section, I will argue about how third world women are being considered in the dominant issue within Western society, and how they may have their agency in the dominant discourse. Talking about agency will refer to the concept of freedom and subjectivity. Therefore, in the following section, I write down about freedom and its problem in postmodern perspectives. In this part, I will emphasize the fact that freedom is always problematic. In the next section I will describe how postmodernism sees an individual may become the subject of what they do. The theories of subjectivity become important in this research since it becomes the perspective, I will use to see how some Women in MWAF emphasize their subjectivity by being Muslim.

In the context of this research, I see that subjectivity is sustained by the using of technology. To make it clear, I will describe how technology has given women a voice to emphasize that they are individuals who have subjectivity from what they are doing.

Lastly, I will explain the methodology I will use in this research and the type of data that I will analyse. Since my field of research is about how some Muslim women gain their agency from the use of technology, therefore, I wish to use virtual ethnography in this research. In this last part, I will explain how the virtual ethnography might be done and what type of data might be used for this research purpose.
LITERATURE REVIEW

As Moi argues, the body is not merely the marker of sex, but it is also the site where our subjectivity as an individual lie. In her argument, Moi asserts that each body will not express their subjectivity in the same way, since each of us has a different situation and experience and, the situation is inseparable from the body. In line with Moi, Butler argues that gender and sex are never fixed and solid, it is always negotiated. The body which has its materiality is always constructed and produced culturally and has its own history.

In this sense, the veiled body has its own history and is constructed as the other in the Western feminist discourse. The veil, which is a Western perspective becomes the obvious signifier of the inferiority of Islamic society, is recognized as the symbol of oppression of women and backwardness. Therefore, it becomes an open target for colonial attacks toward Muslim societies, on behalf of women’s liberation.

As part of the body, I argue that the veil works as a skin. It conceals and reveals at the same time. As a skin, the veil emphasizes the phantasmatic surface, where it reveals what we wish was true and what was not. It becomes the mediation between the inside and the outside. Therefore, skin becomes the part of construction of what we call “human”. It is part of the cultural process. Since the veil appears as the skin, it can be racialized. The race used to be acknowledged as the idea of a biological form. While, today, the justifications of race are based on culture, which includes the assertion of cultural incompatibility between people from different backgrounds. As Amin argues, the doing of race happens through the reception of what is captured by eyes and what appears on bodily performances (Amin, 2012). Based on Amin’s assumption of the doing of race, I would like to argue that the veil as part of bodily performances is being racialized. It becomes a part of the body. As Sara Ahmed asserts, body determines the relation between other bodies and other bodies will construct another. Body, Ahmed argues, becomes the border between insider and outsider. In this research context, the veil as a certain race is interpreted as the border between Islamic values and Western values. It sustains the gap between the East and the West.

Based on that reason, the veiled body never belongs to Western values, since belonging is not an individual action, but rather a constructed one. Talking about how the body and desire are part of belonging. Elspeth Probyn argues that the individual used to live under the role of general categories they wished to belong, yet now the specific of identity might employ the individuation which happens over the boundary. Parallel with Probyn, Grosz asserts that the body cannot be generalized since it is sexually distinct, and cannot be put in the singular universal model.

The discourse of the veil as oppression has hidden the fact that some women wear the veil as an expression of their modesty and piety, as well as the resistance of Western value (Fortier, 2012; Iravani et al, 2015). The dominant discourse of the veil has generalized women and constructed the veil as a fixed meaning. While Butler clearly says that gender is an on-going process. She asserts, there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its result.

Problematising Freedom

The idea of freedom had been used in Duits and van Zoonen’s research. They, –inspired by the debate about the meaning of clothing in a leading Dutch university— problematize the construction of clothing between boys and girls. Both researchers found that “porno-chic” and the headscarf are both problematic in the Netherlands. While the ways boy was seen as the mode of free speech, the girl’s decision in clothing choices are always questioned. Gill says that in Duits and van Zoonen’s argument, girls choose their clothing are not based on external influences: it is understood as an authentic and autonomous act. Gill considers that girls in Duits and van Zoonen’s appear as autonomous and freely choosing individuals. In her article, Gill raises a critique at this point. Gill argues that none of the decisions are ruled by an individual’s preferences, but that is something to do with social contexts and construction that expose the individuals.

Freedom, in the modern tradition, has been politicized as a fantasy of self-autonomy. While, from a Foucaultian perspective. Dumm argues that politics is always related to the constructed truth. At the same time, Dunn argues that Foucault has criticized the concept of freedom in modernity that believes freedom is understood as a fantasy of peace, desire and, consumption that exists outside of politics. Since it is interpreted as standing in the empty space where it is free of social contexts, freedom is celebrated in the world of contemporary political life. As a result, the concept of freedom in the modern tradition fails to recognize the condition of its construction and deconstruction.

In modernity, free individuals are considered autonomous which means subjects have the ability to act out of social contexts. While, based on Bevir, from Foucaultian perspectives, agents only exist in specific social contexts, but these contexts never determine how they are to construct themselves. Foucault asserts that agency, autonomy, and separation have evolved as the constituted products of the discourse of the modern subject. Hekman assumes that Foucault already shows that they are inseparable from historical and discourse contexts.

The ideas about the self that is inseparable from the historical context become the key ideas about subjectivity for postmodern feminists. Subjectivity emphasizes that individuals are always attached to power relations that may happen upon them. Consequently, subjectivity has made the expression of gender cannot be generalized amongst women. In other word, there is no universality between women (Oliveira et al, 2018; Novikova et al, 2018).
Relating to the issue about the rejection towards universality, Butler has argued that there should be no unity among women. Butler’s anti-essentialism is based on the genealogy theories of Nietzsche and Foucault, which assume that feminism has its own genealogy. In line with universality, essentialism is the things that have essential properties, properties that are necessary to those things being what they are. Stone explains, in the feminist context, essentialism means the essential category of women that must be possessed and shared by the women. Meanwhile, in the 1980s, many feminists had rejected the essentialist idea that mentions that women share the same category of being what they are. The reason for these feminists was grounded on particular privileges that had formed the feminine experience (Luo et al., 2016).

Butler’s argument reflects the position of the subject of gender as an active subject. The pictures posted on the MWAF Facebook page show that wearing the veil for some Muslim women is not a process of subjugation. In this page, they are trying to deny the generalization of Muslim women, particularly for those who wear the veil. The generalization of identity, I argue, is a problematic process since it denies the difference amongst women. As MacNay says, the stabilization of identity is the result of an exclusion process and the denial of difference. Meanwhile, the stabilization of identity becomes problematic when the process of othering results in a failure to explain all dimensions of subjection because this process already brushes aside the different possibilities that may happen in different social contexts.

In order to avoid the conflation between the individual and the subject, I would like to suggest Butler’s work on the subject. She argues that individuals become subjects when they are already established in the language. The individual needs to be the subject to gain and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency. Therefore, being subject is the prior condition of agency.

Since the agency relates to the idea of subject, I would like to explain how the individual becomes subject and by resisting their subjectivity. Butler says, no individual becomes a subject without first becoming subjected. In order to reach the intelligibility to become a subject, individuals need previous reference. This process emerges as the subjection toward individuals since prior reference will produce subordination. The subordination creates the opposition of the individual. The subjection makes the subject becomes the guarantor of its resistance and opposition since subjection generates a subject while subject exists prior to agency.

In the case of Muslim Women against Femen, it can be seen that there is a discourse around the concept of freedom. As I mentioned above, Western perspectives have put Muslim women within the universal identity. This subjection has constructed Muslim women as individuals to be the subject. It shows the way they act and are pious in public spaces and display this on the Internet. This effort has shifted the meaning of the veil since it is no longer the form of submissiveness, but the evidence that they have agency to resist. As Butler says, resistance is thus located in a domain that is virtually powerless to alter the law that it opposes.

**Cyberspace Mediates Subjectivity**

In the postmodern body, technology might free the subject from the intelligibility of embodiment, such as the subject is free to create their (sexual) identity. Such a subject may appear as a different identity in cyberspace. The notion of the possibility of shifting identity proves that identity in cyberspace is fluid. I would like to assume the internet provides the space for the user to have multiple identities, and it also has the agency for the user to create their visibility on the internet. Despite having doubts about cyberfeminism that might offer the fantasy of separation between the real and virtual problems, some feminists believe that the Internet could be the medium of agency for women who are being subjected by giving them space.

Many feminist scholars have been fascinated by the emergence of the concept of space on the Internet for its ability to empower women and connect people in the world without any boundaries. Some argue that the Internet provides space for women to resist gender oppression and gain gender equality, yet some have questioned those claims. Newsom and Lengel assert, in some contexts, online activism has provided the site for empowerment, cross-boundary dialogue, and also social change. It might open the gate for women to have cross-cultural dialogue and the possibility of creating a social movement (Newsom, 2012; Kenan, 2018).

I should acknowledge the fact that the development of technology is not just providing advantages to women and there are two sides to this debate. The first sees that technology has created women as cheap labor in third world countries, while on the other side; it empowers women to gain equality. In this research, I will not focus on how technology has oppressed women as labor in the third world countries; rather, I would like to focus on how women have become politically involved in the debate about body and identity on the Internet (Ismail, S. (2007)).

The study shows that women participate online more often than men. This fact has captured my attention. Cybertulture can be the mediation for feminists to share experiences related to bodily experience from different situations. In line with Harcourt, Mitra and Watts assert that cyberspace is a space that consists of discourses and connects millions from anonymous places. The characteristic of online interaction in cyberspace has made women build strong support networks and share and discuss issues they are struggling with. The internet has already enabled the dialog to take place in a space without place.

The way for a community to speak and be heard has already shifted due to the existence of cyberspace. The moment to speak is in important events so subalterns can create a discourse, where they can be the subject, (as mentioned previously)
In this page to show their concern to this page. Any postings collected will be coded and then categorized to answer the research questions.

To contextualize this statement, I would like to illustrate the involvement of Muslim women in the MWAF Facebook page. In mainstream society, many veiled women are subject to racism and Islamophobic treatment. In terms of difference, Facebook should be seen as creating tools, horizons, and practices that create a new concept of agency and subjectivities, and the relations of power.

Online movements for Muslim feminists have been used for several purposes. To speak about differences and queerness in Arabic countries, Muslim feminists have established a website as a place to gain solidarity. The website called AWSA has connected women to help resist injustice and ethnic gender-bias that is being experienced by women from different places. In this context, cyberspace has allowed women to escape from a patriarchal regime and make movement in the safest place (Stephan, 2013).

The use of social media is an important notion for the feminist movement. In the Arab spring, the visibility of women becomes more globally spread when they are engaged with social media which makes them be able to be visible on the global stage. This fact sustains the assumption that social media has the ability to change the world (Newsom and Lengel, 2012). Newsome & Lengel argue that for those who are isolated and silenced, social media is a crucial instrument for them to make their needs and goals are being recognized globally (Rai, A. S. (1995)).

Unlike another form of web 2.0 spaces, the social network is considered as more me-centric. In the matter of me-centric, Facebook may offer the users to access information, post information and communicate each other, with highly individualized and personalized perspective. This character enables the marginalized voice to express them.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research, I would like to do virtual ethnography in compiling data. The point of ethnography research is that the engagement between the researcher and all participants. Hine argues the researcher is not only an outsider that watches the subject but also shares the same concerns, emotions, and commitments of the research subject. Therefore, in ethnography, the researcher needs to get involved with the participants.

Christine Hine notes that ethnography research can be done on the internet, even it lacks face-to-face interaction between researcher and the subject. Hine recognizes everything that goes on the internet is counted as social interaction. Things that we see on the internet can be considered as a collection of texts. Therefore, Hine says that using the Internet becomes a process of reading and writing texts, and the ethnographer’s job is to develop an understanding of the meaning which underlie and are enacted through these textual practices, even by some researchers texts have counted as secondary instruments of cultural products while oral interaction becomes the primary resources for ethnographers. Yet, Hine argues that text becomes important once the researcher has cultural contexts in which form it.

As I mentioned before, I use virtual ethnography for the main perspective of my research. The pivotal method to do the ethnography is observation done by the researcher. Nevertheless, I should acknowledge the limitations of time that I use to do the ethnography. My participation in this page was started on 8 April 2013, and I already observed the page since then. I limit my observation until 1st of September 2013, since the practical issue related to the time that I have to do this paper. I observe all the postings, comments, and pictures. The data collected will be coded and then categorized to answer the research questions.

At the same time, I was joining the event created by Sofia Ahmed called Muslim Women Against Femin... Muslimah Pride Day on Facebook. She also established Muslim Women Against Femen in two forms on Facebook. One is in the closed group form, where people who want to join in this group should be accepted by administrator first. The postings in this group only can be seen by the members as the character of the group is closed one. The other one is in the community page form, where people can freely push “like” button on this page to show their concern to this page. Any postings (article, photograph, or a note from moderator) are open for all people, even when they do not push “like” button. Everybody is free to give comments on every posting on this page. Meanwhile, only the administrators can post articles or photographs. For this research, I choose to do the research on MWAF in community page form, since it is open for all. Instead of using field notes, I observe their conversation which appears as texts.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

Regarding the background mentioned, I will raise questions:

How do groups of Muslim women in MWAF, as the subject, express their negotiation of agency relates to the issue about Muslim women in social media?
ANALYSIS

I begin by quoting one of the Quran’s verses since this line contains the issue of equality amongst mankind. Moreover, it makes it clear that God has created humans differently. Therefore, difference cannot be avoided. Furthermore, Lorde’s words, above, is very important to me as it makes me realize that the differences are not at the core of our problems with diversity, but the manner in which we face the differences is the main problem.

On this page is different and represented as the other is both displayed and celebrated. The page becomes the site where Muslim women speak about their own problems, either in Muslim society or in Western society. In order to see how this group, use this page to express the negotiation of their agency, I will find the data are categorized into two issues: how the members celebrate their subjectivity and make it as central material in debate; how the covered and uncovered body is interpreted.

Celebrating Subjectivity

In the first chapter, I discussed how the veil, as part of the body, has been the site of debate. The way the body is interpreted and recognized is inseparable from political discourse. When the body becomes the instrument of the subject in doing their gender, then what is hidden behind the deed? In this part, I will discuss how freedom is being celebrated and debated in some of the threads on this page.

At the beginning of the page’s establishment, they started posting photographs of women wearing the veil or headscarf. In Image one, the women are holding signs and placards indicating their free choice in wearing the veil. The juxtaposition of the body with the headscarf and the nakedness in the second image or naked Femen protestors is interesting on this page. The debate is no longer about being dressed up or being naked, but about how being dressed or not is about freedom. Here, the image shows us that wearing the veil is a freedom of expression.

![Picture 1: Posted on 6th April 2013, by Sisters in Berlin](image)

The reason I am choosing this image is that it obviously shows the celebration of freedom either in naked form and covered form. Besides, this picture gained 249 comments, 1,442 likes, and 821 shares. Compared with other pictures, this image gained the most “like” of pictures on the page. The second image below was taken at FEMEN’s strike in front of the Berlin mosque. As I already argued in the first chapter, the idea of freedom FEMEN campaigned for in their solidarity movement is problematic as they generalize Muslim women by assuming, they all share the same values and experience. In this image, it can be seen how FEMEN promotes freedom in naked form to Muslim women.

In picture 1, above, a girl wearing a headscarf holds a sign that says: There is more than one way to be free. The term “freedom” is the most often discussed topic in the comments of this picture. The debate centres on whether the women in this image have freedom or not. The debate also discusses how religion has restricted women from the freedom to show their bodies. This statement leads to the next question: what actually freedom is.
As Sergei Prozorov argues in his book *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty*, the concept of freedom has been celebrated in Western societies. Meanwhile, it becomes the enemy for Western “free society” itself. Prozorov uses the term pseudo-emancipatory when he argues that if freedom is determined in one meaning it restricts other concepts of freedom which are different from its determination.

Therefore, to give a certain meaning of freedom is not an easy job. One of the conditions that can be defined as freedom is when freedom has the ontological status of potentiality. Potentiality means the chance to be or not to be. In other words, freedom is the position when the subject has the potential of being or being otherwise.

Furthermore, the chance of being or not being is not completely free from Foucault’s perspective. Being or not being in Foucault’s perspective is not purely based on rationality and scientific reasoning. The action of choosing the self to be or not to always exist inside the discourse that is controlled by power. Foucault argues that freedom might be the pre-condition of power since power is exercised over free subjects. In this condition, power permeates the condition where the subject is having freedom to choose to be covered or uncovered. The celebration for both forms of body and interpreting it as free from power, based on Foucault, is the tricky assumption.

Meanwhile, going beyond Foucault, Butler asserts that the concept of construction is not merely about power which acts on bodies but is not understood to form them. In her book *Bodies That Matters*, Butler asserts that sex and sexuality are in some sense constructed and, in some sense, free, in some sense determined and, in some sense, fixed. Butler suggests that in doing their sex and sexuality, the subject is repeating and iterating the norms under and through the constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo. In picture 1, it can be seen that the women wearing headscarf were asserting two premises: being free and being Muslim. On the one hand, they claim their selves free, but on the other hand, they enact themselves to Islamic regulation, which is recognized by some feminists as not part of freedom.

The same process of iteration also appears in another picture on this page (see image below).

![Picture 2: Sent by women from France and Uploaded on 6th April 2013](image)

The interesting part of this picture is the written words: “My freedom is to wear my hijab in front of my haters”, and the fact that the girl is French, where wearing the headscarf is restricted. The condition of freedom in the image above is when the subject has the potential to be or not to be in front of other subjects who wish she is not to be. Meanwhile, I will say that this notion is not as simple as that when I see from the context where she is coming from.

The veil in France has been a debate long before its banning. Its incompatibility with French values made the veil a crucial debate since 1989. The struggle of the veil in France started from the banning of the headscarf worn by school and college pupils and continued until the banning of the headscarf for administrative purposes. The France sentiment towards the headscarf is not merely because of the War on Terror, but also due to the long history between France and Algeria. As Scott argues, the veil becomes the signifier of the difference between Islam and France. The implication of this religious and cultural incompatibility has made practicing the headscarf difficult as it involves negotiation and anticipation.

Another part that seems interesting on the note of picture 3 is when she mentions: I don’t do anything to please people. The word “people” in this text can infer two meanings: firstly, people might refer to “the bearded man” that FEMEN has pointed to like the men who oppress Muslim women. Secondly, the term “people” might refer to the French since she comes from France. For both references it will imply a different background and meaning.

The premise that she is wearing the headscarf, which is considered as a bodily enactment in Islam, amongst the haters is the evidence where the iteration and repetition of norms can be done by the subjects under the constraints.
Body Naked & Covered

As I discussed previously in the first chapter, the way girls wear their clothes is never out of social contexts. Therefore, the celebration of freedom can be tricky in certain contexts. In this part, I will put the debate about how nakedness is being discussed, and how some of the theorists see nakedness as the form of resistance as well.

On this Facebook page, when they start to celebrate the veil on their photographs, it becomes problematic at certain moments. Most members, I argue, respect the veiled body, yet they condemn the naked movement because of their nakedness. This is one of the conversations that discuss nakedness;

Rafal Sawicki | Nudity is a true enslavement. Treating women like rubber dolls for men's joy has nothing to do with respect for their dignity. Don't trust liberal propaganda. They will give you their "personal freedoms" in order to instrumentalize your bodies and you will eventually end up as lonely mothers with no views for future. That's why I suggest ignoring those guys with immature beliefs. They are too narrow-minded to understand something that exceeds their sexual impulses. Women from Femen are just "useful idiots" of liberal ideology. Don't bother them.
(Posted on 7th April, Got 16 likes)

Ingunn Bilbissi Holm | 100 % right! Nudity only oppresses women and is not making them free at all.
(Posted on 7th April, Got 6 likes)

The reason why this page is against the naked movement becomes blurred in the conversation above. The page is against some naked movements because they promote Islamophobia and racism. Meanwhile, in the conversation above, they interpret nakedness into a single meaning. In some instances, being naked is the symbol that they resist oppression. In her book, Revolting Subjects, Imogen Tyler asserts that the naked movement is long used as a means of generating public dissent through political spectacle. Souweine says that naked protest is dominated by the Western movement and has various purposes with some of them protesting against the war in Iraq, or anti-globalization (Tyler, 2013).

Spivak also sees that nakedness could be the form of resistance to a certain point. Spivak argues about Mahasveta Devi's story entitled "Draupadi" with Dopdi as the main character. Devi narrates the story about the fight of a woman against the enclosure and appropriation of their land (Tyler, 2013). In Mahabharata, Draupadi is a woman who lives with five husbands and was raped when her husband lost a bet, for which he had staked Draupadi. When she was being raped, God, Krishna, helped her, so she never runs out of clothes when she was being stripped. Meanwhile, in her story, Devi illustrates the male can strip Dopdi easily. Her being naked, Spivak argues, is the end of the leadership of men. When she refuses to put clothes on, male power is being destroyed by her naked body, since it becomes, as Spivak calls, a terrifying super object.

To sum up, when one certain body is being celebrated, it will be problematic on the other side. When it comes to claiming another form of body into a single meaning, the aim of this movement will lose its meaning.

Nevertheless, the administrator puts in the effort to maintain the differences in this page by posting:

We have now removed the last status that has been posted up. If you didn't catch it, it was about hijaab-wearing sisters and non-hijaab wearing women with the kind of sentiment that we are not willing to promote- "Be like a diamond precious and rare not like a stone found everywhere." There are plenty of pages that say these cringey things and we don't want to be one of them!
(Posted by the Administrators of MWAF, on 16th of May 2013)

The posting above draws the line where the limit of critique may be raised by the members of MWAF.

"Are We Feminists?"

One of the advantages of the cyber community is that it gives the participants time to be reflexive about their own community. This reflexive moment happens when the administrator posted the reflexive question to the members about the meaning of their movement;

What do you think should be the purpose of Muslimah Pride now?
-April
(Posted by Administrator on 19th of May 2013)

The question above generated 19 comments from the members of MWAF. Most of the members gave answers in a positive manner about the MWAF movement. Most of them said that this page was an effort of Muslim women to talk to the world about their own problems and their own concerns. They considered this as the way to speak and give Muslim women voice after being silenced by a dominant discourse about Islam and the veil.

They realized that this movement was part of the writing process where they put a trace in the public space about their existence, story and their efforts to strive for their agency. I argue, that this question has emphasized their activism as a
feminist movement. If feminism is interpreted as the consciousness of being women regardless of race, culture or other hegemonic power, then the question is which women it refers to. The question about women becomes vague since it is clear that womanhood is always constructed by race, culture or hegemonic power. Therefore, shifting the interpretation of feminism from essentialist thinking about women into thinking that the consciousness of womanhood is influenced by race, culture and hegemonic culture, will give the feminism from the Third World more visibility. Mohanty asserts that the way Third World women engage with feminism is that they appear in storytelling and practices of writing about their own story to oppose the dominant discourse about consciousness and agency.

In the context of this research, some Muslim women choose cyberspace to leave the trace of their own story in the public space to gain their agency. New technology has provided space for people who are marginalized to have their own voice and made their presence more visible. If Mitra argues that sometimes in cyberspace having voice is more pivotal than being heard, then in MWAF, I see that being heard is as important as having voice itself. Therefore, they open this group to everyone, even when they disagree with the movement of MWAF. The disagreement is the evidence that their voice is being heard on some points. Meanwhile, Mitra argues that in some instances, people who speak on the Internet face problems related to trust and authenticity. Since they do not have the power to have authority in the dominant media, they do not gain trust easily. It also happens on this page when the administrator posted about an attack on a Muslim woman.

We've received a very troubling report of a violent hate-crime against a 55-year-old Muslim woman in Mayfair. She was grabbed from behind and punched repeatedly on the back of the head.

She fell face down on the pavement. The attacker then grabbed her headscarf and dragged her along the pavement, continuing to beat her around the head and face (Bagheri, N. (2019)).

He shouted profanities at Muslims, Ramadhan whilst beating her, as well as spitting on her, he had the women's blood on his shirt and hands.

With his bloody hands, he slapped her on the face, leaving a blood-stained hand-print on her face.

He then ran off; the women fell unconscious. The hate crime has been reported to the police (Price, L. S. (2001, March)).

Via Islamic Human Rights Commission

(Posted on 1st August 2013, by Administrator)

From the posting above, there was one comment asking where the source of news comes from. She asked that since when she shared the posting, one of her friends asked about the source of the story. This reflects that authenticity is a problem for marginalized voices when they tell their stories.

It is another expression of how some Muslim women have a voice and write their own story and resistance is manifested when they expose how some Muslim women become victims of racism in Western countries.

Members of #Muslimahpride will be present at the Anti-Fascist Demo Against the EDL in Birmingham today.

Muslim women are the biggest victims of Anti-Muslim violent attacks on the streets of the UK. The Majority of attackers have some link to the Fascist EDL.

Muslim women need to show visible opposition to their Nazi Ideology. Please try and join us on Broad Street today. Come say HI, we will be handing out leaflets and be there to provide a voice for the Muslim women who are victims of the EDL.

THEY SHALL NOT PASS!

(Posted on July 20th 2013 by Administrator)

As discussed earlier, Islamophobia has its own history. It is not merely because Islam doesn’t belong to the Western culture, it is also sustained by the crime committed by some male Muslims. Either war or crime was carried out in the name of responsibility. Butler asserts people feel responsible only for those who are recognizable to them in some way. France feels responsible for banning the veil because they are responsible for sustaining their secular values. The United States is responsible for unveiling women because they feel responsible for liberating women. Meanwhile, this responsibility has a domino effect where there is life to be sacrificed and its grief becomes invisible. Parallel with what Butler said, the administrator of MWAF stated that Islamophobia has made women as the main victims. Since Islam is seen as barbaric or pre-modern, because it is not yet having conformed to those norms that make the human recognizable, therefore people who embrace Islam in their life becomes less valuable. Muslim women who wear the veil become the biggest victim as they wear an obvious Islam attribute as part of their body, and their veil is the marker of their race and identity.

The cyberspace community is needed by disadvantaged groups to conduct collective actions and empowerment. This is the way they challenge the dominant media that has the power to define which life is or is not precarious. Butler emphasizes that by challenging the dominant media, certain kinds of lives may become visible in their precariousness.

Furthermore, the point that they emphasize on this page is the awareness of sexuality.
The traditional colonial image of the veiled Muslim woman as the sheltered, docile sexual property of her husband is just as misleading and simpleminded as the postmodernist image of the veil as the emblem of the female freedom and empowerment from Western cultural hegemony. The veil may be neither or both of these things, but that is up to Muslim women to decide for themselves. (Kennedy, H. (2005))

Posted by Sofia
(Posted on 27th June 2013 by Administrator)

The posting above critiques the traditional image of the veiled Muslim woman as the subject who is unaware of her own sexuality. The veil and sexuality have been the point of debate amongst Muslim feminists. Fatima Mernissi argues for the concept of the veil as a way to highlight the power of women. She argues that the veil is evidence that women’s sexuality is not passive in Islam. Mernissi asserts that human desire is sacred in Islam. It is the way that humans praise God under the rules. Therefore, Islam admits that sexuality does exist within the human, but since it is sacred, Muslim women express it privately.

El Guindi considers that women’s body and sexuality is the sacred space in Arab-Islam cultures. Instead of being invisible, El Guindi argues that wearing the veil is the part of being visible, even when their bodies cannot be seen. The veil is regulating “seeing” since it is related to respect and privacy (El-Guindi, 1999). Therefore, to sum up, instead of restricting their sexuality, Muslim women understand that their enactment to the veil is the very expression of their awareness of their sexuality.

CONCLUSION
At the end of the research, I found the way they use social media to express their negotiation about practicing piety. As I mentioned before, an individual should be the subject of the prior condition of agency. Subjectivity itself will have emerged in the resistance process. This notion is an important process in Muslim Women Against Femen Facebook page. They resist the dominant discourse about the practice of the veil by Muslim women in order to gain their agency.

The second way they express their subjectivity is that they articulate freedom on the page. The articulation of freedom has initiated the member to discuss what freedom is and if Muslim women wear headscarf their own freedom or not. On the other hand, this articulation has promoted the celebration of freedom which in certain moments made some members give single meaning to another feminist movement, thing that should be criticized. I find this celebration in some discussion about how they interpret nakedness done by women.

In the last part of my analysis, I find how this feminist movement speaks about themselves and their own problem, to gain their agency. In this page, they aware of their sexuality, and how some Muslim women become subjugated by the discourse that promotes Islamophobia.

It is strongly recommended for countries that have multicultural society, should embrace all the differences that exist. Countries should accommodate the differences that occur within the communities, therefore, all the marginalized people are safe from any discrimination.

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