

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

FACULTAT DE FILOLOGIA, TRADUCCIÓ I COMUNICACIÓ

DOCTORAL PROGRAMME 3135
'LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, CULTURES, AND
THEIR APPLICATIONS'



**The Image of Women in Sandow Birk's *American Qur'an*
(2015): A Social Semiotic Analysis**

Presented by Elaheh Toosheh

Supervised by Dr. José Santaemilia Ruiz

Academic year 2024-2025

July 2025

To my mother, who granted me the freedom to embark on this journey

To my Husband, who placed her unwavering faith in me

To my sisters, who have been the steadfast pillars of my life

To my brother, who awakened the warrior within me;

And to my son, who is the miracle that breathes life into my existence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for Dr. Jose Santaemilia Ruiz and his dedicated guidance, support and kindness he has shown me throughout this process.

DECLARACIÓN JURADA

Elaheh Toosheh, con DNI n. ° Y9389525L

Declaro que:

El trabajo presentado ha sido realizado solo por mí y que ninguna de las partes de las que consta y el material presentado ha sido escrito por otra persona, a excepción de las citas o del material identificados como pertenecientes a otro. Hago esta declaración juradas sabiendo que, si se comprobara su falsedad, la calificación sería negativa.

En Valencia a, __24____ de ____July____ de 2025____

Abstract

This study explores the intersection of language, gender equality, and religious texts, with a focus on the Qur'an. Feminist writers and translators have critiqued the patriarchal language in sacred texts and its impact on gender representation. Traditionally rooted in patriarchal societies, Qur'anic translations have often reflected male-dominated interpretations. Recent efforts by female scholars aim to reinterpret these texts through a more gender-inclusive lens, addressing the urgent need for redefining contemporary understanding of Islam and promoting gender equality in light of rising violence against women. A significant contribution to this discourse is Sandow Birk's 2015 illustrated adaptation of the Qur'an for American readers. Birk's work combines visual and textual translation, using contemporary American imagery to make the Qur'an's teachings more accessible. This study employs a Multimodal Social Semiotic Analysis to examine Birk's illustrations and their portrayal of women's identities in society. This approach addresses a gap in the multimodal analysis of religious texts, particularly the Qur'an. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's visual communication grammar framework, derived from Halliday's systemic functional grammar, this research investigates how Birk's illustrations challenge the patriarchal tone of the Qur'an. It aims to uncover strategies used by the illustrator to depict women as active societal participants, contrasting with traditional roles defined by patriarchal interpretations. This research contributes to the broader discourse on gender, religion, and translation, providing new insights into the visual and textual reinterpretation of the Qur'an in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: MCDA, Social Semiotics, Intersemiotic Translation, Qur'an

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1.THEORETICAL APPROACH	5
1.2.SOCIAL SEMIOTICS	6
1.3.VISUAL SOCIAL SEMIOTIC	7
1.4.MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS	9
1.5.OBJECTIVES OF THE DISSERTATION	10
1.6.ANALYTICAL TOOLTOP OF FORMTOP OF FORM	13
1.7.VISUAL GRAMMAR	14
1.8.DATA ANALYSIS	22
CHAPTER 2.....	24
QUR'AN AND WOMEN	24
2.1.QUR'AN	25
2.2.WOMEN DURING THE TIME OF REVELATION OF QUR'AN	26
2.3.WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN QUR'AN	31
CHAPTER 3.....	44
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE USA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	44
3.1.INTRODUCTION	45
3.2.FEMINISM AND ISLAMIC FEMINISM	46
3.3.WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST	49
3.3.1. <i>Israel</i>	51
3.3.2. <i>Afghanistan</i>	53
3.3.3. <i>Saudi Arabia</i>	55
3.3.4. <i>Iran</i>	57
3.4.THE MIDDLE EAST WOMEN IN ITS MEDIA	58
3.5.IMAGES OF THE MUSLIM WOMAN IN WESTERN MEDIA	60
3.5.1. <i>Women in America</i>	63
3.5.2. <i>Media and American Women</i>	65
3.5.3. <i>Muslim Women in West</i>	67
CHAPTER 4.....	71
WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN THE ENGLISH-TRANSLATED VERSIONS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN	71

4.1.INTRODUCTION	72
4.2.FEMALE TRANSLATORS AND THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN	73
4.3.MALE TRANSLATORS AND THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN.....	78
CHAPTER 5.....	93
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE AMERICAN QUR'AN.....	93
5.1.AMERICAN QUR'AN	94
5.2.WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN QUR'AN	97
5.2.1.Women in The Cow Surah	97
5.2.2.Women in The Family of Al-Imran (Imran Family) Surah.....	103
5.2.3.Women in The Women (Al-Nisa) Surah.....	105
5.2.4.Women in the Table Surah	110
5.2.5.Women in The Rock (Al-Hijr) Surah	113
5.2.6.Women in The Bee Surah	116
5.2.7.Women in The Maryam Surah.....	118
5.2.8.Women in Ta-Ha Surah.....	120
5.2.9.Women in the Believers Surah.....	122
5.2.10.Women in the Light Surah	123
5.2.11.Women in The confederation (AL-Ahzab) Surah.....	125
5.2.12.Women in the Table (Al-Ma'idah) Surah	129
5.2.13.Women in Divorce Surah	131
5.2.14.Women in the Prohibition Surah	134
5.2.15.Women in the Examine her Surah	136
5.2.16.Women in the Tattle Surah	138
CHAPTER 6.....	149
CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS.....	149
6.1.FUTURE RESEARCH.....	158
REFERENCES	160
APPENDICES.....	173

List of Figures

FIG. 1.....	99
FIG. 2.....	102
FIG. 3.....	104
FIG. 4.....	108
FIG. 5.....	109
FIG. 6.....	111
FIG. 7.....	112
FIG. 8.....	115
FIG. 9.....	117
FIG. 10.....	119
FIG. 11.....	121
FIG. 12.....	122
FIG. 13.....	124
FIG. 14.....	127
FIG. 15.....	128
FIG. 16.....	130
FIG. 17.....	133
FIG. 18.....	135
FIG. 19.....	137
FIG. 20.....	139

List of Tables

TABLE 1: THE SELECTED CATEGORIES OF KRESS AND VAN LEEUWEN'S MDA FOR THE DATA ANALYSIS	21
TABLE .1: THE LIST OF MALE TRANSLATORS WHO TRANSLATED QUR'AN INTO ENGLISH	82
TABLE 1. THE STATISTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VISUAL CATEGORIES OF THE SELECTED IMAGES IN AMERICAN QUR'AN (COMPOSITIONAL)	141
TABLE 2. THE STATISTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VISUAL CATEGORIES OF THE SELECTED IMAGES IN AMERICAN QUR'AN (REPRESENTATIONAL)	142
TABLE. 3 THE STATISTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF VISUAL CATEGORIES OF THE SELECTED IMAGES IN AMERICAN QUR'AN (INTERACTIONAL)	143

Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent times, the arena of language has emerged as a significant battleground in the ongoing pursuit of gender equality. Feminist writers and translators have raised compelling concerns about the presence of patriarchal language and have successfully drawn attention to the issue of sex discrimination. Their critical scrutiny has effectively prompted a broader examination of the politics and repercussions associated with grammatical and linguistic conventions found in various types of texts, including those of a religious and sacred nature.

Given their origins in historically patriarchal societies, ancient religious texts, such as the Qur'an, have gained notoriety for their predominantly patriarchal tonalities. These tones, which may appear exclusionary and discriminatory against women to contemporary readers, have ignited discussions surrounding gender representation. This discussion is of paramount importance, particularly in light of the alarming increase in violence against women that necessitates more concerted attention and action.

Over the past century, the Qur'an has seen translations into more languages than what occurred during the preceding 14 centuries combined. These translations have been undertaken by a diverse group of individuals, including scholars, academics, both Muslim laity and non-Muslims, and notably, women. (It's worth noting that in 2007, the first English translation of the Qur'an by an American woman, Laleh Bakhtiar, was published.) Arabic, as a language, presents a unique challenge in translation due to the fact that its words often carry multiple, and at times, conflicting meanings. Thus, the choice of how to render an Arabic word into English is heavily influenced by the translator's biases and preconceptions.

Taking the following example from Surah 4:34, which has historically been interpreted as permitting husbands to physically discipline their wives: "As for those women who might rebel against you, admonish them, abandon them in their beds, and strike them (*adribuhunna*)."

The issue, as several female Qur'anic scholars have pointed out, is that "*adribuhunna*" can also signify "turn away from them" or even "engage in sexual intercourse with them (Wadud. 2018)." Clearly, the translator's choice of definition is shaded by their preexisting beliefs about a husband's authority. The current generation of Qur'an translators is challenging long-standing, traditionalist, male-dominated, and frequently misogynistic interpretations by clerics. Instead, they are adopting a more contemporary, individualized, and often more gender-inclusive approach to interpreting the Qur'an. In the process, they are not only altering the way in which Islam's sacred text is read, but they are also redefining the understanding of Islam itself in the modern world. Some argue that the Qur'an contains verses and teachings that appear to prioritize men over women and reinforce patriarchal norms. Islamic feminist scholars

and activists engage with the Qur'an to challenge patriarchal interpretations and to highlight verses that promote women's rights and gender equality. They argue that the Qur'an can be a source of empowerment for women and a catalyst for positive social change (Wadud, 1999).

While written language took shape approximately 7,000 years ago, the utilization of images to record and convey information traces its origins back even further, extending over millennia, as corroborated by Hietala's research in 1996. Mirzoeff's perspective, as outlined in 1998, delineates the current age as one marked by the rise of "eye-centered" societies, highlighting the increasing importance of visual communication in the configuration of contemporary social frameworks. As potent agents of socialization, book illustrations possess the capacity to shape individuals' identities, attitudes, and values. This idea is encapsulated in Fairclough's assertion (1989) that "Not all photographs are equal, as each photograph represents a specific image of a scene or person, out of numerous potential images. This choice is of paramount importance because various images convey distinct meanings" (p. 52). These depictions hold the power to profoundly influence public opinions, values, and ideologies, as emphasized by Gamson et al. in 1992. Furthermore, these images have the potential to alter individuals' attitudes toward groups of people with whom they may have limited or no direct contact. Consequently, when individuals from different races, nationalities, social backgrounds, or genders are portrayed poorly and inaccurately, they might experience negative effects and a sense of marginalization.

Sandow Birk, an American illustrator, embarked on a mission to convey its timeless wisdom visually to contemporary American readers in 2015. His endeavor involved illustrating (a form of inter-semiotic translation) based on different translations of the Qur'an. Birk, known for his focus on contemporary social issues, sought to illuminate the Qur'an for the American audience, making its sacred teachings more accessible to modern readers in the United States. He recognized how Islam was often vilified in American media, particularly in the wake of events such as 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the prevailing discourse on whether Islam was fundamentally incompatible with the Western world. Birk's project utilized copyright-free English translations of the Qur'an by various authors. He illustrated selected Qur'anic passages in a manner tailored to the American audience, employing a graffiti-inspired "font" and illuminating the text with scenes from contemporary American life. This version of the Qur'an is distinctive for being the first to captivate through the eye rather than the ear, as noted by Lawrence (2017: 150): "The *American Qur'an* combines a transcription, an adaptation, and an illumination into one large, luxuriant book. Then came 9/11, and soon after the US invasion of Afghanistan, followed by the invasion of Iraq."

In this project, we adopt a Multimodal social semiotic Analysis to conduct a qualitative analysis on the first illustrated adaptation of Qur'an. Semiotic analysis treats signs and texts as research objects and allows researchers to find meaning, including ideological meaning, behind these objects (Creswell & Miller, 1997). Through this analysis, we delve into the strategies used in the *American Qur'an's* illustrations to convey meanings concerning the identity of women as members of society. It is worth noting that, to date, there has been no study on the subject of Qur'an's illustrations, especially considering social semiotics. The novelty of this research lies in its contribution to bridging a gap in multimodal analysis of religious texts such as The Holy Qur'an adapted for contemporary audiences.

Adopting the theoretical framework of visual communication grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen, which grew out of Halliday's systemic functional grammar, this project makes a detailed multimodal analysis of *American Qur'an* verses which are related directly and indirectly to women issues. As we apply this framework to the illustrations of *American Qur'an*, our aim is to show how the illustrator as a motivated rhetor (as described by Kress 2010, 26), or sign maker, creates images to convey specific social, political, and aspirational messages to the audience about women in Qur'anic verses. Furthermore, our objective is to shed light on the strategies employed by the illustrator to liberate the Qur'anic text from its patriarchal tone. For instance, we seek to discern whether there are endeavors to portray women as active participants in societal roles or wives and homemakers under patriarchal rule.

The study is structured into four chapters, with the first chapter delving into the historical and societal context in which the Qur'an was revealed, offering insights into the status and treatment of women during the time of revelation of Qur'an. This chapter establishes the groundwork for a comprehensive exploration of the Qur'an's teachings and their influence on the treatment and status of women. The second chapter scrutinizes the representation of women in both American and Middle Eastern mass media, providing an account of the situation of women in modern America and the Middle East. This contextualization serves as the backdrop for the comparative analysis in the fourth chapter, where we compare the status of women in *American Qur'an* with their real-life representation in the contemporary era. The third chapter further explores how women are represented in English-translated versions of the Qur'an, translated by both male and female translators. In the fourth chapter, we endeavor to show how the illustrator (an intersemiotic translator) transformed the patriarchal context of the Qur'an in comparison to the interlingual translators, identifying the strategies employed to depict women as members of society and to challenge prevailing female gender stereotypes.

1.1. Theoretical approach

In the realm of social semiotics, texts are conceptualized as multimodal complexes, constituting amalgamations of more than one mode. Modes, such as writing, speech, gesture, music, dance, and layout, serve as tangible resources for manifesting meaning. The uniqueness of modes results from both their typically distinct materiality and the specific social shaping each mode undergoes, often evolving over extended periods through ongoing social interaction. This perpetual shaping gives rise to resources characterized by recognizable regularities, comprehensible to members of a given social group, thereby shaping the historical trajectory and current state of mode development.

From a social semiotic perspective, meaning emerges as a response to the impetus of a social agent (the rhetor), whose meanings undergo semiotic articulation by a designer and materialization by a producer. Frequently, these three roles are consolidated within a single individual. The rhetor/designer/producer orchestrates modes and other non-material semiotic resources to craft texts-as-prompts, driven by the rhetor's interests within a specific moment and environment. During text production, the rhetor/designer meticulously evaluates the environment, pondering questions like "What is the world in which I am designing my prompt?" and "What do I aim to achieve?" They also consider audience characteristics and available semiotic resources, contemplating how these resources will serve their objectives.

This perspective leads to a fundamental tenet of Social Semiotic theory: the prompt is regarded as a sign-complex. In a sign, the convergence of meaning and form, signifier and signified, is never arbitrary; it is motivated by the signmaker's interests. Signs are crafted based on the maker's interests, considering salient environmental factors. The specific combination of signifier/form and signified/meanings arises from the maker's interests, reinforcing the notion that signs are always freshly created, constantly reshaping the pre-existing designed world with each sign-making act.

In the realm of interaction and communication, signs and meaning-making occur twice. The initial maker creates signs, and the individual engaging with the sign, through their interpretation and transformation, designs a new sign based on their interests and semiotic resources. This process entails constant modification of modes, reflecting the interplay between the material affordances of modes and the transformative semiotic efforts of both the initial rhetor/designer and the re-designer.

Within social semiotics, a text is perceived as a composition of interconnected signs—a sign-complex fashioned with signs in various modes. The text, as a sign-complex, strives for

internal cohesion and coherence, aligning with its environment. Its completeness derives from the occasions of its social use and creation. A text serves as the designer's adept representation of their endeavor to align with the rhetor's interest.

1.2. Social Semiotics

Semiotics, also known as semiology, represents the field devoted to the study of signs. These signs serve as symbols, signifying other concepts or objects. The origins of semiotic science can be traced back to the medieval era, but it acquired its technical precision in the latter half of the twentieth century. Pioneers like Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce laid the groundwork for the exploration of semiotics. Subsequently, a host of semioticians, including Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Marshall McLuhan, Algirdas J. Greimas, Charles Morris, and Roman Jakobson, contributed to the development of sign systems.

Semiotics delves into three principal themes: the examination of signs, the analysis of the systems that give structure to these signs, and the exploration of the social and cultural contexts within which these signs operate (Fan, 2006: 123). In the semiotic perspective, signs are akin to a coin with two inseparable faces (p.88). In this semiotic context, signs can take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, or objects, and semioticians scrutinize these signs not in isolation but as integral components of semiotic "sign-systems" (Chandler, 2002: 2). Additionally, semioticians aim to probe the connections between signs and their meanings, specifically, the relationship between the 'signifier' and 'signified.' In essence, Semiotics is a blend of "a science, complete with its own body of discoveries and theories, and a methodology for examining anything that produces signs" (Sebeok, 2001: 5).

Visual communication, employing visual means, serves to impart information and ideas. Its diverse forms have been subject to examination through multiple lenses, encompassing content analysis (Bell, 2001), cultural dimensions (Stoian, 2015), anthropological studies (Collier & Collier, 1986), psychoanalysis (Dien-Ville 2001), as well as exploration within the realms of film and television (Price 2015) and social semiotics (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001), among others.

Social semiotics encompasses the elucidation of semiotic resources, encompassing an exploration of the possibilities inherent in images and other visual modes of communication, as well as the intricate analysis of the ways in which individuals articulate meanings through their interactions with such visual elements. As articulated by Jewitt and Oyama (2001, 134), this involves an intricate examination of what can be articulated and accomplished using visual

means, along with an exploration of the interpretative dimensions associated with the statements and actions executed through visual representation. Consequently, visual resources are approached through a functionalist lens, wherein, akin to any semiotic resource, they concurrently serve multiple metafunctions, working in tandem to convey nuanced layers of meaning.

Social Semiotics, also referred to as Sociosemiotics, represents a branch within the field of semiotic theory. It grapples with the multifaceted nature of meaning, exploring its manifestations across a spectrum of social occurrences and within diverse cultural settings (Kress, 2010: 2). In the words of Wong (2019), Social Semiotics serves as a framework designed to elucidate the processes of meaning creation, or the crafting of signs, within social milieus and the interactions taking place therein (p. 134). This theory, aptly named 'Social Semiotic,' is fundamentally preoccupied with the manifold dimensions of meaning. This is because meanings inherently manifest within social realms and interactions, thus justifying the nomenclature (Kress, 2010: 54).

Additionally, Social Semiotics constitutes an effort to elucidate and comprehend how individuals generate and convey meaning within particular social contexts (Sharif & Kamali, 2017). Each society possesses its unique characteristics, rendering signs susceptible to divergent interpretations in varying social and cultural environments. As a case in point, the color red can paradoxically symbolize both mourning and life in different regions. Consequently, the interpretation of a sign hinges on the context of its society (Harrison, 2003: 48).

In essence, Social Semiotics harbors a keen interest in the utilization of language in social contexts or, to put it differently, in the role of language in shaping societies. Furthermore, it delves into how communicators harness semiotic resources within language and visual communication to advance their specific interests (Machin & Mayr, 2012:17).

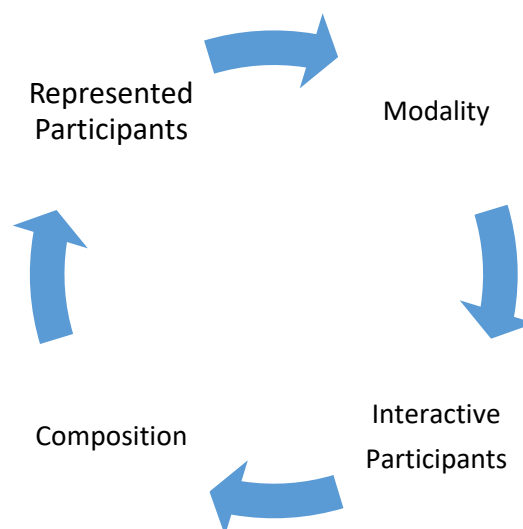
1.3. Visual Social Semiotic

Visual Social Semiotics, as described by Jewitt and Oyama (2001:134), is the comprehensive exploration of semiotic resources, elucidating what can be expressed and achieved through the use of images and other visual modes of communication. It also delves into the interpretation of the actions and expressions associated with images. This approach initially found its roots in O'Toole's seminal work, *The Language of Displayed Art* (1994), and in Kress and van Leeuwen's *The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996). The framework of Visual Social Semiotic

theory finds application across a wide spectrum of resources, including newspaper articles, websites, journalistic photographs, textbook illustrations, children's picture books, and social media photographs, among others.

The core objective of Visual Social Semiotics, as articulated by Wong (2019: 4-5), is to bring to light the social dimensions inherent in the creation of meaning. It achieves this by putting the spotlight on the role of the sign-maker and the social context in which the sign is generated. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996 & 2006) elaborate on four key Visual Social Semiotic elements that illustrate how the visual representation of the interaction order can be constructed.

Fig.1 Visual representation adapted from Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 34)



Interactive participants refer to the people or entities involved in a communicative event. This element focuses on the roles, relationships, and power dynamics between the participants, including the speaker/writer and the audience. It examines how communication is shaped by the social positions and perspectives of those involved. Composition relates to the arrangement and organization of elements within a text or communication artifact. It involves the spatial and structural layout, the use of visual or linguistic features, and how these elements work together to create meaning and coherence. Composition is critical in shaping the overall impact and readability of a message. Represented participants pertain to the individuals or entities that are represented or within a communication artifact. This element explores how different semiotic resources are used to represent people, objects, or concepts. It delves into how these representations contribute to the construction of meaning and the portrayal of certain ideas or ideologies. Modality refers to the way in which meaning is expressed and the resources used

to convey meaning. It encompasses the choice of language, mode of representation (e.g., visual, linguistic, gestural), and the use of various semiotic resources to convey meaning. Modality helps in understanding how messages are constructed and how they affect the audience. These four social semiotic elements are central to the analysis of multimodal communication, helping researchers and analysts understand the complex ways in which meaning is created and interpreted in various forms of discourse.

1.4. Multimodal Analysis

With the advancement of media and communication technologies, there has been a notable transition from single-sign systems to multimodality. This shift aligns with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, as described in O'Toole's "The Language of Displayed Art" (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen's "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design" (1996/2006). Multimodality has now emerged as a fundamental theory of communication and social semiotics. It is the use of several modes of communication other than language.

Multimodality is denoted as Critical Multimodal (CM), Multimodal Analysis (MA), Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), Multimodal Semiotics (MS), or Systemic-Functional Multimodal Analysis (SF-MA). This perspective delves deeper into important matters, probing the interplay between verbal and nonverbal modes of communication, as expounded by Waugh et al. (2015: 98).

The concept of a visual image serves as a vital tool in the process of constructing meaning. This term, "visual image," denotes a wide range of visual elements, such as photographs, paintings, and various images that are incorporated into multifaceted compositions (Serafini, 2012:14). In today's digital landscape, texts have evolved to encompass diverse modes of communication, combining elements like words and images, thereby earning the label of "multimodal texts." As a conveyer of messages, an image possesses inherent significance and influence; it fulfills a distinct purpose and its examination unveils its concealed intricacies and authority. The creator or designer of the image discovers, within its representation, a response to their feelings of inadequacy in this visual-oriented era.

Multimodal texts are ultimately examined from two perspectives: Inter-semiotic relations and Logico-semantic relations. Inter-semiotic relations delve into the manner in which visual and verbal elements complement one another to create a coherent text. On the other hand, Logico-semantic relations refer to the connections between various semiotic modes (as discussed by Wu in 2014). The primary objective of this analysis is to investigate the

interaction between distinct semiotic modes, with a specific focus on the representation and interaction of communicative practices, rather than examining static entities. Each semiotic mode offers a diverse range of resources that contribute to the potential for conveying meaning.

Halliday's SFL theory lays the groundwork and establishes a foundation for conceptualizing how multiple semiotic modes come together to generate meaning in multimodal phenomena. Numerous scholars have contributed to the development of theoretical, descriptive, and methodological tools for the exploration of multimodality, including the works of van Leeuwen (2005), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and (2001). The goal of multimodal analysis is to generate a meta-theory with the capacity to theorize semiotic resources, their functional aspects, their potential for conveying meaning, and their integration within multimodal occurrences, all within the context of the situation and culture in which they are interpreted. The primary focus is on comprehending and elucidating semiotic resources and the underlying principles governing their choices, to gain insight into how individuals employ these resources in social settings to achieve specific objectives (Jewitt, 2014: 130).

1.5. Objectives of the Dissertation

To carry out a social semiotic and multimodal analysis of the *American Qur'an*, the Kress and van Leeuwen Framework for the reading of visual images (1996) will be used as the main investigative tool. By applying the framework to the illustrations contained within the corpus, it is hoped that a clearer picture will emerge of the strategies in which the illustrator attempted to free the Qur'anic text from its patriarchal tone. Are attempts being made, for example, to show women to be active participants in society roles or are they being represented to cling to their more traditional roles of wives and homemakers ruled by the patriarchy. Follows are the research questions of the study:

Research question 1:

How did the attitudes towards women and their societal status evolve during the period of the Qur'an's revelation when Prophet Muhammad resided in Mecca and Medina, and what transformative impacts did the Qur'anic revelations have on the treatment and perception of women in early Islamic society?

Research question 2:

How do social representations of women in American and Middle Eastern media differ in terms of visual imagery, linguistic cues, and symbolic representations, considering the cultural differences and sociopolitical contexts, and how do these differences reflect the

varying emphasis on individualism, empowerment, and diverse representations in American media versus traditional gender roles, cultural norms, and conservative portrayals of femininity in Middle Eastern media?

Research question 3:

How do the personal, cultural, and socio-political backgrounds of female and male translators influence the representation of women's rights in the English translations of the Qur'an?

Research question 4:

To what extent does Sandow Birk's *American Qur'an* challenge and reinterpret patriarchal elements within the Qur'an while maintaining the essence of the original text, and how does this artistic reinterpretation influence perceptions of women's roles and rights in the Qur'anic narratives?

The first research question at the heart of the first chapter seeks to investigate how attitudes towards women and their societal status evolved during the critical period of the Qur'an's revelation when Prophet Muhammad resided in Mecca and Medina. This historical inquiry explores the transformative impact of the Qur'an on the treatment and perception of women, considering the unique contexts of Mecca and Medina and the dynamic societal changes that unfolded during the early Islamic era.

Our hypothesis for this research question is that the attitudes towards women and their status underwent a significant transformation during the period when Prophet Muhammad was in Mecca and Medina, primarily influenced by the Qur'anic revelations. This transformation could be characterized by a shift from a pre-Islamic Arabian society that often marginalized and oppressed women to one that progressively granted those increased rights and recognition.

The hypothesis posits that in Mecca, where the early revelations of the Qur'an began, women might have experienced initial improvements in their status, especially in terms of protection and the rejection of harmful practices such as female infanticide. As Prophet Muhammad received the Qur'anic revelations, which emphasized the equality and dignity of women, this could have laid the foundation for more equitable treatment of women.

In Medina, where the Islamic community began to take shape, our hypothesis suggests that women's roles and participation in various aspects of community life might have expanded, reflecting the Qur'an's teachings. This could include women engaging in economic activities, participating in social and political matters, and benefiting from legal rights that offered them protection and autonomy. The first chapter would seek to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Qur'an and the actions of prophet Muhammad contributed to shaping attitudes towards

women and their status in early Islamic society.

The second research question seeks to investigate how social representations of women in American and Middle Eastern media differ in terms of visual imagery and symbolic representations, considering the cultural differences and sociopolitical contexts. Specifically, it aims to explore how American social media platforms emphasize individualism, empowerment, and diverse representations of women, contrasted with Middle Eastern platforms potentially showcasing more traditional gender roles, cultural norms, and conservative portrayals of femininity. Through the application of social semiotics, the second chapter aims to analyze the utilization of signs, symbols, and discourses in shaping gender identities and roles within the realm of media.

Given the cultural differences and sociopolitical contexts between America and the Middle East, it is hypothesized that the social representations of women in media will vary significantly in terms of visual imagery, linguistic cues, and symbolic representations. Specifically, it is expected that American media will exhibit a greater emphasis on individualism, empowerment, and diverse representations of women, while Middle Eastern media may demonstrate more traditional gender roles, cultural norms, and conservative portrayals of femininity. Through the application of social semiotics, these differences will be elucidated by analyzing the use of signs, symbols, and discourses in the construction of gender identities and roles.

The third research question aims to investigate the representation of women in the English translations of the Qur'an, specifically focusing on verses related to women's rights translated by female translators. This inquiry seeks to shed light on how these interpretations and translations may influence perceptions and understanding of women's roles, status, and rights within the context of Islamic scripture, as well as within the broader English-speaking audience.

The hypothesis for this research question is as follows: "Translators' personal, cultural, and socio-political backgrounds significantly influence the portrayal of women-related issues in English translations of the Qur'an." This hypothesis suggests that the perspectives and biases of translators, which are shaped by their cultural and social contexts, play a substantial role in the representation of women in these translations. It proposes that various translators may interpret Qur'anic verses related to women differently, depending on their personal and political beliefs, cultural and social values. Therefore, a translator with a feminist perspective might emphasize gender equality in their translation, while a translator with a conservative viewpoint might lean towards a more traditional interpretation.

The hypothesis also implies that the English-speaking audience's understanding of women's roles and rights in Islam can be heavily influenced by the translators' choices. It assumes that these translations may not always faithfully represent the original Arabic text but may rather reflect the translator's interpretation, which can sometimes lead to variations in how women and their rights are perceived. To test this hypothesis, the research would involve an examination of English translations of “the women” (al-Nisah) surah, identifying variations in how verses related to women and women's rights are translated and interpreted by different female translators in chapter 3. Additionally, the study would likely include an analysis of the translators' backgrounds, including their cultural, religious, and ideological affiliations, to explore how these factors impact their translation choices.

And the last and fourth research question of this project that will be answered in chapter 4 delves into the representation of women in the *American Qur'an*, a contemporary illustrated interpretation of the Qur'an by artist Sandow Birk, and aims to assess the extent to which his work succeeds in challenging and opposing patriarchal content present in the Qur'an.

The hypothesis of this research question is that Birk's *American Qur'an*, through its artistic reinterpretation, may partially succeed in subverting patriarchal elements within the Qur'an while simultaneously retaining the essence of the original text. This hypothesis suggests that Birk's reinterpretation may introduce alternative perspectives on women and their roles in Qur'anic narratives, potentially ameliorating or reimagining instances where women are traditionally perceived as marginalized or subservient. Through visual art and accompanying translation, he might engage with the Qur'an's text to challenge or question its patriarchal aspects, encouraging viewers to reconsider their understanding of gender dynamics within the Qur'an. This hypothesis also suggests that Birk may retain the core themes and narratives of the Qur'an, indicating that his reinterpretation is not a complete departure from the original text but rather a critical engagement with it. By keeping the essence of the Qur'an intact, Birk's work might appeal to a broader audience, including those with a deep reverence for the Qur'an's content, while still promoting a more egalitarian view of women's roles.

1.6. Analytical Tool

In conducting an analysis of The *American Qur'an*, we employed the visual grammar, as outlined by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), and adapted the metafunctions proposed by Halliday (1978). The consideration of these metafunctions enabled us to delve into the structures embedded within the visual components, examining the representation of individuals

and objects, and understanding the intricate relationships among various modes as perceived by the reader-viewer. When it comes to the Qur'an as a sacred text, no research has been conducted into the subject of stereotyping and bias conveyed by visual elements. What adds to this shortcoming is that the very few researchers who have worked on the Qur'an have restricted their research to investigating the issue of gender stereotyping in the verbal mode, not the visual one.

1.7. Visual Grammar

According to Kress and Leeuwen (1996), visual grammar, rooted in a social perspective, goes beyond a mere replication of reality's structure. Instead, it generates a depiction of reality intertwined with the interests of the social community producing, circulating, and interpreting the image, thereby acquiring an ideological dimension. The conveyed meanings by artists in various mediums, such as printmakers, photographers, designers, painters, and sculptors, primarily encapsulate social meanings. Kress and Leeuwen established a social semiotic framework, providing an inventory of major compositional structures developed as conventions in the history of visual semiotics. Their intention was to analyze how these structures are employed by contemporary image-makers to create meaning (KvL: 1).

KvL introduces a grammar of visual design, presenting a theory of visual representation grounded in social contexts. This grammar serves as a tool for researchers to scrutinize the meaning embedded in images, akin to how grammarians scrutinize the combination of words into clauses, sentences, and texts. Tahririan and Sadri (2013: 140) highlight the critical role of visual design grammar in interpreting images, revealing implicit regularities and invisible patterns that govern visual representation, facilitating viewers in the interpretation, negotiation, and meaning-making from information presented in visual form.

In their seminal work, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]) proposed a method for interpreting images that considers both context and formal elements. Their approach, heavily influenced by Ronald Barthes's theory, diverged from Barthes's theory in the interdependence of meanings in images and texts.

The grammar of visual design, inspired by Michael Halliday's systemic functional grammar (1978), offers a framework for elucidating how visual elements amalgamate and the explicit or concealed meanings they aim to convey. Comparable to the grammatical structure of language, which clarifies how written words combine to express diverse meanings and messages, visual design utilizes elements such as color, mood, perspective, social distance,

framing, and composition (Caldas-Coulthard & Iedema, 2008; Camiciottoli, 2007; Iedema, 2003; Unsworth, 2008). As articulated by Unsworth and Wheeler (2002), this approach underscores the pivotal role of visual design in conveying meaning.

Visual social semiotics, extending Halliday's theory (1978), operates on three simultaneous metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2006) have adapted these metafunctions for visual communication, relabeling them as representational, interactive, and compositional. They assert that "the visual, like all semiotic modes, has to serve several communicational (and representational) requirements, in rotation as a full system of communication" (2006: 41). This perspective accentuates the multifaceted nature of visual communication and its alignment with broader semiotic principles. The theory is grounded in four interconnected assumptions:

(1) The process of creating meaning is multimodal, involving various elements like writing, images, and action simultaneously.

(2) The social context shapes semiotic resources, indicating that the cultural background influences the meaning assigned to a semiotic resource in a given context.

(3) Individual motives drive signs, indicating that people deliberately convey specific meanings in a social setting, and it is not coincidental.

(4) The creators' interests influence their semiotic choices, revealing that individuals use semiotic resources with the intention of achieving specific goals or framing situations (Wong, 2019).

The initial metafunction of their theory, representational, primarily concerns representing the interaction and relation between the people, places, and things, as stated by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006 [1996]). It is not merely that images display the visual structure of reality; they, in fact, represent the standpoint of the institution within which they are produced, distributed, and consumed. Images ideologically carry a "deeply important semantic dimension" (p. 47). Every semiotic act involves interactive participants—those who speak/listen or write/read, make/view images—and represented participants (or 'Social Actors' in Van Leeuwen's (2008))—those who are the subject of the communication. Representation is realized by participants (such as people, figures or things) forming a visual "Syntax" of a given image by relating those participants to each other. Visual structures of representation can be either *narrative* (presenting unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements) or *conceptual* (representing participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, structure or meaning).

Narrative processes depict social actors as engaged in doing something either to or for

each other, with vectors, such as eye lines, bodies, limbs, or gestures indicating a line force in a specific direction, linking participants or processes. Based on different vectors and the number and types of participants involved, various narrative processes are identified, such as (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006):

- Action processes: the participant who forms the vector or is the vector itself is called the Actor. Action processes can be either transactional or non-transactional. Transactional processes have two participants, an Actor and a Goal. Some transactional processes are bidirectional. In this case, a vector connects two interactors in a way that each participant is both an Actor and a Goal simultaneously. Non-transactional processes, however, have only one participant who is usually an Actor.
- Reactional processes: the vector is formed by the direction of the glance of one or more participants, i.e. Reactors. Also, these structures can be non-transactional (the glance is directed toward something outside the picture frame) and transactional (the glance is directed toward another participant, the Phenomenon) (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 67-68).
- Circumstances: narrative images may contain secondary participants that are not related to the main participants using vector but in other ways called circumstances. Circumstances of means are the tools with which the participants perform the actions. The circumstances expressed by visual language are of several types: Locative (relate participants to the Setting), Means (present the tools used in the action process), and accompaniment (depict two participants, who are not linked by a vector) (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 72).

Concerning conceptual structures, they delineate participants based on their class, structure, and meaning, as noted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 59). These structures are categorized into classificational, analytical, and symbolical. Classificational processes establish relationships among participants, always involving a Subordinate for a Superordinate. They are further distinguished as overt or covert taxonomies, depending on whether the Superordinate is explicitly shown (79-87). Additionally, analytical processes establish connections between participants in terms of part-whole structures, where parts or possessive attributes pertain to the whole or carrier.

These processes manifest in various types: unstructured (lacking a carrier), temporal (realized by timelines), exhaustive (presenting possessive attributes comprehensively),

inclusive (with much of the carrier unaccounted for), topographical (involving physical spatial relations), topological (involving logical relations between participants), and spatiotemporal (applied to charts). Lastly, symbolic processes portray the nature or meaning of a participant and can be either attributive or symbolic. In the former, two participants are involved—the Carrier, whose meaning or identity is established, and the Symbolic Attribute, representing the meaning or identity. In the latter, only the Carrier is present, deriving its meaning and identity from its qualities (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 105-107).

Narrative and conceptual structures may appear independently or concurrently, akin to simple or complex sentences in a language. When they coexist, embedding occurs. The distinction between major and minor processes in visuals is discerned "by the relative size and conspicuousness of the elements" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 107).

The second metafunction, interactive, encompasses the interaction between the image producer and viewer. The images depict social interactions, considering relations in this metafunction. In instances where face-to-face communication is absent, producers and viewers of images engage in interaction. In such cases, interactions are shaped by three factors:

1.The gaze: In images where participants, when represented, direct their gaze towards the viewer, vectors are established between them and the viewer, creating a connection at an imaginary level (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These images impose certain 'demands': "The participant's gaze requires something from the viewer, urging them to engage in some form of imaginary relationship." The nature of this relationship depends on the facial expressions exhibited. In instances where the participants avert their gaze from the viewer, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) term them 'offer' images, as they present "the participants to the viewer as pieces of information, subjects of contemplation, impersonally, akin to specimens in a display case."

The dynamic between viewers and the represented participants within an image is shaped and organized by the gaze of the portrayed social actors. When participants refrain from making direct eye contact with the viewer, it implies that they have been presented for the scrutiny of viewers as objects. Conversely, if they engage in direct eye contact, it signifies a demand, indicating a desire or expectation from the audience. The linkage between the viewer and the participant is established through vectors, both on a formal and imaginary plane (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]; Royce, 2007; Unsworth, 2008; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002; Van Leeuwen, 2008).

2. Point of View: The second structure, which establishes connections between participants and the observer, is the angle or point of view. Kress and van Leeuwen elaborate

on two angles: Horizontal and Vertical. The horizontal angle is defined as "a function of the relation between the frontal plane of the image-producer and the frontal plane of the represented participants." This angle serves as an indicator of whether the image producer and viewer are engaged with the participants; a frontal angle signifies involvement, while an oblique angle suggests detachment. Conversely, the vertical angle is associated with power dynamics. If the viewer sees a represented participant from a high angle, the viewer is portrayed as more powerful. Conversely, a low angle depicts the represented participant as holding power in the relationship. When the picture is at eye level, equality prevails in the relationship between participant and viewer, with no power disparity. Kress and van Leeuwen emphasize that the levels of involvement, detachment, and power are nuanced, contingent on the degree of the angle.

In terms of the perspective from which a person is viewed, a horizontal angle determines whether the viewer observes individuals from the side or front. On the other hand, a vertical angle dictates whether the viewer perceives the participants from below, above, or at eye level. Regarding the representation of social relations between viewers and social actors in images, a vertical angle signifies power differentials, while a horizontal angle signifies involvement and detachment (Caldas-Couldhar & Iedema, 2008; Iedema, 2001; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]; Royce, 2007; Van Leeuwen, 2008). Essentially, looking down at someone may imply exerting symbolic power over that person, looking up indicates that someone holds power over the viewer, and eye-level gaze denotes equality. Furthermore, viewing individuals from the outside or front might suggest a direct encounter or confrontation (Camiciottoli, 2007; Royce, 2007).

According to Serafini (2012), the point of view establishes an interactive angle between the reader-viewer and the characters or objects in an image. For instance, the reader and viewer may be positioned to gaze straight at, up at, or down on a character in an image. Looking up at a character confers power or authority, while looking down diminishes the character's perceived power or authority (Serafini 2012). A straight-on angle creates an egalitarian relationship between the reader-viewer and the character.

3. Social distance: The third structure explores the implications of the varying distances between a represented participant and the viewer, suggesting different relations. Drawing upon Edward T. Hall's 'proxemics' (1964), as cited by Kress and van Leeuwen, the spatial arrangement in images plays a pivotal role in determining social relations. Hall (1966) posits that a shorter distance between the participant and viewer signifies a more intimate relationship. Distance, as a visual cue, carries the potential to imply diverse relations between viewers and

social actors, serving as an indicator of interpersonal closeness.

A close shot establishes an intimate connection between the viewer and the participants, fostering a perception of shared identity. Conversely, a wide perspective engenders impersonality, depicting the participants as strangers to the viewer. The medium shot strikes a balance, presenting a more social and objective perspective (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]; Moebius, 1986; Nodelman, 1988, 1999; Van Leeuwen, 2008). Within this framework, the degrees of distance between represented and interactive participants each carry a unique significance.

An extreme close-up shot, capturing less than the social actor's head and shoulders, conveys an intimate distance. A close-up, encompassing the head and shoulders, signals a close personal distance. The medium close shot, cutting off participants at the waist, situates them at a relatively far personal distance. A medium shot, from knees up, aligns more with a social distance. The medium length shot, revealing the full figure, signifies a close social distance. A wide perspective, where the human figure occupies about half the frame's height, implies a distant social connection. Extending beyond this, the very wide perspective, depicting a group of people, conveys a public distance (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

4. Modality: At the interpersonal level, modality assumes significance as it delineates the extent of 'credibility' and 'truthfulness' embodied in a visual text. Serving as an interpersonal structure, modality communicates the extent to which a reader-viewer embraces a visual representation as authentic, truthful, or credible, as asserted by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and Serafini (2012). The heightened modality of an image, denoting its proximity to real-life depiction, corresponds to an increased perception of realism by reader-viewers, as expounded by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The greater the semblance of reality in an image, the more authority and truthfulness reader-viewers ascribe to it, according to Hodge and Kress (1988). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) enumerate eight characteristics of modality contributing to the lifelikeness of any given image, including color saturation, color differentiation, color modulation, contextualization representation, depth, illumination, and brightness.

The third metafunction, compositional, is a combination of the two previous metafunctions: it brings what is represented (ideational) together with interactive components (interpersonal). In other words, it looks at how the first two metafunctions merge to form a meaningful whole through three interrelated systems: information value, salience, and framing (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006 [1996]; Royce, 2007; Unsworth, 2008; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002).

The concept of information value pertains to the arrangement of elements in relation to

each other. For example, positioning individuals on the left side of images may signify aged or established information, whereas those on the right side could be perceived as introducing new information. Additionally, elements placed at the top of images may be deemed ideal and promising, while those at the bottom may emphasize the factual and real aspects. Salience, on the other hand, addresses how elements within images are strategically crafted to demand the attention and retention of viewers. Framing involves the presence of dividing lines or actual frame lines that either connect or disconnect elements in an image. This aspect serves as an indicator of whether the elements in the image are inherently linked.

Category	Sub-Category	Minor Sub-Category		
Representation	Narrative	Action	Transactional	Actor
				Goal
			Non-Transactional	Actor
				No Goal
		Reactional	Transactional	Reactor
				Phenomenon
			Non-Transactional	Reactor
				No phenomenon
	Conceptual	Analytical	Carrier & Possessive Attribute	
		Symbolic	Carrier & Symbolic Attribute	
Symbolic Suggestive (no carrier)				
Interaction	Contact (Gaze)	Offer  Presenting		
		Demand  Asking		
	Social Distance	Close Shot	Intimate	
			Close Personal	
		Medium Shot	Far Personal	
			Close Social	
			Far Social	
		Wide perspective	Formal and impersonal	
			Public	
			Frontal  Involvement	

	Attitude	Horizontal Angle	Angle
			Oblique Angle → Detachment
		Vertical Angle	High → Powerful viewer
			Eye-Level → Equality
	Low → Power of Representation		
	Information	Left/Right → Given/New	
Top/Bottom → Ideal/Real			
Composition	Value	Center/Margin → Nucleus/Subservient	
	Salience	Foreground/Background (In focus/out of focus)	
		Color Contrast	

Table 1: The Selected Categories of Kress and van Leeuwen's MDA for The Data Analysis

Van Leeuwen (2008) highlighted that various combinations of distance, gaze, and angle can convey diverse depictions of individuals as 'others.' He further elaborated on three potential strategies for visually portraying people as 'others' and as 'not like us': distancing, which presents social actors as strangers, distanced from us; disempowerment, illustrating people as beneath us and oppressed; and objectivation, representing individuals as objects under our scrutiny rather than as subjects engaging the viewers with their gaze (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 141).

Van Leeuwen (2008) posits that these criteria, outlined as strategies for visually portraying individuals as 'others' (p. 147), encompass various approaches. These encompass the strategy of exclusion, wherein individuals are entirely omitted from contexts where they are actually present. Additionally, there is the strategy of portraying people as the perpetrators of actions that are either disdained or deemed subservient, deviant, criminal, or malevolent. Another tactic involves depicting people as homogeneous groups, thereby negating their individual characteristics and differences through the assertion that "they're all the same." Furthermore, negative cultural connotations and racial stereotyping are employed as strategies in this visual representation.

There are three possible strategies of visually representing people as 'others' and as 'not like us': distancing; disempowerment; and objectivation. Distancing shows social actors as strangers and not close to us; disempowerment depicts people as below us and downtrodden; and objectivation represents people as objects of object scrutiny rather than as subjects addressing the viewers with their gaze (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 141). In other words, Van Leeuwen (2008) believes that these criteria can be used as strategies for visually depicting and representing people as 'others' (p. 147):

- The strategy of exclusion, not representing people at all in contexts where, in reality, they are present
- the strategy of depicting people as the agents of actions that are held in low esteem or regarded as subservient, deviant, criminal, or evil
- The strategy of showing people as homogeneous groups and thereby denying them individual characteristics and differences ("they're all the same")
- The strategy of negative cultural connotations
- The strategy of negative racial stereotyping

1.8. Data Analysis

This study employs the analytical tool of social semiotic theory introduced by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen in their *Grammar of Visual Design* (1996; 2006). This framework is applied to analyze the collected data figured in the visuals of women represented in the *American Qur'an*. It is mainly concerned with the visual analysis of the women portrayal in *The American Qur'an* relying on the three metafunctions (Interactional, representational and compositional).

The primary objective of this thesis is to analyze how the illustrator represents women in Qur'anic verses, and to explore whether their portrayal has the potential to influence or challenge the patriarchal context of the *Qur'an*. The study will investigate whether the illustrator's depictions are influenced by social, ideological, or political factors, examining the extent to which these external elements shape the representation of women in the illustrations. By scrutinizing the interplay between artistic interpretations and the broader societal context, this research aims to discern if and how the illustrator's work contributes to reshaping perceptions of women in the Qur'anic narrative.

The analysis of the present study is both qualitative and quantitative. The procedures adopted for analysis start with the qualitative perspective relied on the analytic framework, and

then the quantitative one relied on the rate of each metafunctions that enhances the present study findings. A qualitative case study method is an approach to conduct research that focuses on the description and interpretation of *American Qur'an* to gain meanings and understandings. As stated by Baxter and Jack (2008), a qualitative case study allows the researchers to analyze complex phenomena within their context. In the realm of data acquisition, this research centers around the *American Qur'an*, specifically focusing on the illustrated version created by Sandow Birk as the primary data source. Our visual analysis delves into 20 images that explicitly depict women in direct reference to Qur'anic verses. The analysis of images is carried according to the representational, interactional, and compositional metafunctions to explore how the illustrator depicted women in *American Qur'an*.

Chapter 2

Qur'an and Women

2.1. Qur'an

The Qur'an, regarded as a sacred text by Muslims, is believed to be the exact words of God, which were conveyed through Gabriel to Muhammad in the 7th century CE. Comprising 114 chapters known as "suwar," the Qur'an constitutes a compilation of revelations that serves as the foundational scripture of Islam. The inherent sanctity of the Qur'an has historically presented a unique dilemma for many Muslims. Ever since the conclusion of the seventh century CE when its verses were compiled into a singular authoritative canon, the Qur'an has remained fixed in its original Arabic form, the language of its initial revelation. The belief persisted that translating the Qur'an into any other language would infringe upon the divine essence of the text.

Arabic, a language replete with words bearing multiple, occasionally contradictory connotations, greatly influences the selection of how a particular Arabic word is translated into English, and this choice is susceptible to personal biases or prejudices. The translations of the Holy Qur'an, whose Arabic "is, according to experts, unmatched..." (Abdul-Raof, 2001: 2-23, 10-38), and whose translation, owing to the language and culture-bound linguistic and rhetorical characteristics, is, according to Abdul-Raof (2001: 12), simply "unrivaled" and "impossible to replicate" satisfactorily in other languages. It "remains in a state of uncertainty as the word of God cannot be replicated by the word of man" (Abdul-Raof, 2001: 1).

The recitation of the Qur'an serves as an indicator that this text was intended to be heard rather than read, perhaps elucidating why it was not transcribed during Mohammed's lifetime. Instead, the revelations were meticulously memorized by a group of religious scholars referred to as the Qur'an readers, who subsequently disseminated God's words to the wider Muslim community in easily retained, concise bursts of prophecy. Reading the Qur'an can be a perplexing experience.

In contrast to the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Old Testament, the Qur'an does not constitute a compilation of books that narrate the legendary history of a religious community. It neither recounts the life of Mohammed nor chronicles the ascent of Islam, with Mohammed scarcely finding a mention within its verses. Although the Qur'an comprises 114 chapters referred to as suwar, they are not organized thematically or chronologically; instead, they are arranged according to their length, the sole exception being the initial and most crucial chapter, known as al-Fatiha or "The Opening." Despite these chapters bearing evocative titles like "The

Cow" or "The Feast," their titles bear minimal resemblance to the content they contain. The Qur'an itself affirms that its verses possess multiple interpretations, some of which are beyond human comprehension, known solely to God. Regarding content, the Qur'an addresses both universal themes and specific historical events, both temporal and distinctive. Early Muslim scholars categorized the Qur'an into two types of chapters: "Meccan," revealed in Mecca, and "Medinan," revealed in Medina.

These classifications, however, extend beyond merely indicating the geographical origin of the revelations. Meccan chapters are primarily associated with matters of faith, encompassing the core principles of Islamic doctrine and ethical and religious practices, as revealed at the inception of Mohammed's Prophethood. In contrast, the Medinan chapters, revealed after the formation of the initial Muslim community, predominantly focus on the legal, political, and social structure of Muslim society. Yet, in both its style and content, the Qur'an stands as a distinctive scripture. Its words are believed to possess divine essence, with Muslims regarding it as the direct speech of God transmitted through Mohammed between 610 and 632 CE. The Qur'an has retained its original Arabic form, the language in which it was initially revealed. The act of translating the Qur'an into any other language was deemed to infringe upon the divine character of the text. Although translations did occur, non-Arabic versions of the Qur'an are still considered interpretations of the Qur'an to this day. Officially, a text cannot be labeled a Qur'an unless the original Arabic verses are incorporated on the page.

The implications of this belief are apparent. For the greater part of the last 14 centuries, approximately 90 percent of the world's Muslim population, who do not have Arabic as their primary language, had to rely on Islamic clergy, who are exclusively male due to the prohibition of women entering the clergy, to expound the meaning and message of the Qur'an for them. This mirrors the historical reliance of pre-Reformation Christians on priests to read and interpret the Bible, which was then exclusively available in Latin.

However, this situation is currently undergoing transformation. In the past century, the Qur'an has been translated into more languages than in the preceding 14 centuries combined. Numerous translations have been carried out not by Muslim clergy but by scholars, academics, Muslim laypersons, non-Muslims, and significantly, by women. We will shed more light on the translations of Qur'an by female translators in the next chapters to see how they have rendered Verses related to women in Qur'an.

2.2. Women during the Time of Revelation of Qur'an

While the status of women in society has been a persistent and unresolved issue, it is not a

recent one. Numerous studies conducted from various perspectives over time have generally indicated that in ancient civilizations and up until the late nineteenth century, women were perceived as the property of their husbands. They were devoid of any rights to possess assets or assume civil or public roles. Additionally, they were prohibited from acting as witnesses, sureties, tutors, or curators, adopting or being adopted, and making wills or contracts. During the late eighteenth century, the matter of women's rights took center stage in political debates, notably in Europe, particularly in France and Britain. Throughout the nineteenth century, European women were progressively granted the rights to employment, voting, and property ownership. Nonetheless, even in contemporary times, despite the fervent call for equality and human rights for all, the prevalence of violence against women remains a pressing concern. This violence impacts the lives of countless women globally, transcending socio-economic and educational boundaries and cutting across cultural and religious barriers, thereby impeding women's full participation in society. As per reports from the United Nations Human Rights Council, violence against women in the present day manifests in a distressing array of forms, encompassing domestic abuse, rape, child marriages, and female circumcision, all of which constitute grave violations of fundamental human rights.

The majority of contemporary scholars, possessing a sound understanding of Islam, concur that it was Islam that ushered in a historic turning point by empowering women with the most progressive social, legal, economic, and political rights since the seventh century. For instance, William Montgomery Watt proposed that Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, can be viewed as a champion of women's rights. Nevertheless, in the contemporary Muslim world, women continue to grapple with insecurity, the ravages of war, domestic and cultural maltreatment, limited access to education and healthcare, and various forms of adversity.

The situation of women at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an in 7th century Arabia was characterized by a variety of social, cultural, and economic factors. It's important to note that the status and roles of women varied across different tribes and communities within Arabia, and the Qur'an sought to address and improve the condition of women in that context.

Before the advent of Islam, Arabian society was largely tribal and patriarchal. Women had limited rights and were often treated as property. Female infanticide was practiced in some tribes, and women were often inherited as part of an inheritance, which meant they had little say in their marriages or divorces. Some women were involved in economic activities, such as trading, but this was generally limited to a minority. Women from the wealthier families enjoyed more freedom and independence in this regard. Marriages were often arranged, and women had little say in the choice of their spouses. Divorce was relatively easy for men, but

difficult for women. Women typically received a smaller share of inheritance compared to men, and in some cases, they were excluded altogether.

Before Muhammad assumed the role of a prophet, the general position of women in Arab society was characterized by significant inferiority and apprehension. At that time, women lacked any political rights. It was during this period that Muhammad, as a young man, developed a profound appreciation for the inherent dignity of all individuals, emphasizing the importance of humanity and the rights of women. His deep concern for the status and rights of women was an intrinsic aspect of his character prior to his prophetic appointment.

Islam, in its emancipatory essence, liberated women from the shackles of ignorance and discrimination, which had cast their long shadows over pre-Islamic society. In a remarkable juncture in human history, Islam bestowed upon women a progressive array of social, legal, political, and economic rights, thus empowering them. Noteworthy scholars, such as William Montgomery Watt, posited that Muhammad, the revered Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him), could be seen as a champion of women's rights (Maan and McIntosh, 2000).

The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are the bedrock upon which equity and parity between the genders are established, while simultaneously acknowledging distinct roles for men and women within the realms of marriage, family, and society. According to the teachings of Islam, men and women are complementary to each other and serve as a source of mutual fulfillment. Family life does not adhere to a rigid hierarchy of rights and responsibilities but is founded on the principles of *sakīnah* (peace, restfulness, and honor), *muwaddah* (affection), *rahmah* (forgiveness, grace, mercy, compassion), and *rufq* (gentleness). In his Last Sermon, Muhammad (peace be upon him) conveyed, "O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well never to be unchaste."

Upon Muhammad's appointment as a prophet, his followers faced various forms of oppression, particularly impacting women who risked vulnerability when actively engaged in external spheres. Consequently, women's activities experienced limited development. In contrast, in the stabilized conditions of Madinah, where security became assured, women attained full and equal social rights with men. In the realms of education, marriage, and inheritance, they enjoyed identical rights to those of men.

The contrasting attitudes of Muhammad towards women before and after his prophethood were shaped by economic, political, security, and social factors prevailing in each respective period. Despite these influences, the fundamental principle of equality in rights and obligations between men and women remained a constant aspect of his attitude.

According to Kamali (2002), during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the early years of Islam, women were actively involved in public life. The restrictions imposed on them in later years were partly a result of circumstantial developments that lacked normative and undisputed validity in the Shari'ah. In those flourishing days of Islamic civilization, a notable lineage of women scholars and activists held prominent positions and gained recognition for their scholarly, social, public, and educational contributions.

During the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, women, alongside men, held principal administrative roles. For instance, the Prophet appointed a woman named Samra Bint Nahik as a mujtahid, responsible for regulating commercial activities and safeguarding public interest. Her appointment was retained during the rule of the first two caliphs, as noted by Murtuza (2004). Caliph Umar ibn Al-Jattab similarly appointed a woman, Al-Shifa Bint Abdullah, who was highly regarded in the community for her knowledge, piety, and morality, as a market inspector and manager.

Consequently, women actively participated in various spheres of early Islamic society, including politics, economics, and education. The allocation of influential positions was determined by an individual's qualifications and skills rather than their gender. Like their male counterparts, women had access to at least six fundamental rights within the Islamic government: the right to vote, the right to be nominated for political office, the right to voice opinions on political matters, the right to refuse obedience to a deviant ruler, and the rights to health, welfare, occupation, and education, as highlighted by Kamali (2002).

Muslim scholars point to the narrative of the two sisters in the Qur'an (28:23) as a distinct indication that, in general, women have the permission to engage in work (Al-Qaradawi, 2016). Furthermore, the noteworthy example of Khadijah, Muhammad's first wife, serves as an illustration of a prosperous businesswoman who not only accumulated wealth but also dedicated it to the advancement and sustenance of Islam in its nascent stages.

Furthermore, citizens in an Islamic polity possessed the right to critique and express their views on the government's conduct and political matters. This right was evident in the significant Qur'anic principle of *hisbah*, which entails promoting good and preventing evil. Regardless of their gender, religious beliefs, or social status, no individual within the state could be hindered from advancing a just cause or preventing an unjust one, as indicated by

Akhmetova (2014).

Islam condemns both infanticide and the burning of female children, emphasizing the gravity of the latter as a great sin, according to the teachings of the Prophet. The rationale behind this condemnation lies in the fact that children, lacking the discernment of good and bad, should be spared from such atrocities. The Prophet, in his efforts to ameliorate the status of women, brought about significant changes. In the pre-Islamic era, girls were denied the right to choose their husbands. However, with the advent of Islam, the Prophet granted women the autonomy to select their life partners, staunchly declaring against forced marriages.

As a result, women began to exercise this newfound freedom, leading to happier and more prosperous lives. Before Islam, societal norms regarding polygamy and polyandry were ambiguous. The Prophet explicitly condemned polyandry due to the inherent challenges in identifying parents in such arrangements. On the other hand, he allowed polygamy under specific conditions. If a woman's character was deemed unfavorable or if she faced difficulties in childbirth, the husband was permitted to marry another woman. In an effort to promote equality, Islam granted women the right to vote and participate in the army.

Additionally, Islam bestowed property rights upon women, aligning them with men in terms of ownership. Before Islam, women were bound to live with their husbands until death. However, Islam introduced conditions allowing women to live separately under specific circumstances, such as a husband's incarceration, prolonged absence, or abusive behavior. In essence, Islam played a pivotal role in elevating the status and rights of women, fostering a more equitable and humane society. In the context of marriage, Islam places the onus of providing for the wife and children squarely on the husband. Unlike societal norms, Islam absolves women of the duty to financially support their husbands or children. The method of property distribution outlined by Islam aims to uplift the status of women. In cases where the deceased leaves no issue, the husband is entitled to half the estate, whereas the wife receives a quarter. Furthermore, after settling the shares of parents and spouses, the remaining property is bequeathed to the children, with sons inheriting double the share of daughters. If no children are present, and there are siblings, one-sixth is allocated to them, with brothers receiving twice the share of sisters. The practice of demanding dowry from brides is unequivocally prohibited in Islam, a departure from pre-Islamic times where poverty often led to unmarried girls.

Islam's prohibition against demanding dowry, whether directly or indirectly, has significantly improved the condition of women. Any gifts given to daughters by parents voluntarily are accepted, but coercion or demands for dowry are strictly forbidden. A woman's earnings, regardless of her financial standing, remain her sole property, and she is not obligated

to contribute financially to the household. This emphasis on financial autonomy for women, irrespective of their wealth, underscores the husband's responsibility to uphold these principles in the spirit of Islamic teachings.

During the era of Prophet Muhammad, both men and women actively sought religious education from him. The Prophet specifically praised the women of Ansar for their courage and dedication to learning, expressing admiration with the words, "How splendid were the women of the Ansar; shame did not prevent them from becoming learned in the faith" (Lindsay, 2005). After the Prophet's time, numerous women emerged as scholars of Islam (Seddigi, 1993). Additionally, the Prophet's wives, particularly Aisha, a prominent transmitter of Prophetic traditions, played a crucial role in educating companions on Islamic jurisprudence and familial law (Sayeed, 2013).

It is noteworthy that Islam did not confine women to specific areas of knowledge. Instead, it emphasized the significance of acquiring knowledge related to motherhood to complement their societal roles.

Contrary to the common belief that Islam restricted women to the confines of their homes, historical evidence challenges this notion. In the Islamic Golden Age, women enjoyed comparable or even superior educational opportunities compared to their contemporaries. It was customary for women to engage in informal intellectual discussions and participate in public discourse within mosques and madrasas. Numerous historians, such as Ibn al-Tuwayr and al-Muṣabbiḥī, documented the active involvement of women in the "sessions of wisdom" (majālis al-ḥikmah) during the Fatimid Caliphate (Virani, 2007).

2.3. Women's Rights in Qur'an

The Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, indicate equity and parity between men and women, even though their functions in marriage, family, and society are not identical. Passages from the Noble Qur'an resolutely affirm that, in the sight of God, women are equal to men, encompassing both rights and responsibilities, leaving no room for doubt.

The Qur'an emphasizes that God, in His perfect wisdom, has created all species in pairs, and so men and women have been created of the same species, as it is stated: "He created you from a single being; then of the same kind made its mate" (al-Zumar 39:6). In the chapter of al-Nisā', Allah Almighty also said: "O mankind! Fear Allah Who created you from a single person [Adam], and from him [Adam] Allah created his wife [Hawwa], and then from both of them, He created many men and women spread [all over the world]. And fear Allah through

whom you make claims [of your mutual rights]. And do not cut off the relations with your blood relatives. Indeed, Allah is All-Watching over you" (al-Nisā' 4:1).

For women and women's groups like Sisters in Islam, it is the ethical vision of Islam that advocates the absolute moral and spiritual equality of women and men found in verses such as Surah 33:35, which places common and identical spiritual and moral obligations on all individuals regardless of sex. Surah 3:195 declares that men and women are members of one another, while Surah 2:187 describes Muslim men and women as each other's garments. Surah 9:71, the final verse on the relationship between men and women, talks about them being each other's 'aliya - protecting friends and guardians. The obligations for both men and women are to enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil, to observe regular prayers, zakat (tithe), and obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and they will be equally rewarded. These verses are unequivocally egalitarian in spirit and substance and reflect the Qur'anic view on the relationship between men and women.

This egalitarian vision also extends to human biology. The verses on the creation of men and women talk about the characteristic of pairs in creation. Since everything created must be in pairs, the male and female must both be necessary, must exist by the definition of creativeness. Neither one comes before the other or from the other. One is not superior to the other, nor a derivative of the other. This means that in Allah's creation of human beings, no priority or superiority is accorded to either man or woman.

According to the Islamic view, men and women complement each other and are a means of mutual fulfillment. Family life is not based on a formal hierarchy of rights and responsibilities, but the basis for the husband-wife relationship in Islam includes *sakīnah* (peace, restfulness, honor), *muwaddah* (affection), *rahmah* (forgiveness, grace, mercy, compassion), and *rufq* (gentleness). The passages from the Noble Qur'an confirm that woman is completely equated with man in the sight of God in terms of her rights and responsibilities. It is clearly stated: "Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds" (al-Muddathir 74:38). On another occasion, the Qur'an articulates: "Who does well, whether male or female and is a believer, these will enter the Garden; they will be provided therein without measure" (al-Mu'min 40:40). There is no ruling in Islam that forbids a woman from seeking employment, although Islam regards her role in society as a mother and a wife as the most sacred and essential ones. Badawi (2014) stated that there is no restriction on benefiting from women's skills and knowledge in any field. There is no textual ruling in the Qur'an to deprive women of public and political rights as well (Hasan, 1983).

Every human being, irrespective of their economic or political standing, holds the

inherent right to a means of livelihood. Those who wield economic or political authority must not possess the privilege to deprive others of life's essentials through the misappropriation or misuse of resources, divinely created by God for the collective welfare of humanity. The act of earning a livelihood stands as a fundamental source of sustenance, actively encouraged for both women and men alike. In the Surah (4:32) Al-Nisa (women), it clearly articulates, "To men is allocated the fruits of their labor, and likewise to women." Crucially, this delineates the entitlement of both women and men to the yield of their toil, reinforcing their right to the means of livelihood. One such avenue is the prerogative to access, oversee, and govern assets. Hence, Islam has bestowed upon both women and men the right to property access and the autonomy to manage their financial resources.

Centuries ago, Islam bestowed upon women the invaluable right to inherit, as elucidated in various verses spanning the Qur'an, including Surah Nissaa, Surah Baqarah, and Surah Maidah. These verses underscore that women, regardless of their roles as wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters, possess an inherent and divine entitlement to inheritance. In the event of a husband's passing without offspring, the wife is legally entitled to a fourth of the inheritance. This equitable allocation of shares for daughters, sisters, mothers, and wives serves to integrate them as active contributors to the family's economic dynamics.

By endowing women with these inheritance shares, they are emancipated from being relegated to the status of mere possessions bereft of financial autonomy, transcending the confines of household responsibilities. Empowered with the right to own property, engage in various professions, participate in industries or trades, and independently enter into contractual agreements, women are elevated to the esteemed status of legal entities. The active participation of American women across various spheres of national life, their engagement in addressing social issues, and their advocacy for women workers' rights can be attributed to the pioneering initiatives of Islam in this realm. A woman, possessing a legal identity analogous to that of a mentally sound man, is free to enter into contracts, retain her earnings, and inherit property without any obligation to relinquish her rightful claims.

As previously mentioned, the Qur'an was revealed in a context where some tribes were burying their newborn daughters alive. Another group, out of fear of hunger and famine, or the possibility of experiencing hunger and famine, would kill any child, whether a son or daughter, born into their families. This was because there was a dilemma between them: either they would die of hunger themselves and let their children live, or vice versa. For this reason, they chose to keep themselves alive. In verse 31 of Surah Al-Isra, it is stated:

لَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ مِّنْ نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْئًا كَبِيرًا .

In verse 151 of Surah Al-An'am, it is also stated

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ.

God commands in these verses that you should not kill your children out of fear of poverty or hunger. It's as if they were sometimes hungry and would say, "Let's kill the baby so it won't share our food." At other times, they were not hungry, but, for example, they would say, "We have enough food for the next two months, so let's kill the baby to have food for three months." In any case, the killing of children was attributed to both groups, sons and daughters.

In Surah At-Takwir, which is the seventh revelation to the Prophet, there is a reference to the killing, specifically of daughters. In this Surah, the mention of killing daughters is accompanied by expressions of fear, such as:

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ... وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ؛

"Then when the sun is folded up, and when the stars become dim, and when the mountains are made to move..." After describing seven terrifying events, it states, "And when the girl [child] buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed." In these verses, the question about the murdered daughters is placed in the midst of horrifying events mentioned in the preceding verses. Then three more dreadful issues of the Day of Judgment are raised, including, "Then when the pages [of deeds] are laid open, and when the Hellfire is set ablaze..." Amidst the description of these terrifying occurrences, the question arises: why did you bury and kill the daughters?

These verses reveal that in the time of the Prophet, the Arabs used to kill their daughters, and some who did not kill them regarded daughters as second or third-class individuals, assigning little value to women and girls. The Qur'an, in the midst of these verses, takes a stern stance against the killing of daughters as the first step in the gradual elucidation and adherence to women's rights in its message. In the second stage, the Qur'an, in verses 57 to 61 of Surah An-Nahl, which is the seventieth revelation and Meccan, addresses the removal of aversion to having daughters. In verse 57, it questions why they consider daughters to be evil and consider them as a share of God, while regarding sons as something good and making them their own share:

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ.

The polytheists, on one hand, claimed that God is highly exalted and that we cannot directly connect with Him to ask for our desires. They used idols as intermediaries, hoping they would intercede on their behalf. On the other hand, they assigned daughters to God, whom they considered evil. This verse aims to expose the inconsistency in their arguments, as if to remove the stigma associated with having daughters. Continuing, in verses 58 and 59 of Surah An-

Nahl, the Qur'an seeks to dispel the aversion to having daughters:

وَ إِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَ هُوَ كَظِيمٌ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَلَيْسَ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ.

When one of them was given the news of the birth of a daughter, he became deeply distressed, and his face turned dark with sorrow because in his view, this news was bad. He concealed his anger and considered ways to humiliate her or bury her alive to avoid shame and disgrace.

In the continuation, in verse 61, it is stated:

وَ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ.

The Qur'an says that if God had held people accountable for the injustices they committed, He would have left no living creature on the earth. According to this verse, God considers the mistreatment of daughters a great injustice, and if He were to punish for this injustice, no living being would survive. Now, imagine the enormity of the injustice of burying daughters alive! Following this stage, the Qur'an, in Surah Al-Baqarah, a Medinan chapter and the eighty-fifth revelation in chronological order, addresses various aspects of marital and divorce laws from verse 220 to verse 243, and presents diverse content concerning women.

Based on the progression of these verses, the pre-Islamic Arabs initially used to kill their daughters, which was vehemently condemned. Later, they detested the birth of daughters. In the subsequent phase, efforts were made to instill a positive attitude towards women, likening them to cultivated fields:

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ وَ قَدِْمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ وَ بُشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ.

This verse conveys that women are like your agricultural fields. Enter your fields and take care of them. If there were no women, how would you have children? Does a farmer dislike his own land? The more attention you give to your women and children, the better it is for you. You cultivate your own fields and send forth good deeds. So, practice piety and be aware that you will meet God; meaning, if you act wrongly, you will be held accountable. In the end, believers are given good news in this verse.

It should not be asserted based on the content of this verse (comparing women to fields) that the Qur'an has insulted women. Instead, it should be understood that gradually, God brought the ignorant Arabs from a stage where they considered women as property to a stage where they recognized the worth of women and understood that men are dependent on women for the continuation of their lineage, much like a farmer relies on his land for cultivation.

It's crucial to note that in the verses of Surah Al-Baqarah, the word "حدود" is used multiple times. In common usage, this word implies "to whip or lash," but in the Qur'an, it is never used

in the sense of physical punishment. Instead, it is predominantly used within the context of family matters. After addressing family-related issues, the Qur'an often states, "تلك حدود الله" as a warning to men not to misuse their physical strength against women, as seen in verse 2:228:

وَالْمُطَلَّاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَنَّ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ
عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ. فَرَأَى لَهُنَّ مِثْلَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ.

This means that just as there is a right against women, there is also a right in their favor. It's not as if rights are solely against women. "لهن" means in favor of women, and "بالمعروف" means in a desirable manner. Then it says: "لِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ". It seems that this portion of the verse implies that forgiveness is greater, and men, being in higher positions, should be more forgiving. In other words, the fact that there is a degree for men over women is not discrimination; rather, this degree is an honorific one, and since men have accepted to be more honorable, they should spend more, help more, forgive women's mistakes, and...

In verse 229 of Surah Al-Baqarah, the word "حدود" has been mentioned several times. The Qur'an addresses men concerning divorcing women, stating that they have the right to divorce their wives twice. After that, they should either keep their wives with kindness or release them with goodness and generosity, so that they may depart from your home. You do not have the right to take back from them the things you have given them, such as the dowry and gifts, unless the woman and the man fear that they will not uphold the divine limits. It is then stated: "تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ", meaning these are the boundaries defined by God, and you should not transgress them. Those who transgress the limits set by God are unjust.

In summary, these twenty-three verses, specifically verses 220 to 243 of Surah Al-Baqarah, establish various rights for women. For example, it advises consulting with women, or it stipulates that if you divorce them, they are entitled to stay in your home for a year while their housing is provided for. It also states that during the waiting period, you must provide for their expenses and livelihood, and so on.

The next stage of women's rights is addressed in Surah Al-Ahzab, which is the ninetyeth Surah in chronological order. In this Surah, alongside the discussion of the Battle of the Confederates, the issue of the rights of the Prophet's wives is presented to demonstrate that the challenging circumstances of war should not result in the loss of the rights of a particular group of individuals within society. The verses in this Surah are phrased in a way that underscores the equality of women and men with one another.

For instance, expressions such as "ذكر او انثى" or "مومن و مومنه" have been used; meaning, alongside men, women are explicitly mentioned separately. In other words, in a society where

women had no inherent identity, wherever man is mentioned, woman is mentioned alongside him.

It is evident that according to the rules of the Arabic language, it is not necessary to mention the second word, which is "woman"; however, the Qur'an deliberately and for emphasis has included that second word. In verses such as verse 35 of Surah Al-Ahzab, such expressions have been used ten times for emphasis:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا.

In the Arabic language, the masculine term encompasses the feminine as well, and despite using the masculine term, there is no need to mention the feminine separately. This means that if there is a group of both women and men, masculine terms are used, even if the entire group consists of women with only one man among them, according to the rules of the Arabic language, the masculine term is still used. However, in expressing Himself, God has used the feminine term alongside the masculine term ten times in the above verse to emphasize the equal value of the two. With this repetition, the Qur'an aims to convey to men that women are alongside them and are equal to them so that gradually men come to believe and accept this fact. Examples of such verses are abundant in the Qur'an.

According to what has been stated, the Qur'an first strongly prohibited the killing of women, then forbade harboring animosity towards them. After that, it established the minimum level of dignity for them and in Surah Al-Baqarah stated that women are your cultivation, and you must take care of them. Subsequently, in Surah Al-Ahzab, it placed them alongside men.

The next step in this process was to articulate more rights for women, as seen in Surah Al-Mumtahina. The order of the revelation of the suwar was as follows: At-Takwir 7, An-Nahl 70, Al-Baqarah 85, Al-Ahzab 90, Al-Mumtahina 91.

Surah Al-Mumtahina is the ninety-first surah revealed to the Prophet, and it introduces a new right for women, the right to pledge allegiance. This means that women have acquired the right to participate in social matters and, in modern terms, have been granted the right to vote. In verse 12 of Surah Al-Mumtahina, it is stated as follows:

أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَى أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعُصِيَنَّكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ قَبَائِعَهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ؛

"O Prophet, when the believing women come to you to pledge allegiance that they will not associate anything with Allah, not steal, not commit adultery, not kill their children, not bring forth slander they have invented between their hands and feet, and not disobey you in

any good matter, then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

At this stage, the right for women to participate in the pledge, a social activity, was established. Significant events unfolded during the pledge, reflecting the importance given to women and the necessity of considering their well-being.

Following this stage, we come to Surah An-Nisa (The Women), the ninety-fourth chapter revealed to the Prophet, with its initial 34 verses setting the theme for this section of the interpretation, now before you.

In the first verse of Surah An-Nisa, it is stated:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا.

The verse asserts that God created both man and woman from a single essence, emphasizing the unity of their origin. It specifically uses the term "نفس" or essence, rather than a physical body, highlighting the shared reality of man and woman. Therefore, man and woman share a common essence. While grammatically feminine, the term "نفس" does not inherently signify femaleness at an ontological level. In the Qur'an, where it appears in nearly three hundred instances, "nafs" primarily denotes an individual human, irrespective of gender, emphasizing its predominant usage (Ibrahim, 2020).

Another noteworthy point is that the Qur'an does not use the term "زوج" exclusively for the husband and "زوجه" for the wife, introducing a distinction between them. Instead, the Qur'an employs both terms interchangeably, using "ازواج" for the plural of spouses and "زوجه" for the plural of wives. In colloquial language, one might say "زوجات النبي" to refer to the Prophet's wives. Interestingly, even in the case of the Prophet's wives, the Qur'an uses the term "ازواج," signifying that they are his spouses, not wives. In Arabic linguistics, it is stated that the plural and singular revert to their original form; meaning if the intended meaning of "زوج" is a woman, the plural becomes "زوجات." However, the Qur'an refers to the Prophet's wives as "ازواج," ensuring that their identity as women is not diminished linguistically.

In addition to the subtleties in the Qur'anic expressions regarding women, in Surah An-Nisa, it enumerates legal rights for women, including the right to inherit. Notably, the Qur'an goes

beyond mere linguistic precision and addresses the legal aspects of women's rights, such as the right to inheritance.

It is crucial to note that the Qur'an elevated the status of women in a society where they were often killed at birth. The Qur'an specifically states, "For men is a share of what the parents

and close relatives leave, and for women is a share, whether it be little or much - an obligatory share." This repetition in the Qur'an emphasizes that women have a distinct and equal right to inheritance, challenging the notion that the inheritance of horses and swords is the exclusive domain of the eldest son. The Qur'an, in Surah An-Nisa, verse 7, asserts that the share for men and women, whether it be less or more, is a predetermined and obligatory allocation.

In summary, the Qur'an, through its linguistic precision and legal provisions, affirms the equality of men and women. It recognizes women's right to inheritance, ensuring that their status is not diminished linguistically or legally:

نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا.

In verse 13 of Surah An-Nisa, it states:

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ.

It means that the mentioned guidelines are the boundaries set by God. Therefore, administering the distribution of inheritance among women is not a punishment; rather, it is an establishment of their rightful share.

It appears that in verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa, which asserts:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ.

It elucidates the notion of male leadership based on their spiritual and intellectual capacity for management over women. This is further explained by stating, "بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ" "بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ" signifying that the authority of men over women is due to God's preference of some individuals, be they men or women, over others. It does not imply the superiority of some men over some women; otherwise, it would have stated, "بِمَا فَضَّلَكُمْ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِنَّ", referring to the superiority of men over women.

In the continuation of verse 34, the discussion shifts to the issue of beating women:

وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ.

It is possible that this verse is a continuation of the same trend mentioned earlier; that is, at this stage, it instructs to strike them, and then in the next stage, it negates the act of striking. Just as in previous stages, it initially likened them to a cultivated field, then counted them as equal to men, in another stage granted them the right to vote, and in the subsequent stage allocated a share of inheritance for them. Perhaps the Qur'an was concerned that accepting this concept would be difficult for men, and they might reject it, refraining from marriage or avoiding managing their wives. Similar to the present time when men refrain from marrying and claim that the law has given women rights that are difficult to adhere to, so we simply do

not marry. The verse seems to address this point and states:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ؛

It means management is with men, and if women don't listen, admonish them, express displeasure, and strike them. Here really doesn't want to say "strike women"; because in that case, it won't be compatible with the rights it has mentioned earlier for women; rather, it aims to enhance the managerial abilities of men so that they are willing to accept the management of the family.

It is possible that the command to "strike" may not be literal; instead, it might be in the form of a threat. The evidence for this is that it says to strike women where striking is not at all appropriate. Pay attention that the position where the verse mentions striking is specifically in the context of marital disputes; meaning, it's a situation where if a man strikes his wife, he himself will be deprived of abundant pleasures. No one other than the husband and wife can witness this.

An example of this kind of striking is regarding a woman who, when she goes to court, claims to uphold her spouse's rights and expresses specific support for marital duties; but when in private, she doesn't provide that support. The Qur'an here says to strike her. Well, in that case, using force is not possible; rather, the intention is to strike slowly to exert influence.

Therefore, this type of striking pertains to a woman who, with deception and deceit, portrays herself as righteous while being unjust. Although, fundamentally, it is unlikely that this type of striking has a real-life counterpart.

The final stage of elucidating women's rights in the Qur'an involves the proclamation of authority, guardianship, and governance, as stated in verse 71 of Surah Tawbah:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ؛

It has been previously explained that in the Arabic language, when a man and a woman are together, the masculine pronoun is used; thus, "بعضهم" includes some men or some women. "ولى" also signifies guardianship, which is carried out amicably; for instance, when we say a father is a "ولى," it means he benevolently oversees the affairs of a child. However, a "قيم," while exercising guardianship, may not necessarily do so in a friendly manner.

Now, the meaning of the first part of the verse becomes clear: Believing men and believing women exercise a form of guardianship over others, and they do so amicably. The term "بعضهم" can encompass both believing men and believing women. Consequently, just as some believing men have guardianship over others, it can be affirmed that some believing women also have guardianship over others. Therefore, some women hold authority over others and exert their guardianship benevolently, including enjoining what is good and forbidding

what is evil, such as promoting kindness and deterring from wrongdoing.

Now the meaning of the first part of the verse becomes clear: Believing men and believing women have a level of authority over others, and they exercise this authority in a friendly manner. The term "some" can include both believing men and believing women. Therefore, just as some believing men have authority over others, it can be said that some believing women also have authority over others. Thus, some women have authority over others and exercise their authority in a friendly manner, including enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, with kindness:

يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ.

Similarly, it can be inferred from this verse that a woman can be in a position of authority; that is, she can be the president or a leader and hold a position of leadership. Based on this, in the religion of Islam, there is no office that a woman cannot attain. While the Qur'an does not advocate or endorse a singular role or prescribe a single definition of roles exclusively for each gender, it recognizes the diversity of roles that may vary across different cultures (Wadud, 1999).

In the verses of Surah Al-Mumtahanah, God states that a woman can cast her vote, and here it is stated that a woman can be in a position where others can vote for her.

In accordance with the verses we have mentioned, women and men have attained an equal status. However, bringing people to such a culture and mindset has been quite challenging, and the Qur'an, with special eloquence, elevated the status of women in the society of that time. An example of this delicate and graceful approach is stated in Surah Al-Imran (verses 35 and 36). In these verses, the Qur'an attempts to convey the story of the mother of Mary, who thought her child would be a son before his birth and dedicated her to serve in the temple. But when her child was born, it was a daughter. The mother of Mary was perplexed and said, "O Allah, my child is a daughter, and I cannot take her to the temple." The Qur'an explains this matter by saying, "وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنثَى" implying that a male is never equal to a female; in other words, a female is far superior. Such expressions indicate that rights can be established for women that men do not possess.

On this basis, it can be said that the Qur'an has gone beyond the culture of its time and recognized the elevated status of women. In our time, the pinnacle of societal progress is to assert that women and men are equal. However, the reality is that in Islam, the rights granted to women surpass those given to men.

Within the framework of Islam, both men and women are regarded as essential partners

in the establishment of familial harmony, collaborating towards the cultivation of peace and love within the family unit. Women, entrusted with the roles of mothers to their children and wives to their husbands, bear significant responsibilities and are accorded numerous rights, occupying a pivotal position within the familial structure. The influential role they play within the family serves as a cornerstone for the well-being and future sustenance of the ummah.

The reciprocal obligation of children towards their mothers is underscored by the Islamic imperative to treat them with kindness, offering care and prayers for their well-being, as their satisfaction is intricately linked to the blessings of Almighty Allah (swt). As mandated by the Qur'an, children are obliged to heed the commands of their parents, provided such directives do not contradict the Qur'an and the Sunnah:

And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word (17:23)

Disregarding the kindness and mercy owed to parents is deemed a grave sin in Islam, and even after their demise, parents remain entitled to the prayers of their offspring.

In the context of marriage, a wife is entitled to receive the marriage mahr, or bridal money, from her husband upon the conclusion or consummation of the marital union. This mahr stands as her exclusive possession, as articulated in the Qur'an:

"And give to the women (whom you marry) their Mahr (obligatory bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage) with a good heart" (4:4).

The payment of the mahr not only symbolizes the importance of the marriage covenant but also underscores the respect and honor that Islam accords to women.

Furthermore, it is a fundamental obligation for a husband to provide his wife with the essentials of life, encompassing food, clothing, and accommodation. Failure to fulfill these basic needs is considered an act of oppression, and according to Islamic principles, a man should abstain from marrying if he is incapable of meeting these fundamental responsibilities.

The exploration into the representation of women in the context of Islamic scripture, particularly the Qur'an, has unveiled a complex tapestry of historical, cultural, and theological dimensions. The Qur'an, revered as the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims worldwide, serves as a foundational text shaping societal attitudes and practices, including those related to gender roles and women's rights. This investigation has delved into various aspects surrounding the Qur'an's treatment of women, spanning from its historical context to its contemporary interpretations and implications.

The Qur'an's historical context, originating in 7th century Arabia, was marked by diverse

social, cultural, and economic factors that influenced the status and roles of women within Arabian society. Pre-Islamic Arabia was characterized by tribal and patriarchal norms, wherein women faced significant limitations in terms of rights and freedoms. The Qur'an emerged within this context, addressing and challenging prevalent societal norms regarding women's rights, marriage, inheritance, education, and participation in public life.

The interpretation and translation of the Qur'an have presented unique challenges, particularly in conveying its divine essence and linguistic nuances to audiences beyond the Arabic-speaking world. The belief in the Qur'an's sanctity and the inherent complexities of the Arabic language have led to debates and discussions surrounding the fidelity and accuracy of translations, especially regarding verses related to women's rights and roles.

Furthermore, the Qur'an's treatment of women reflects a nuanced and multifaceted perspective, emphasizing principles of equity, justice, and mutual respect between men and women. Passages within the Qur'an affirm the spiritual and moral equality of men and women, challenging patriarchal interpretations and practices prevalent in various societies throughout history. Moreover, the interpretation and application of Qur'anic teachings concerning women have evolved over time, influenced by diverse cultural, social, and political contexts. While the Qur'an provides a framework for women's rights and responsibilities, interpretations and practices have varied among different Muslim communities and individuals, leading to ongoing debates and discussions regarding gender equality and women's empowerment within Islam.

In conclusion, the Qur'an's treatment of women embodies a dynamic and evolving discourse that reflects the complexities of historical, cultural, and theological contexts. The exploration of women's representation in the Qur'an highlights the significance of contextual understanding, critical interpretation, and inclusive dialogue in addressing contemporary issues related to gender equality and women's rights within Islamic societies and beyond. As scholars, practitioners, and advocates continue to engage with these issues, it is imperative to approach the Qur'an with sensitivity, nuance, and a commitment to promoting justice, equity, and dignity for all individuals, irrespective of gender.

Chapter 3

Women's Representation in the USA and the Middle East

3.1. Introduction

Despite residing in a contemporary era, the issue of women's status and gender equality remains unresolved. In the present world, women endure significant hardships, including insecurity, exposure to war, domestic and cultural abuses, and limited access to education and medical care. Akhmetova (2014) posits that scholars with a profound understanding of Islam unanimously agree that Islam, since the seventh century, pioneered the empowerment of women by endowing them with progressive social, legal, economic, and political rights. According to Wadud (1999), a prevalent misconception about the Qur'an and women is the misguided belief that the book solely pertains to Muslim women; however, her reinterpretation seeks to provide a more meaningful understanding for women in the modern era.

In the realm of Islamic religious and social tradition, the female body has consistently garnered special attention. Yet, in contemporary society, it has evolved into a potent catalyst for interest and debate, serving as a focal point for social and political tensions and sparking discord between conflicting ideologies. Although discrimination against women is acknowledged as prevalent across cultures and religions, Islam, as both a civilization and a religion, remains uniquely targeted, subject to relentless criticism for its perceived unequal treatment of women. This incessant focus on gender inequality within Islam complicates efforts to introduce an alternative, objective methodology for addressing the issue.

The persistent discourse and media portrayal of Muslim women, emphasizing their precarious legal status, gradual emancipation, restrictive cultural guardianships, and diverse burqas and veils, have cemented a fixed image of the Muslim woman as perpetually submissive and overlooked in the contemporary collective imagination. This surreptitious portrayal conveniently upholds the notion that gender inequality is inherent only to Islamic ideology, discouraging further analysis or reflection. The imperative to liberate women, spurred by Western intellectual ethnocentrism, conveniently absolves other cultures, particularly in the West, from accusations of discriminating against women, projecting the notion that these women are inherently liberated and possess all their rights from birth.

It is essential to draw attention to two pieces of evidence. First, the remarkable diversity among Muslim societies and women, ranging from Indonesia to Morocco, challenges Western stereotypes that reduce Muslim women to a singular cultural archetype. Second, the

"universality" of a culture of discrimination against women is often overlooked, with unequal rights persisting globally despite contemporary achievements.

In the case study of the American Qur'an, scenes depicting America at home and abroad, including the militarized US-Mexico border, Guantanamo prison camp in Cuba, and war-torn landscapes in Japan and Iraq, are juxtaposed with images of women from the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iran, etc.) and America, including Muslim women. This chapter aims to unveil and describe the situation of women in the Middle East and America, offering foundational context for the project.

3.2. Feminism and Islamic Feminism

The term feminism encompasses a set of thoughts and convictions about the roles of women and men within their cultural context based solely on gender. Central to feminist ideology is the premise that women face unequal treatment compared to men, resulting in a disadvantage. Essentially, feminism examines the cultural and social behaviors of women, attributing them to gender, illustrating the differential treatment women receive. Within this treatment, women find themselves at a disadvantage. Feminism posits that such treatment is culturally ingrained and subject to change, rejecting the notion that it is inherent and unalterable. Instead, feminism envisions an alternative cultural paradigm and values progress toward this envisioned culture. Activism, both individual and collective, is integral to feminism, serving as a means to effect personal and social change toward a more equitable culture.

As a system of beliefs and a commitment to action, feminism has intersected with various economic and political ideologies, resulting in diverse branches. These include socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, bourgeois feminism, individualist feminism, cultural feminism, social feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, and others.

Feminism in Muslim lands exhibits distinctive features setting it apart from Western counterparts. Islamic feminism notably places significant emphasis on religion, often absent in Western feminist discourse. Another divergence lies in broader issues that occupy feminists in Islamic countries, such as anti-colonialism and efforts to rejuvenate Islam. The phenomenon of Islamic feminism has sparked considerable debate due to its integration into wider discussions concerning women's rights, Islam, and the status of women in Muslim-majority societies and those where Muslim populations constitute a minority.

Islamic feminism, situated within the parameters of Islam and the Qur'an, holds particular significance in the realm of Qur'an translation as it advocates for the rights of

marginalized women in Islamic discourse (Badran, 2009: 242). It is crucial to note that Islamic feminism is not a unified identity but a collection of practices employed to pursue justice for Muslim women (Cooke, 2001: 59). The emergence of Islamic feminism in the 1990s introduced a body of ideas focused on unraveling the patriarchal attitudes embedded in past exegeses of the Qur'an. Notable contributors to this discourse include Amina Wadud (1999), Asma Barlas (2002), Kecia Ali (2006), and Leila Ahmed (1992). Their works emphasize the role of gender in comprehending societal structures and underscore the imperative of securing equal opportunities for Muslim women in male-dominated societies.

At the core of Islamic feminism's argument is the assertion that gender inequality in Islam results from a patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an, rather than an inherent flaw in the Qur'an itself. The long history of male-dominated interpretations of the Qur'an, evident in tafsir (exegesis), has given voice to patriarchal perspectives (Barlas, 2002: 21; Wadud, 1999: 2). According to this perspective, the Qur'an articulates an egalitarian discourse, drowned out by the dominance of patriarchal voices prescribing distinct social roles for women and men (Barlas, 2002: 21-22). The imposition of gendered roles threatens to transform the Qur'an from a sacred text into one specific to a particular culture. In reality, the Qur'an does not assign societal roles based on gender; instead, such roles are products of cultural interpretations (Wadud, 1999: 8-9). For instance, practices like domestic violence and the misconception of women's inferiority to men have been erroneously read into the Qur'an as essentialist interpretations (Wadud, 1999: 9).

Critiquing traditional modes of tafsir, Muslim feminists contribute to the deconstruction of patriarchal translations by challenging rationalist pretensions. They uphold the legitimacy of diverse, independent readings of the Qur'an through the exercise of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) (Hidayatullah, 2014: 35). Additionally, they question the Qur'an's status as a "timeless text" from the vantage point of women's "experience, knowledge, and observation." These interpretations shake the foundations of knowledge and challenge conventional notions of 'truth' in Islam, fostering multiple understandings and inviting readers to actively engage in the construction of meanings.

The contemporary Islamic feminist movements trace back to the nineteenth century in Iran, with Tahirih Qurrat al-'Ayn emerging as the catalyst for the earliest feminist movement in the Middle East during the mid-1800s. Despite the state's execution of Tahirih in 1852, her influence resonated deeply, prompting both men and women to reassess Qur'anic exegesis. The term 'Islamic feminism' gained prominence in the 1990s as scholars employed it to characterize a burgeoning activist phenomenon among Muslim female scholars.

Islamic feminism, also known as "gender activism" and "gender jihad," as defined by Badran (2009), is a feminist discourse rooted in the Qur'an seeking rights and justice within the framework of gender equality for women and men across various aspects of existence. Islamic feminism posits gender equality as an integral component of the Qur'anic principle of equality among all human beings and advocates for its implementation in state affairs, civil institutions, and daily activities.

Muslim feminists substantiate their advocacy for women's rights and critique of patriarchy by referencing the Qur'an, citing examples from the prophet's life and that of his companions and condemning the masculinist distortion of religion. Badran (2009) characterizes this feminism as a middle path between secular feminism and a patriarchal interpretation and practice of religion. Islamic feminism aligns with the resurgence of religion in many Muslim societies in recent decades, even in its more fundamentalist manifestations, influencing women's attire and behavior beyond ideological realms.

Contrary to assertions attributing women's inequality in Muslim-majority nations solely to Islam, scholars such as Carland (2017) view the Qur'an as a holy text promoting equal rights for both sexes. They contend that Islam's egalitarian spirit can guide Muslim women in pursuing education and property ownership. Despite arguments depicting Islam as inherently sexist, some scholars attribute restrictive practices to patriarchal (mis)interpretations of Qur'anic verses taken out of context. The perception of Islam as patriarchal and discriminatory has led some Muslim women activists to believe that working within the religious framework is futile. They argue that all religions, including Islam, inherently perpetuate patriarchal oppression and injustice against women, serving the interests of male oppressors.

The term 'Islamic Law' generally denotes the legal aspects of Shari'a rooted in jurists' interpretations of the Qur'an and other sources. Muslims commonly believe in the religious authority underlying these legal principles and norms. Convincing devout Muslims that Shari'a laws can evolve without compromising the Qur'an's essence has proven challenging.

However, some to patriarchal norms rather than religious beliefs attribute challenges to women's rights in Muslim-majority countries. They argue that despite Islamic tenets supporting women's rights, leaders in these countries have been hesitant to enforce them, particularly in matters of inheritance where discrimination against women persists. Barlas (2002) emphasizes that misogyny, inequality, and patriarchy, often justified in the name of Islam, are not inherent to the religion.

The initial opposition of Islamists to the marginalization of women, urging adherence to traditional roles and denouncing feminism as anti-Islamic, evolved over time. The forthcoming

chapter will delve into an analysis of representation and status of women in the context of Middle East and West countries and their media, preceded by an exploration of the contemporary status of women in the Middle East, America, and mass media. This contextualization serves as the foundation for understanding the depiction of Muslim women in American society by the illustrator in our case study.

3.3. Women in the Middle East

In discussions surrounding the formidable challenges faced by women in the Middle East, Western narratives often portray Middle Eastern women as inherently passive, feeble, and consistently veiled. These women assume specific societal roles, marked by distinct responsibilities within familial structures and unique integration into the workforce compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, their involvement in governmental affairs varies, exhibiting overarching similarities in societal roles but discernible divergences in women's rights across different nations within the region.

There persists a prevailing assumption that the stringent conditions observed in Saudi Arabia, where women are prohibited from driving, epitomize the standard for women across the entire Middle East and the broader Muslim world. Contrary to this assumption, numerous Muslim countries provide women with political and social rights, with recent advancements such as Egypt granting women the right to divorce. Tunisia stands out with legalized abortion and the prohibition of polygamy, and women have occupied ministerial and vice-presidential roles in several Middle Eastern nations.

Religious tenets wield a substantial influence on the legal frameworks governing women in the Middle East, with some countries explicitly governed by religious laws and others incorporating religious determinations into their secular legal systems. Instances of familial repercussions for violating religious laws are not uncommon.

Most Middle Eastern societies assign women traditional roles of cooking, childcare, and household chores, often expecting men to bear the financial burden of supporting the family. Marriage holds significant cultural value across all Middle Eastern countries, with some nations imposing strict parameters on interactions between genders, leading to parental involvement in arranging marriages. The extent of agency granted to girls in choosing their prospective husbands varies across the region.

Divergent viewpoints exist in Middle Eastern societies regarding women's participation in the workforce. While some women engage in employment to support their husbands' pursuit

of religious studies, other societies disapprove of women working outside the home. Despite official proclamations of gender equality, noticeable disparities persist, ranging from restrictions on clothing and mobility to limitations on employment opportunities in specific sectors or government roles.

Certain Middle Eastern countries afford women rights akin to men, including voting, equal educational opportunities, military participation, and governmental positions. Notably, a woman has been elected to lead one nation in the Middle East. However, the acceptance of imposed restrictions on women's freedoms varies, with some individuals in the region embracing these limitations as a reflection of their unwavering faith.

The Middle East, characterized by significant geographical expanse and cultural diversity, defies facile generalizations. Findings derived from the analysis of any single country within this region cannot be extrapolated to others, as emphasized by AbuKhalil (2005), who aptly highlights the wide-ranging disparities in the status of women across the Middle East. Importantly, he warns against projecting the norms prevalent in sexist and oppressive states onto the broader Muslim world.

Geertz's (1973) comparative exploration of countries with majority Muslim populations further illuminates the nuanced nature of Islamic ideas and practices in the region. Despite a shared theology, these ideas manifest in diverse forms, reflecting the complexity inherent in the Middle East's cultural and religious landscape.

Nevertheless, the predicament of Middle Eastern women remains pronounced, compounded by exclusivist and conservative interpretations of religious laws promulgated by male Islamic, Christian, and Jewish jurists and theologians. These interpretations, permeating family, society, and the state, exert a burdensome influence on women. A particularly glaring manifestation of gender inequality is observed in the strict Islamic laws that preclude women from attaining the highest governmental positions—a prohibition ostensibly rooted in a disputed Hadith, a collection of sayings and deeds attributed to Muhammad.

Lamrabet (2018: 3) emphasized "the recurrent need to acknowledge that the oppression of women does not emanate from Islam as a spiritual doctrine but rather arises from the longstanding, unrevised legal stipulations and interpretations upheld for centuries by Muslim scholars ('ulamā'), which have displaced the sanctified text and transmuted it into rigid religious laws." The subsequent segments delineate the women's status in three Middle Eastern nations, chosen as a subset within the larger mosaic of numerous countries constituting the Middle East. These selected countries serve as an illustrative cross-section, encapsulating a diverse spectrum of rights and constraints influencing women across the region.

3.3.1. Israel

Despite Israel being perceived as the most democratic country in the Middle East by the West, Arab women within its borders face persistent challenges. According to BBC (2009), the Association for Civil Rights highlights ongoing discrimination against women, violating existing laws. An association-conducted study reveals that Arab Israelis, compared to their Jewish counterparts, encounter disparities in government job opportunities, educational quality, and treatment within the criminal justice system.

In Israel, the prioritization of Judaism over liberalism is evident, perpetuating gender inequality. Cohen-Almagor et al. (2022) attribute this imbalance to various factors, including Jewish law (Halacha), the Arab-Israeli conflict, the shift to a neo-liberal economy, and traditional chauvinism. Halacha, in particular, emphasizes the subordination of women, prescribing specific roles and duties within the household. Women are excluded from influential positions in both the public and spiritual spheres, highlighting a systemic gender bias ingrained in religious and cultural norms.

The discouragement of women from pursuing higher education or religious pursuits is justified by the belief that women are ill-equipped for such endeavors due to perceived frivolity and the demanding nature of their roles as wives and mothers (Meacham, 2021). This limiting perspective restricts women's freedom of choice, prioritizing domestic responsibilities over personal and educational pursuits.

The defense for maintaining this status quo argues that women's exemptions from certain obligations aim to facilitate their ability to fulfill their tasks (Goldfeder, 2012). However, this structured view restricts freedom of choice, undermining women's autonomy to lead a meaningful life according to their own preferences. Halacha further justifies gender roles by emphasizing inherent differences between men and women, prescribing specific tasks for each gender (Goldberg, 2013). Critics' claims of women's inferiority and discrimination are dismissed, with the argument that God assigned distinct identities to men and women that complement each other.

In the Haredi community, a strict form of Orthodox Judaism in Israel, women are often considered inferior to men, with men making most decisions, including whether women can have social engagements. Despite high literacy rates and educational access, religious guidelines continue to confine many Israeli women to traditional roles, creating a conflict between societal customs and increasing opportunities for women in public life.

Recent research on the portrayal of women in Israeli media highlights a consistent trend where women are as peripheral to the political, cultural, and economic progress of society. The findings indicate that women are frequently shown as subordinate to men, often younger, and confined to traditional feminine roles (Tidhar & Lemish, 1993). Even in instances where a more 'liberal' representation attempts to depict women as similar to men, it often fails to capture the distinctive values and experiences associated with feminine work styles (ibid). Studies conducted in Israel reveal a consistent association of women with the private sphere, relegating them to one of two social stereotypes: the sex object or the mother, thereby perpetuating the marginalization of women in Israeli society (ibid). The portrayals further reinforce gender stereotypes by depicting women as less logical, ambitious, active, aggressive, and independent compared to men. Instead, they are as more romantic, emotional, dependent, and vulnerable (Lemish, 2004). Women are not only confined to their sexual roles but are also linked to consumer goods of lower value and status, especially those related to household chores or personal grooming. These advertisements reinforce a distinct societal hierarchy between men and women, portraying men predominantly in professional settings and women primarily in domestic roles (Weimann, 2000).

Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, the country has witnessed seven wars, seven major military operations, and numerous conflicts. From 1948 to 2019, a total of 86 Israeli films have delved into the theme of Israel's military engagements. However, only two of these films, both authored by women, specifically explore the experiences of female Israeli soldiers. The limited presence of screen stories portraying the military involvement of Israeli women provides a unique chance to examine how female screenwriters perceive women's behavior within a patriarchal military environment. Moshe and Aharoni (2020) propose that these female screenwriters present a dual perspective on women – depicting them as both silenced and using silence as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, these stories illustrate the hegemonic male as suppressing women's voices, although in certain instances, women themselves may silence dominant men. Additionally, these narratives depict military service as an opportunity for women to discover and express their femininity.

Kiwanuka et al (2023) conducted a thorough analysis on the way the mainstream media in Israel presents the concept of polygamy within the minority Palestinian Bedouin community. The paper delves into the theoretical framework, elucidating how the media employs gendered practices within the minority to magnify Islamophobic sentiments directed at the Muslim community. Additionally, it explores the potential for alternative framing and the inclusion of critical voices of Muslim women in media to alleviate the adverse effects of such portrayals.

The findings of the research underscore a notable imbalance in the representation of Muslim minority women and their issues, highlighting the restricted platforms available for the voices of minority groups.

3.3.2. Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, a nation formerly governed by an Islamic fundamentalist regime, the treatment of women over the past decade has been significantly shaped by the influence of the Taliban. The Taliban, advocating for an Islamic fundamentalist government, imposes its beliefs on the Afghan population. This form of governance is rooted in the extreme tenets of Islamic fundamentalism, characterized by a stringent adherence to the Qur'an. Individuals who deviate from these prescribed teachings often face harsh and brutal punishments. Notably, in 2019, Afghanistan held the 166th position out of 167 countries on the Gender Development Index.¹

In the decades spanning the 1970s and 1980s, when Afghanistan was not under Taliban control, women adorned attire reminiscent of their Western counterparts, engaging in diverse professions such as agriculture, medicine, and law. However, following the ascension of the Taliban to power, women found themselves constrained, deprived of the freedom to choose their clothing and barred from pursuing employment beyond the confines of their homes. The economic repercussions of restricting women from the workforce are estimated to range from US\$1 billion to up to 5% of the country's GDP, signifying an immediate and substantial financial setback.²

In adherence to Islamic principles, both women and men bear familial responsibilities, with women entrusted with the task of nurturing children and men assuming the role of providing financial support. The Taliban, however, has zealously embraced and exacerbated these principles, compelling women to remain confined within their homes, devoid of the liberty to venture out except for reasons sanctioned by the government.

Under the Taliban's stringent regime, a strict dress code is imposed on women, mandating the wearing of a burqa—a garment that envelops the entire body, resembling a cape with a mesh screen for limited visibility. The weight and discomfort of the burqa have led to instances of women incurring accidents, unaware of approaching vehicles due to their restricted vision.

Compounded by the Taliban's prohibition on women working, the costliness of burqas adds an additional layer of hardship, rendering them unaffordable for many. Consequently,

¹ Human Development Report. UNDP, 2020

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-socio-economic-outlook-2021-2022-averting-basic-needs-crisis>

women within a community may resort to sharing a single burqa, resulting in extended periods of confinement until their turn to wear the garment. This represents a stark departure from the pre-Taliban era when the obligation for women to wear burqas was nonexistent.

Further constraints imposed by the Taliban include forbidding women from traversing public spaces unaccompanied, subjecting those who defy this rule to physical punishment. Mandating five daily prayers at the mosque, the Taliban creates formidable challenges for women, given the stringent conditions dictating their permissible outings.

In Afghanistan, where arranged marriages are customary, the Taliban exacerbates this practice, coercing women into unions and compelling fathers to yield to marital demands under threat of harm. The harrowing consequence is that a significant proportion of Afghan women, aged 15-49, find themselves married before turning 18, as parents succumb to the pressures of selling their daughters into matrimony.³

The majority of Afghanis adhere to Sunni Islam, wherein the prospect of a Sunni woman obtaining a divorce is exceedingly rare. Notwithstanding, within the Afghan legal framework, there exists a singular exception to this norm. Judicial authorities possess the discretion to grant a divorce to a woman if she can substantiate that her marriage was coerced upon her. Given the inherent difficulty in establishing such circumstances, the incidence of women being granted divorces under this provision remains minimal. A prevalent societal practice in Afghanistan, denoted as "bride money," involves the commodification of young girls as transferable assets in instances of familial indebtedness or economic crises. This unsettling scenario unfolds as early as the age of 6 or 7, with the implicit understanding that the formal marriage will transpire upon the child's attainment of puberty.

In many instances, this practice is infrequently observed; however, it exposes the young child to potential sexual exploitation, either by the groom or by older male members within the family, as documented by UNIFEM in 2006. Additionally, recent statistical data reveals that over 87 percent of women in Afghanistan endure domestic abuse, rendering the country one of the most perilous places globally for women (UNIFEM, 2006).

Islam, as a religion, underscores the significance of education for both genders. Prior to the Taliban's ascendance, women comprised half of the student body at the Kabul University. However, under Taliban rule, the prohibition on women and girls attending educational institutions was instituted. Despite the risks involved, some women clandestinely engage in teaching and learning within covert educational setups. Notably, around 60 percent of children

³ Unicef, November 2021

not enrolled in schools are girls, and the gender disparity is evident in tertiary education, where merely 4.9 percent of women access such education compared to 14.2 percent of men (UNIFEM, 2006).

In Afghanistan, the emergence of female media figures has empowered them to actively engage in social communication, advocating for women's rights and equality. Rostami (2005) undertook a research project titled 'Afghan Women's Resistance and Struggle for their voices,' aiming to pinpoint the varied perceived requirements of women during the reconstruction phase in Afghanistan, with a specific focus on media involvement. Through interviews with 126 women across diverse regions of the country, Rostami determined that:

“Afghan women should be seen as agents of change, which means to change the existing pattern of behavior in Afghan social system. To help Afghan women get equal rights and equal access to all social and political affairs and to facilitate this process, women in Afghanistan felt the media could play an important role by advocating women’s rights socially and politically, because media has the capacity to make a very positive contribution towards social change in any society. The media can provide opportunity for women to tell their stories and share their experiences. This is a healing process” (Rostami, 2005, p .34).

According to Darwaish's (2015) research, a thorough examination of Afghan women's media reveals a portrayal of Afghan women as predominantly marginalized, victimized by violence, subjected to masculine dominance, and structurally discriminated against. The media depicts them as less informed about their rights and grappling with significant challenges in education, health, and economic participation, which restricts their ability to fully exercise their rights. Nonetheless, Darwaish's study highlights that Afghan women's media utilizes these portrayals as a form of protest. These media outlets actively analyze the plight of women and strive to bring about change by advocating for equality, encouraging participation in public spaces, and challenging the traditional cultural depiction of women.

3.3.3. Saudi Arabia

The societal status of women in Saudi Arabia has undergone a profound transformation over the past half-century, exhibiting multifaceted changes. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed a substantial proliferation in the involvement of women across diverse spheres, particularly in response to the social advancements within the nation. Notably, the expansion of opportunities in education and employment has catalyzed shifts in women's educational attainment levels and their multifaceted contributions within various social, economic, and

cultural contexts. Alshakhs (2012) delves into the portrayal of Saudi women (SW) in local media across different periods, revealing a consistent depiction of them as housewives in domestic settings. Despite a focus on house environments, women are generally portrayed as not deprived of their right to education, marriage, and work.

As articulated by Abdulmajid (2019), women in Saudi Arabia have increasingly assumed roles in commercial establishments, airports, shopping complexes, hotels, and restaurants, predominantly occupying administrative positions. Moreover, their presence extends to governmental institutions, banks, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities. Over the past decade, there has been a noteworthy progression, exemplified by women's appointments to the Shura Council, a prestigious advisory entity, as well as their active participation in municipal council activities and electoral campaigns.

Saudi Arabian women enjoy a degree of freedom surpassing that observed in some other Islamic nations, with rights encompassing education, employment, and autonomy in marriage choices. However, it is noteworthy that women in Saudi Arabia still encounter disparities in civil rights when compared to their male counterparts (ibid). Furthermore, the past decade has witnessed a targeted focus on Saudi women as potential contributors to both the private and public sectors, as elucidated by Le Renard (2014). This concerted effort has manifested in a discernible rise in women's workforce participation, constituting approximately 15–18% of the total Saudi workforce across public and private sectors in 2009–10.

In parallel, initiatives aimed at enhancing women's economic participation have been implemented, encompassing financial support and training initiatives such as the Human Resource Development Fund (Hrdaf). Al-Munajjed (2010) underscores the diversification of women's roles into areas previously deemed inaccessible, spanning media, construction, politics, bureaucracy, banking, NGOs, and civil society. Despite these advancements, Quamar asserts that the trajectory toward women's improvement is intricate, given the complex societal and political dynamics in Saudi Arabia.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of women in the economy, the monarchy initiated the Nitaqat (Ranges) program in June 2011, aiming to nationalize jobs, address unemployment concerns, and expedite Saudization policies. Adham (2012) notes the contemporary landscape where Saudi women hold positions as deans, doctors, artists, photographers, filmmakers, journalists, writers, and fashion designers. The discourse surrounding women's empowerment resonates prominently across formal media channels, governmental bodies, and social media platforms, reflecting their active integration into the Saudi public sphere (Karolak, 2013).

Recent developments underscore the Saudi government's strategic commitment to further

elevate women's role in public life, propelling them into prominent leadership positions (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Consequently, it can be inferred that women in Saudi Arabia possess substantial opportunities to contribute to their society, leveraging their skills and intellect to foster meaningful societal progress.

3.3.4. Iran

In a manner akin to Afghanistan, Iran was once governed by a relatively liberal administration spearheaded by Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Serving as the Shah of Iran from 1941 to 1979, Reza undertook endeavors to Westernize the nation, striving to diminish the influence of religion within the Iranian government and championing the cause of women's rights. Notably, in 1963, he conferred the right to vote upon Iranian women and advocated for their equal educational opportunities, as well as encouraging their participation in the workforce. Reza, viewing the practice of wearing a veil as constraining for women, abolished this tradition.

Nevertheless, Reza's policies faced vehement opposition from segments of the Iranian populace, who perceived his initiatives as excessively inclined towards Westernization, diverting attention from religious principles. The year 1979 witnessed a popular uprising, leading to Reza's exile and the ascension of the Ayatollah Khomeini, a prominent Muslim religious leader.

Upon assuming power, Ayatollah Khomeini implemented substantial transformations in Iran, establishing a theocratic fundamentalist government termed the Islamic Republic of Iran. Within this framework, women experienced a curtailment of rights, marked by restrictive measures and a legal framework that granted men unilateral authority in familial decision-making. Khomeini, through legislation, reinforced traditional gender roles, restricting women to familial responsibilities and imposing limitations on their personal freedoms.

Under Khomeini's governance, polygamy was permitted, the legal marriage age for girls was lowered, and the veil was reintroduced as a mandatory attire, covering women's hair and bodies, with non-compliance subject to punitive measures such as whipping or imprisonment. Despite Khomeini's passing in 1989, the repercussions of his policies persist, shaping the contemporary legal landscape in Iran.

Subsequent presidents, including Mohammed Khatami, have purported positive stances on women's issues, yet policies restricting women's mobility and autonomy persist, exemplified by the requirement for written permission from husbands or fathers for travel. Divorce, historically skewed against women, has seen limited improvement in certain conditions, such

as spousal violence, addiction, or mental illness.

Child custody post-divorce is contingent on the children's age, with the father gaining full custody of boys over two and girls over seven. The intricate legal framework in Iran, deeply entwined with Shari'a law, aims to regulate women's conduct to safeguard their reputation. Adultery, under Shari'a law, is considered a criminal offense, punishable by stoning, perpetuating a harsh enforcement mechanism to uphold societal norms.

Despite these challenges, women's rights groups in Iran have emerged, striving to enhance women's rights and employment opportunities. Their efforts have contributed to an increased presence of women in government roles. The ebb and flow of women's rights in Iran reflect a complex interplay between legal, religious, and societal factors, with ongoing efforts to navigate and transform this landscape.

3.4. The Middle East Women in Its Media

Mass media has emerged as the primary channel for information and communication in most societies. It serves as a reflection of societal events and realities, influencing the way individuals shape their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The Middle East, in particular, has garnered media attention, especially post the September 11, 2001 attack, highlighting the interconnectedness of political, economic, social, and religious affairs on a global scale. The pivotal date of September 11, 2001, is considered a transformative moment not just in global politics but also in reshaping media coverage and influencing audience perceptions, particularly regarding issues related to Middle Eastern women. Prior to this date, Middle Eastern women's concerns were often marginalized due to societal norms, leading to a lack of representation in the media. Bird (2005) criticizes the media for perpetuating stereotypical depictions of Arab women as weak, passive, and always veiled, overlooking the diversity in their lifestyles and conditions.

Sakr (2004) contrasts this view by noting that media interest in women's issues in the Middle East predates September 11, 2001, and has been driven by a shift in the region's media landscape since the early 1990s. Women's rights organizations have used mass media to address taboo topics, although some argue that only the voices of intellectual, educated women are amplified, neglecting the broader community of women facing high illiteracy rates.

Various studies examine the representation of SW in local media, with Adham (2012) focusing on the Arab Spring period, showcasing diverse roles attributed to women, including mother/homemaker, fashion icon, radio and television presenters, singers, and businesswomen.

The results of his study indicate that specific cultural values persist within Arabian society, wherein males traditionally assume a central role in the family, while females tend to adopt subservient positions towards males (See Appendix 1 and 2). It appears that there is a continued prevalence of traditional gender roles in both advertising and real-life situations, highlighting a need for progress in enabling Arab women to embrace more diverse and gender-inclusive roles (Adham 2012).

Nevertheless, a notable apprehension exists regarding the potential for cultural variances to cause non-Islamic societies to perceive Saudi women as being subject to oppression. This, in turn, may contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes highlighted by Guta and Karolak (2015), as asserted to be disseminated by Western media. Mishra (2007) uses feminist criticism, Orientalism critique, and postcolonial discourses to compare the representations of SW in *The Washington Post* and *Arab News*. While the former portrays Saudi women negatively as 'oppressed victims,' the latter depicts them as resisting Westernization. Elyas et al. (2020) find that local newspapers generally portray SW positively, emphasizing their achievements and attributes. However, broader studies indicate a general neglect of women's issues in the media, both at the local and international levels, with only 21% of news subjects being female according to a report by the Global Media Monitoring Project (2005). The depiction of women in Middle Eastern media is critiqued by Allam (2008), who argues that it often exacerbates problems by perpetuating negative stereotypes, portraying women as sexual commodities or as morally questionable. This focus on the mental and psychological aspects of portrayal reinforces harmful images, including perceptions of women as illiterate, intellectually limited, opportunistic, weak, or dependent.

Rahbani (2010) contends that women's media has a substantial impact on reshaping the perception of women and enhancing their self-confidence. She argues that media outlets managed by women can function as catalysts for change and empowerment, exerting significant and lasting effects on the societal status of women. Rahbani's study, which investigated the influence of positive portrayals of women in the media on the status of women in Arab society, focused on Sudan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. Her research encompassed various media forms such as TV shows, radio, cinema, film, drama, news, sports, commercials, newspapers, magazines, and others (Rahbani, 2010: 4).

The findings of Rahbani's study revealed a noteworthy shift in the position of Arab women, indicating that they increasingly view media as a means of empowerment, education, and progress in their communities. Rahbani emphasizes that modern information technologies have facilitated the perception of women in the Arab world as equals to men, capable of

engaging in discussions, investigations, reporting, and presenting diverse issues (Rahbani, 2010: 11). Furthermore, she notes that these media initiatives contributed to constitutional changes in two Arab countries, leading to the acknowledgment of women's participation in elections and their right to vote. Consequently, women now occupy prominent positions in government (Rahbani, 2010).

3.5. Images of the Muslim Woman in Western Media

The handling of Middle Eastern women's issues by Western media has been criticized in numerous international reports and by experts who argue that the Western popular imagination, shaped by a media often insensitive to intricate realities, tends to hastily link Arab women with oppression and subordination. Within Western-based media, the portrayal of Muslim women is predominantly characterized by images of veiling and seclusion. These representations appear to function as a negative contrast, allowing Western constructs of gender and femininity to be positively portrayed. According to Haddad et al, consumers of Western media are frequently presented with analyses of Islam that emphasize the perceived powerlessness of veiled Muslim women. Newspapers, movies, and television often depict Muslim women as passive victims subjected to masculine dominance, or as individuals kept in harems for the fulfillment of male sexual fantasies (2006, 22). Haddad et al. cite the December 3, 2001, Time cover story titled "About Face for Afghan Women" as an example. This article describes the burqa in Afghanistan as a "body bag for the living" and symbolizes the Taliban's oppression of women. The piece further portrays Afghan women as "silent, shapeless figures encased in shrouds" (2006, 32). The authors argue that these oversimplified Western notions of Muslim women gained more prominence after the events of 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Television news has consistently been drawn to capturing images of Muslim women in various countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, often showcasing them in all-enveloping burqas. Photographers take pleasure in inundating the American public with such visuals, particularly emphasizing women casting votes into ballot boxes, introducing an element of apparent ambiguity. The question arises: Can these veiled women exercise their right to vote? (2006: 32).

In response to the negative portrayals of Muslim women in Western media, numerous media groups based in the West have initiated a counter-discourse employing two primary strategies. The initial approach involves discrediting the Western construction of womanhood by fostering Muslim stereotypes of Western women. Mirroring the Orientalist discourse,

Muslim counter-discourses often depict Western women as leading empty, morally bankrupt lives, characterized as loose and abandoned by their partners. As highlighted by Haddad, some Muslims have reciprocated by developing counter-stereotypes of Western women, drawing inspiration from certain movies and popular TV series like *Desperate Housewives* (Haddad, 2006: 34).

The second strategy revolves around crafting and disseminating specific images of the ideal Muslim woman. Various Muslim media production companies, encompassing newsletters, magazines, audiotapes, videos, CDs, and DVDs, have emerged to shape an Islamic model of the Muslim woman. Haddad, for instance, cites numerous journals tailored for American Muslim audiences that seemingly project similar Orientalist images of veiled and submissive Muslim women. Publications like *The Muslim Magazine*, *The American Journal*, *al-Jumu'ah*, and *Islamic Horizons* tend to discuss or represent women primarily within the familial context, portraying them as sisters, daughters, wives, and mothers. Notably, unveiled Muslim women or those choosing not to adopt specific Islamic attire are generally excluded from visual representation or attention. Equally significant is the frequent advice given to women in more conservative Muslim magazines regarding appropriate feminine behavior.

Articles often praise virtues such as obedience, sacrifice, and maintaining a soft and low voice. Conservative viewpoints emphasize a woman's primary roles as a wife and mother, expecting her to prioritize her family's needs over personal aspirations. In the context of Islamic expectations, a virtuous Muslim woman is to delay personal goals until fulfilling the requirements of her husband and children. Mothers are particularly encouraged to exhibit piety and serve as a cornerstone for their children's Islamic education (Haddad, 2006: 35).

Despite differing ideological perspectives between Muslim and Western representations of Muslim women, there exists a shared fascination with stereotypical images portraying them as "veiled," "obedient," and "silent." Both perspectives highlight the veil as a symbolic element of Muslim women's identity, inadvertently overlooking the significant number of Muslim women who do not wear veils. Consequently, readers are often exposed to narrow perceptions of Muslim women, as these recurring images persist in various contemporary literary works about them.

The prevailing representation of veiled Muslim women in the Western media has consistently leaned towards the negative, a concept articulated by Said (1997). Such depictions frequently serve as a symbolic representation of Islam's perceived mysteriousness, an emblem of women's subjugation within the religion, and a means of distinguishing those diverging from 'Western' values. Images, however, possess the potential to foster enhanced comprehension and

collaboration between different individuals and societies, while also exerting significant influence on shaping public opinion. Media outlets are astutely aware that incorporating images of women or children to illustrate suffering in a particular region elicits heightened sympathy and engagement from the audience. For instance, many media sources opt to showcase images of despairing, malnourished women when discussing poverty. Paradoxically, a woman's presence in such narratives may be purely visual, with her words remaining unquoted and detached from the context. This frequent utilization of women in images could also be an endeavor by the media to convey the perception that women are more susceptible to crises in the third world, aligning with the predominant focus of international aid agencies and organizations. The renewed scrutiny on Islam and terrorism in the media, especially post the September 11th attacks, has once again thrust Muslim women's attire into the realm of contentious discourse.

Examining both the English and Arabic editions of the Al Jazeera network, Al-Ariqi (2009) revealed a notable array of distinctions, despite their affiliation with the same network. For instance, Aljazeera.net Arabic typically avoids featuring photographs of Saudi women in its news articles. Instead, it predominantly employs images of the Saudi king, the Interior minister, or scenes from a Saudi city.

In contrast, the English version is more inclined to utilize pictures of veiled Saudi women, accompanied by highly critical captions such as a Saudi woman can only have a husband or a male relative as an escort in public. Saudi Arabia is one of the world's most conservative societies and Women in Saudi Arabia must be covered from head to toe when they go out in public." These stories, subtitles, and images collectively convey a potent impression that portrays all Saudi women as discontented and mistreated (ibid).

Owing to the prevailing cultural and religious backdrop in Iran, coupled with the influence of mass media, the portrayal of women in advertisements adheres to specific regulations and constraints. Numerous efforts have been exerted in Iran to scrutinize the depiction of women in commercials. Amini (2010), in her research, contends that contemporary global advertising tends to depict women not as stereotypes but as "sex objects." Nevertheless, she notes that in Iran, gender-stereotypical images are still prevalent in commercials, with the divergence lying in the form of "women's representation." In an analysis of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) commercials, Payande (2006) outlined specific stereotypes attributed to women, including being a housewife, a mother, reinforcing gendered division of labor, and serving as positive role models for their daughters. Payande argues that commercials not only convey information about product quality but also mirror societal relations and cultural

values. Carter and Steiner (2004) support this perspective, regarding media as a pivotal domain capable of signifying socially acceptable norms. Azin and Heidari Tabrizi (2015) asserted that gender stereotyping persists in Iranian television advertisements, perpetuating a division of gender roles rooted in the patriarchal family model and social archetypes. Adham (2012) posited that entrenched values, such as the dominance of males within the family and females assuming subservient roles, persist in Arabian society. Consequently, it appears that Arab women have yet to embrace more gender-inclusive roles both in advertising and real-life scenarios.

In 2004, Fahmy conducted the pioneering examination of how a Western news organization visually Afghan women in the context of the political narrative surrounding the liberation of Afghan women through the war against the Taliban. She observed that the Associated Press, in the aftermath of the Taliban's downfall, portrayed Afghan women in photographs as "more engaged, interactive, socially intimate, and symbolically equal to the viewer." This portrayal suggested a shift in the Western media's representation of Afghan women. Fahmy also pointed out that this alteration in representation reflected more a change in the attitudes of Western media than in the actual circumstances of Afghan women, emphasizing the enduring challenge of transforming culturally ingrained traditions (pp. 105-6). In the most extensive examination of visual portrayals of the Afghan war to date, Verschueren (2012) conducted a study comparing the visual representations of the Afghan conflict in US and Western European news media. In his findings regarding the connection between Western 'savior' narratives and the portrayal of Afghan women, he observed that Afghan men were frequently as 'belligerents,' whereas Afghan women were consistently presented in "subordinate or passive roles, either as victims of the conflict or recipients of aid programs" (2012: 129).

3.5.1. Women in America

In a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in the United States, it was revealed that 77% of female respondents consider sexual harassment a significant barrier to achieving gender equality with men. While slightly fewer respondents identified other obstacles, majorities still pointed to disparities in legal rights (67%), societal expectations (66%), and the underrepresentation of women in positions of power (64%) as major impediments to gender equality (Horowitz and Igielnik, 2020).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW) focuses on raising women's status to that of men in the realm of human rights, building upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international agreements aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination. Despite the existence of CEDAW since 1979, pervasive discrimination against women persists across various areas, encompassing access to resources such as food, health, education, training, and employment opportunities (CEDAW 1979, Reichert 2011).

By ratifying the Convention, states commit to implementing measures to eradicate gender discrimination, spanning political, economic, cultural, social, and behavioral domains. The objective is to promote women's development while eliminating prejudiced attitudes and practices grounded in the belief of one sex's inferiority or stereotyped gender roles (CEDAW 1979, Art. 5[a], Reichert 2011). Although most countries have endorsed CEDAW, the United States remains an exception. Notably, when the Equal Pay Act was enacted in 1963, women earned 59 cents for every dollar earned by men. Nearly 50 years later, in 2011, women were still earning an average of 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. This pay disparity is more pronounced for African-American women (earning about 70 cents) and Latinas (about 60 cents on the dollar), as well as women with disabilities (Davaki, 2012).

Despite some narrowing of the gender wage gap, little progress has been made since 2001 (White House, 2011). Furthermore, the commonly used method of measuring the pay gap restricts the comparison to those working full-time on a weekly or annual basis in a single year, omitting two-fifths of women workers who do not work full-time or full-year (Hartmann, Rose, and Lovell 2006, p.126). In 2021, across all workers in the United States, including those working part-time or part of the year, women were typically paid just 77 cents for every dollar paid to a man – resulting in an annual difference of over \$1 (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2022). This gender wage gap underscores the ongoing challenges our nation faces in ensuring the full and equal participation of women in the economy (ibid).

The 2011 Global Gender Gap Report places the United States in the 17th position among 135 countries in terms of gender equality. While the country excels in educational attainment and economic participation, it ranks 39th in health/survival and political empowerment (Hausmann et al., 2012). Over the course of history, the American workforce has undergone significant transformations due to societal, economic, and technological shifts, impacting work, workers, and workplaces. Present trends encompass heightened employment prospects for women, increased involvement of men in domestic activities, escalating global economic pressures, and the ongoing advancement of communication technologies, offering more opportunities for balancing work and personal life (Matos and Galinsky, 2011).

The inaugural Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index, introduced in 2017 by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, and subsequently updated in 2019, assesses the well-being of women across 167 nations, focusing on the dimensions of inclusion, justice, and security. In the 2019/20 global index, the United States secured the 19th position, trailing behind Germany and Portugal. According to this index, the United States grapples with a distinctive crisis related to lethal intimate partner violence, stemming from the convergence of domestic abuse and the widespread accessibility of firearms. The presence of a gun increases the risk of homicide for women experiencing domestic violence by fivefold, and an alarming 5.5 million adult women have faced gun threats or shootings from an intimate partner at some point in their lives. Concerning community safety, a notable gender gap is evident in the United States, with 79 percent of men feeling secure walking alone at night in their community, compared to only 56 percent of women (GIWPS).

In addition, American women encounter a notable underrepresentation across various organizational levels, particularly in the C-Suite, where the percentage was 17% in 2015 and increased to 21% in 2019, as reported by Huang, Krivkovich, Starikova, Yee & Zanoschi (2019).

3.5.2. Media and American Women

Gender bias has impacted the societal perception of women, and regrettably, we, encompassing all genders, have subconsciously embraced the notion that the "typical chief executive is six feet tall with a deep voice," a description that does not align with women (Miller, 2018). Individuals tend to see a woman first, attributing socially ascribed feminine traits to her, influencing their opinions about her before considering other factors such as titles, competence, and skill sets (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Media coverage is a domain where this challenge against women is prominently evident. According to Kurtz (1997), women appear as different embodiments: the homemaker, the sex kitten and the independent woman. The Homemaker is the queen of the domestic sphere. In the early years of the Industrial Revolution, she symbolized tradition. The independent woman first appeared at the turn of the century and became a dominant figure in the 1990s. Each culture has a set of general beliefs about what constitutes femininity and beauty. According to Wood (1999), to be feminine in the United States is to be attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. For Hofstede (1997), in Confucian cultures, femininity is associated

with virtue and modesty.

Numerous scholars have delved into the analysis of the portrayal of white and black women in media coverage, revealing that women are inadequately represented both as news subjects and as sources of information and opinion. Contemporary academic discourse has criticized mainstream media for their negative depictions of African-American women (Hill Collins, 2000; Manatu, 2003; Perry, 2003). Contesting media portrayals of black women as mammies, matriarchs, jezebels, welfare mothers, and tragic mulattoes is a central theme in black feminist thought.

Any essays in the realm of media conclude with two probing questions: firstly, 'how can the media undergo transformation?' Secondly, 'how can women be liberated from the tyranny of media messages that confine their lives to hearth and home?' (Tuchman, 1978, p. 38). Even today, these questions articulate the concerns driving much feminist media analysis. The 2011 documentary "Miss Representation" by Jennifer Siebel Newsom explores how mainstream media's often disparaging portrayals of women contribute to the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions. For instance, on issues such as planned parenthood, birth control, and abortion—pertaining to family life and planning—women were only given the opportunity to express their opinions 19% of the time in print. In contrast, men held a 75% stake in the discourse on such issues that predominantly affect women and families.

American society exhibits significant stratification based on race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. Cortese (2016) asserts that advertising serves as an indicator of influential groups' willingness to accept the mainstreaming of ethnic minorities in society. Williams (1970) identifies ten values central to U.S. culture, including freedom, democracy, science, progress, racism, and group superiority. These values, both positive and negative, are transmitted to the next generation through cultural transmission (Macionis, 1996, p.34). Cultural beliefs tend to favor whites over people of color, males over females, and the privileged over the disadvantaged. Cortese (2016) notes that advertising sometimes positions women against each other as fierce competitors, instilling in women, particularly young women, an attitude of alienation from their peers.

In an examination of social studies textbooks utilized in American schools spanning grades one through eight, Sleeter and Grant (1991, 78-109) discovered an imbalance in the visual representation of women compared to men. The study revealed that women were portrayed in 512 images, whereas men were featured in 855 pictures. This underrepresentation of women in visual depictions in American history textbooks was corroborated by other studies conducted by Clark, Ayton, Frechette, and Keller (2005, 41-45), Chick (2006, 284-290), and

Schocker and Woysner (2013, 23-31).

Clark et al. (2005, 41-45), in their analysis of 18 world history textbooks designed for high school students from the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s in the USA, observed a significant disparity in the number of pictures featuring women compared to men. They noted that only 368 images of women were accompanied by captions, contrasting with 2167 images of men with corresponding names. Similarly, Chick (2006:284-290), scrutinizing K – 12 American history textbooks for gender balance, discovered a notable overrepresentation of males in visual images across all three textbooks studied. For instance, in a grade two textbook, there were 31 images of women compared to 89 of men. In a grade 7-9 textbook, women comprised 53 visual images, while men had 185. Additionally, a grade 9-12 textbook contained 46 pictures of females and 185 of males (Chick, 2006:284-290).

Furthermore, Schocker and Woysner (2013:23-31), examining an African American history textbook and two mainstream American history textbooks for their portrayal of African American women, disclosed a similar trend of unequal representation in visual images. In the African-American themed history textbook, women were represented in only 14.4% of the images. Similarly, the two mainstream American history textbooks featured women in percentages of 44.6% and 34.1% respectively, indicating a consistent underrepresentation of African American women in visual depictions in both sets of textbooks.

3.5.3. Muslim Women in West

In recent times, particularly since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Muslim communities in Europe and America have faced an increasingly hostile stance from the broader society, as portrayed in popular media. This portrayal is marked by suspicion, ingrained biases, and instances of harassment. Grewal (2014: 9) notes that post-9/11, many Muslims, out of both fear of racial violence and a sense of patriotic mourning, adorned their bodies, cars, homes, and workplaces with American flags. The display of flags also signified the disappearance of other distinctive markers; numerous Muslim women discreetly shed their veils, anticipating or reacting to the anticipated backlash, often resulting in real and sometimes violent consequences (ibid).

In both official and unofficial discussions in the United States, spanning the political spectrum from right to left, there is a widespread diagnosis of various "crises" within Islam – crises of violence, backwardness, stasis, and women's oppression. The reform of Islam has become an explicit national interest, parallel to the focus on national security. Military interventions in the Middle East and South Asia are justified by their purported commitment

to reform Islam and address its perceived crises. Mainstream US media perpetually asserts that acts of religious "terror" by Muslim actors signify a "clash of civilizations" and a broader "crisis of Islam" (ibid).

Following September 11th, many Muslims were compelled to confront the complexities of being both Muslim and 'American.' For women wearing headscarves and other attire associated with Islam, this was particularly challenging, as their dress not only identifies them as Muslims but also serves as a visible marker of a predominantly negative Islamic social identity in Western society. Amid increased media scrutiny of Islamic practices after September 11th, Muslim women became vulnerable targets for religiously motivated hate violence. While precise figures on violence towards Muslim women were unavailable, the Council on American Islamic Relations reported over 1700 hate-related incidents against Muslims. In response, some Muslim leaders urged women to remove their headscarves. Despite some adhering to this call, many did not, and some women even chose to start covering for the first time after September 11th.

Edward Said's (1981) Orientalist thesis posits that "the West" views Islam and Muslims as inferior "Others," suggesting that Muslims are a threat to "the West." Orientalism is described by Said (ibid) as a Western style of dominating and restructuring the Orient, wherein "the West" claims ideological and cultural superiority. Powell (2009) argues that the media's "style" in covering Islam and Muslims consistently produces Islamophobia, framing Muslims as exotic "Others." The media constructs reality and shapes the perception of Islam as both "peaceful" and "violent" for social consumption. The Western corporate media consistently portrays Islam and Muslims as a threat to the "West," labeling them as barbaric and suppressive. This Orientalist perspective creates a dichotomy between "the West" and Islam in media frames, fostering an "us" versus "them" mentality. Elizabeth Poole asserts that Western generosity is often emphasized against the perceived oppressive actions of the other, furthering the notion that the presence of Muslims is a threat to Western "civilized" society (ibid). Any symbol identifiable as "Islamic" is viewed suspiciously, and Islamic symbols, such as mosques and Muslim attire, are symbolized as threats to "the West." Moreover, Western mainstream media perpetuates the image of Islam as a threat through deliberate prejudicial perceptions rooted in the Orientalist belief in a clash of cultures, promoting Islamophobia and the perception of a clash between cultures (Kabir, 2007).

Byng (2010) scrutinizes newspaper reporting with the aim of interrogating how the media portrays the ideological interests of Western nations. This research underscores the symbolic depictions of Islam in the public sphere post-September 11, 2001. Employing a critical

discourse analytic framework, the study meticulously analyzes 72 stories published in the New York Times and Washington Post between 2004 and 2006. The focal points of the analysis include the ban on hijab in France, the debate surrounding niqab in Britain, and the veiling practices of Muslim women in the USA. The study's findings reveal that Western nations tend to resist the visibility of veiling in public spaces. Byng asserts that Western nations should acknowledge the national identities of minorities and address concerns about Muslims' assimilation/integration. The conclusion drawn is that, from an ideological standpoint, Western media approach issues related to minorities with a uniform perspective, despite variations in their framing of religious freedom.

Jafri (1993) conducts an analysis of a report issued by the Afghan Women's Organization, focusing on local activism and community perspectives regarding the portrayal of Muslim women in Canadian mainstream media. The author identifies the prevalence of a phenomenon in current media representations, labeling it as Orientalist images of Islam. Concerning the existence of this phenomenon, she contends that Western media construct a depiction of Muslim women that diverges significantly from the actual lives of Muslim women. In this context, Muslim women are portrayed as the alien 'other,' with their veils casting them in the role of passive victims of patriarchy.

The examination of the representation and status of women in both Middle Eastern and American contexts, as presented in the preceding chapter, illuminates the complexities and nuances inherent in discussions surrounding gender equality, feminism, and the role of media in shaping societal perceptions. Throughout this chapter, various perspectives and experiences of women in the Middle East and America have been explored, offering insight into the diverse cultural, religious, and social factors influencing the portrayal and treatment of women within these regions.

From the portrayal of Muslim women in Western media to the challenges faced by women in countries like Afghanistan and Israel, it is evident that gender inequality manifests differently across diverse cultural and geopolitical landscapes. Despite the progress made in some areas, such as women's political participation and educational opportunities in certain Middle Eastern countries, persistent patriarchal norms and restrictive interpretations of religious teachings continue to impede women's autonomy and advancement.

Moreover, the analysis of media representation underscores the power dynamics at play, with media often perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing societal norms that marginalize and objectify women. Whether it is the portrayal of Afghan women as victims of violence or the limited and stereotypical roles assigned to women in Israeli media, the influence of media in

shaping public perceptions cannot be underestimated.

Furthermore, the chapter highlights the emergence of Islamic feminism as a response to patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, particularly within Muslim-majority societies. Islamic feminists advocate for a reinterpretation of Qur'anic teachings to promote gender equality and challenge the entrenched patriarchal structures that inhibit women's rights and agency. In conclusion, the examination of women's status and representation in the Middle East and America underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing gender inequality. This includes challenging cultural and religious norms that perpetuate discrimination, advocating for media representations that reflect the diversity and complexity of women's experiences, and supporting grassroots movements, such as Islamic feminism, that seek to empower women within their respective cultural and religious frameworks. Ultimately, achieving gender equality requires concerted efforts at the individual, societal, and institutional levels to dismantle the systemic barriers that limit women's rights and opportunities.

Chapter 4

Women Representation in the English- Language Versions of the Holy Qur'an

4.1. Introduction

Concerning the translation of the Qur'an, its discourse has left a lasting impact on Western perspectives regarding women. This chapter delves into the religious motivations behind the prevalent literal approach adopted by translators and explores how these choices have tainted numerous translations of the Qur'an. The repercussions are significant, especially in terms of the portrayal of women. Various translations of the Qur'an circulating in the Anglosphere contribute to positioning women in a subordinate role, often depicting them as second-class citizens (Engineer, 2004; Lamrabet, 2018).

The translators' tendency to overlook the significance of historical, contextual, Islamic, and Qur'anic scholarship in grasping the intended meaning leads to a breakdown in communication regarding the Source Text (ST). Consequently, this miscommunication results in a distorted representation in the Target Text (TT), influencing the perception of Muslim women in Western discourse. Literal translations, despite their widespread acceptance, shape views on numerous issues, such as social matters, ideologies, and violence. The impact of these translations stems from their literal nature, driven by the belief that the Qur'an represents the literal word of God, compelling translators to uphold a literal approach to preserve its sanctity (Abdul-Raof, 2001). However, this adherence can lead to an overreliance on literalism, creating translations that may superficially mimic the original in terms of wording but fail to accurately convey its essence.

The translation of the Qur'an and its subsequent interpretations often leads to divergent perspectives among readers due to the failure of translations to accurately convey the original concepts. This miscommunication stems from various factors, one of which involves a misconception regarding the depiction of women in translated versions of the Qur'an. Women are frequently portrayed as being subordinate to men, with some translations suggesting that the Qur'an advocates the belief that "a woman is an inferior being, devoid of compassion, obligated to unquestionably submit to the man, with the sole purpose of maintaining household cleanliness and procreation" (Nicolau, 2014). Such assertions are likely derived from translations that do not faithfully represent the intended meaning. The discourse on women's empowerment is significantly influenced by Western perspectives, which draw upon ideas found in various translations of the Qur'an (Ismail, 2017). Consequently, Western perceptions often characterize Muslim women as living in a regressive and male-dominated environment, where a woman's worth is considered to be half that of a man.

A new generation of Qur'an translators is challenging centuries-old traditionalist, male-centric, and frequently misogynistic interpretations by adopting a more contemporary, individualized, and gender-friendly approach to the Qur'an. In doing so, they are not only transforming the way the holy book of Islam is read but also redefining how Islam itself is comprehended in the contemporary world. This chapter explores how these translators address issues arising from the interpretation of gender-related verses, examining and comparing the translated versions of the Qur'an produced by both male and female translators.

4.2. Female Translators and the Translations of the Holy Qur'an

Despite the historical absence of women in the translation of Islamic texts, a significant contemporary development involves the active participation of numerous female Muslims in the revitalization of Qur'anic verses pertaining to women. This heightened involvement now allows women to articulate their perspectives on a wide spectrum of religious issues, with a particular focus on gender-related matters within the Qur'an. The translation of the Qur'an into English by women is a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging as a response to the religious and political transformations from the twelfth to mid-twentieth centuries, during which male translators dominated. However, the late twentieth century witnessed socio-cultural shifts that led to Qur'an translations by females.

The final decade of the twentieth century marked the emergence of women Muslim writers who contributed substantially to liberal interpretations of Islamic understanding and practice, collectively known as 'progressive Islam' (Duderija, 2020). The subsequent table enumerates female translators who undertook the translation of the Holy Qur'an in the last century. These translators are categorized into two groups: the first includes those who collaborated with male translators, while the second comprises women who independently translated the Qur'an. In the forthcoming discussion, I will provide a chronological overview of their translations, including insights into the content of their introductions and prefaces. Furthermore, I will evaluate all translations based on their treatment of verses in the Women's Surah, a deliberate choice due to its pivotal role in discerning whether a translation leans towards a patriarchal or woman-sensitive perspective, given the sharp contrast in readings by conservative and moderate/Islamic feminists.

Up to the present time, there have been five instances of the Qur'an being translated into English *through collaborative efforts involving women. The inaugural joint translation was*

accomplished by the husband and wife duo Ahmad Abdul Munim Zidan and Dina Al Zahraa Zidan, resulting in "The Glorious Qur'an: Text and Translation," first released in the UK in 1991. Following suit, the second collaborative translation was conducted by father and daughter Muhamed Ahmed and Samira Ahmed, based in Canada. A subsequent joint effort involved the teamwork of husband and wife Abdul Mannan Omar and Amatul Rahman Omar, resulting in "The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text and English Translation." Another noteworthy translation emerged from the collaboration between husband and wife team Hajj Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley, titled "The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English," published in the UK in 1999. The fifth and concluding instance of collaborative translation between genders is embodied in "The Qur'an: A Reformist Translation," undertaken in 2007 by a group of scholars, including one woman, Martha Shulte-Nafeh, alongside Layth Saleh al-Shaiban and Edip Yuksel. It is noteworthy that all these joint translations materialized within the last two decades. Despite the varied backgrounds of the translators, not every collaborative effort explicitly addresses the issue of women's status in Islam or provides insights into their utilization of traditional supporting texts in their prefaces and introductions.

Concurrently, there are four distinct English translations of the Qur'an authored by women. The earliest known English translation by a woman is attributed to Umm Muhammad, titled "The Qur'an, Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning." Following this, Camille Adams Helminski contributed "The Light of Dawn: Daily Readings from the Holy Qur'an," a partial translation published in 1999 containing 365 selected verses for daily meditation. Tahereh Saffarzadeh embarked on the third individual translation, titled "The Holy Qur'an: Translation with Commentary," published in 2006 in Iran. The most recent among these individual translations is "The Sublime Qur'an," translated by Laleh Bakhtiar and published in 2007 in the United States. Each of these individual translations offers a unique perspective, with their publication dates spanning from the late 20th century to the early 21st century.

The experiences of women who converted to Islam in different cultural and religious contexts can be significantly influenced by their surroundings. For instance, Umm Muhammad, an American convert residing in Syria and Saudi Arabia, and Saffarzadeh, an Iranian poetess, adhered to patriarchal traditions within QT. In contrast, Western perspectives influenced Helminski, an American, and Bakhtiar, an Iranian-American, both converts to Islam. These American female converts, in their new environments, reconstruct unique feminine identities, adopting distinct translation strategies that reflect gender roles in their respective societies, as highlighted by Braude (2004).

Women translators are typically portrayed as either challenging or adhering to conservative theological, political, and social norms. Take Laleh Bakhtiar, for instance, whose translation of the Qur'an diverged from traditional reliance on tafsir (Islamic exegesis) and other conservative Islamic sources. This decision can be interpreted as a direct confrontation with the authority of the ulama, an elite group of learned Muslim scholars considered guardians of Islamic tradition, for whom tafsir is a fundamental requirement in all Qur'an translations. Similarly, Camille Adams Helminski defied cultural expectations regarding the male image of Allah, opting to use the pronoun 'she' in reference to Allah (Haroun, 2022). The impact of these translations is significant; as noted by Hassen, they represent the narratives that women wished to share with the world. In contrast, Um Muhammed took a conservative stance, aligning herself with patriarchal mandates that prioritize males in a politics of sexual differentiation, granting them higher moral worth and control over females, as defined by Barlas (2002: 12).

According to AL-Shafie (2004), the contemporary Islamic world is embracing the Western Christian Hermeneutic approach in interpreting the Qur'ān, a trend that tends to overlook exegetical books, the sayings and deeds of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and the principles of interpretation. AL-Shafie argues that Western scholars often view the Islamic legacy as inherently patriarchal and biased against women, leading them to advocate for a reinterpretation of this legacy. He contends that Western Christian Hermeneutics has resulted in interpreting the Qur'ān through a feminist lens.

AL-Shafie (2004) concludes that all four English-speaking female translators of the Qur'an have maintained a strong fidelity to the original text. They have not added or embellished to highlight their presence or address gender-related issues, adhering to the conventional arrangement of chapters and verses (Hassen, 2011).

All the female translators of the Qur'an appear to be in consensus regarding their choices of "equivalence," "consistency," and "faithfulness" to the original text. The fourth Surah of the Qur'an, An-Nisā' (the women), explores various aspects of women and marital relationships, leading to diverse interpretations in translations due to the ambiguity of certain terms in the original text. An example is the polysemous term "qawwamoon," which can be rendered as "to have authority," "to maintain," "to be responsible," "to be in charge," "to guard," or "to be superior." The translator's choice of a specific meaning reflects strong ideological positions on gender-related issues (Hassen, 2012).

Verse 4:34 is one of the most contentious and debated passages in the Qur'an concerning gender roles in Islam. This verse introduces key gender-related terms, including qawwamoona, qanitat, nushuz, and idhribuhunn. Qawwamoona, the plural of qa'im, carries meanings such as

'in charge of,' 'responsible for,' 'provider,' and 'carer.' Qanitat, a feminine adjective, lacks a precise English equivalent but conveys the idea of religious obedience or devotion. Nushuz, a singular noun, encompasses rebellion, ill will, disobedience, deliberate misconduct, desertion, and infidelity. The verb idhribuhunna, derived from daraba, has diverse meanings such as 'to travel,' 'to get out,' 'to strike,' 'to beat,' 'to set up,' and 'to give examples' (Hassen, 2012).

The Verse on Wife Beating revolves around two main themes: male superiority over women and husbands' entitlement to discipline their wives. Concerning the former, conservative scholars argue that the first half of the verse signifies male superiority, with qawwamoona interpreted as a divine declaration of men's dominance. This interpretation is often supported and combined with the Degree Verse, suggesting that men hold a higher rank, privilege, and the right to control women's lives. Umm Muhammad translated this verse as follows:

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [in the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them.

Umm Muhammad interprets the term qawwamoona as 'in charge of,' additionally incorporating the phrase 'by right,' thereby attributing religious authority to men for governing the lives and affairs of women. It is noteworthy that she appends a footnote specifying the relevance of this verse to the relationship between husbands and wives; however, her use of the term 'primarily' suggests a potential extension to relations between men and women more broadly. She translates qanitat as 'devoutly obedient,' leaving the implication of obedience to the husband without further clarification. Umm Muhammad chooses 'arrogance' as the translation for nushuz, aligning with the interpretation offered by conservative scholars like al-Tabari. Furthermore, her rendering of the term 'strike them' in the keyword database aligns with patriarchal perspectives, even though she adds a footnote emphasizing its use as a last resort and the prohibition of causing bodily harm.

Saffarzadeh provides the following translation:

Men are *overseers and maintainers* of women because Allah has made one of them excel to the other, and because they, [the husbands] provide the livelihood of the family. Therefore, righteous women are obedient and guard in the husbands' absence what Allah orders them to guard as to those women on whose part you see ill conduct, admonish them [first], [next] refuse

to share their beds, [and last] *beat them lightly*, but if they return to obedience, do not seek against them means of annoyance. Verily, Allah is the sublime Great (2001: 142-3).

Saffarzadeh interpreted the term *qawwamoona* as "overseers and maintainers," wherein 'maintainers' alludes to financial support, and 'overseers' implies that men possess the authority to control and manage their affairs. Similar to Umm Muhammad, Saffarzadeh translates *qanitat* as obedient, signifying submission to the husband. The term *nushuz* is rendered as "ill conduct," and *daraba* is translated as 'to beat lightly.' Although Saffarzadeh's translation is less patriarchal than that of Turner and Fakhry, it still depicts women in a subordinate position, particularly if obedience is construed as compliance with the husband. Bakhtiar, however, offers a distinct interpretation of this verse:

Men are *supporters* of wives
Because God has given some of them an advantage
Over others
And because they spend their wealth
So the ones (f) who are in accord with morality
Are the ones (f) who are morally obligated,
The ones (f) who guard the unseen
Of what God has kept safe.
But those (f) whose resistance you fear,
Then admonish them (f)
And abandon them (f) in their sleeping place
Then *go away from* them (f);
And if they (f) obey you
Surely, look not for any way against them (f);
(Bakhtiar, 2007: 94).

Bakhtiar chose to render the term *qawwamoona* as "supporters," encompassing both financial and moral backing. In the absence of an exact counterpart for *qanitat*, Bakhtiar opted for "morally obligated" to avoid connotations of obedience and to eliminate any association with husbands. *Nushuz* is translated as resistance instead of 'arrogance' or 'ill conduct.' One noteworthy innovation in Bakhtiar's translation is her rendering of *daraba* as 'to go away,' challenging the patriarchal notion that men possess the right to discipline and punish their wives. This translation aligns with Bakhtiar's emphasis on gender equality and women's rights. It is essential to note, however, that Bakhtiar is not the first or the sole translator to propose an alternative interpretation for the term *daraba*.

Ultimately, the analysis of how women interpret gender-related verses in translations highlights a persistent reliance on conservative patriarchal sources by Umm Muhammad and Saffarzadeh. Their interpretations of verses related to the degree, the creation, and wife beating predominantly stem from the patriarchal Islamic discourse they live in. In contrast, Bakhtiar, while not integrating egalitarian interpretations into her translations of the degree and the creation verses, diverges from the conservative discourse in her rendition of the wife beating verse. This suggests that female Qur'an translators present divergent views on femininity and exhibit varied allegiances in their readings of gender-related verses based on the context they live in.

4.3. Male Translators and the Translations of the Holy Qur'an

From the 12th century until the final years of the 20th century, male translators were responsible for producing translations of the Qur'an. These translations followed four paths: translation from Arabic to Latin, from Latin to other European languages, from Arabic to European languages by orientalists, and from Arabic to European languages by Muslims. In 1143, Peter the Venerable, a French Priest and Head of the Cluny Abbey, proposed the translation of the Qur'an into Latin with the aim of understanding Islam and converting Muslims to Christianity. The English Priest Robert of Ketton and the German Priest Hermann of Carinthia (Al-Bundaq, 1980) carried out the task.

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, political motivations arising from Ottoman conquests led to translations of the Qur'an, all done by male translators. In 1649, Alexander Ross, chaplain to Charles I of England, produced the first English translation of the Qur'an, indirectly translating from the French version created in 1647 by André du Ryer due to Ross's lack of familiarity with the Arabic language (Kidwai, 2008). In 1734, British Orientalist and practicing solicitor George Sale created the second English translation of the Qur'an, based on Maracci's Latin version, and Sale's translation dominated for the next two centuries (Kidwai, 1978). In 1861, Meadows Rodwell, an English oriental clergyman, published a version that included cross-referencing with biblical texts. In 1880, Cambridge scholar and translator Edward Henry Palmer produced a scholarly and relatively non-polemical translation (Rafiabadi, 2003: 287).

During the first half of the 20th century, Qur'an translation held prominence within the male Muslim community. Notable translators of this era included Mohammad Ali, Mohammad

Marmaduke Pickthall, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, and Mohammad Asad. These translators incorporated their religious and theological convictions into their translations. For instance, Ali, an Ahmadi Indian scholar, manifested his skepticism towards the prophets' miracles, while Pickthall, a former Christian, employed archaic Biblical language (Hussain, 2020; Lawrence, 2017). Ali, Yusuf Ali, and Asad were guided by the tenets of their respective schools of Islamic theology, whereas Pickthall's translations reflected the influence of his previous religious affiliation.

The majority of English Qur'an translations are the result of individual endeavors, with some gaining official endorsements from religious bodies like the Saudi government and Al-Azhar University. These Islamic institutions significantly contribute to the global dissemination of Qur'an translations. Noteworthy examples, such as "The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary" by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and "The Noble Qur'an in the English Language" by Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, rank among the most popular and widely distributed English translations in Islamic bookstores and Sunni mosques across the English-speaking world (Mohammed, 2005).

Today, there are more than fifty English translations of the Qur'an that have been completed and published. However, these translations have primarily been carried out by male translators. An analysis of annotated bibliographies by Khan (1986) and Kidawi (1988) reveals that up until 1988, no female translators had undertaken the task of translating the entire or partial Holy Book of Islam. This indicates that for a span of four hundred years, Qur'an translation was an exclusive domain of male translators.

From the beginning of the twentieth century to the onset of World War II, a series of English translations of the Qur'an emerged in the British Raj. These translations include works by Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan in 1905, Mirza Abul Fazl in 1910, Hairat Dihlawi in 1916, Maulana Muhammad Ali in 1917, Ghulam Sarwar in 1920, Marmaduke Pickthall in 1930, and Yusuf Ali from 1934 to 37. In essence, within a span of less than forty years, seven Muslims, among them a British convert residing in India (Pickthall), produced more translations of the Qur'an than all British Orientalists from the preceding three centuries combined (Lawrence, 2017).

Over the past century, several male translators and scholars of the Qur'an have made significant efforts to provide interpretations and translations that challenge traditional patriarchal readings. These scholars seek to offer a more inclusive understanding of the text, emphasizing ethical and moral dimensions that promote gender equality and social justice. Among these translators are Muhammad Asad, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Ahmed Ali, and

Muhammad Abdel Haleem. This essay explores their translation styles and contributions in challenging the patriarchal tone of the Qur'an.

Muhammad Asad, originally Leopold Weiss, was an Austrian-Jewish convert to Islam whose translation, "The Message of the Qur'an" (1980), is celebrated for its modernist approach. Asad's background in Western philosophy and his deep engagement with Islamic texts allowed him to approach the Qur'an with a unique perspective that blended traditional Islamic scholarship with contemporary insights. Asad's translation style is noted for its clarity and effort to contextualize verses within the historical and cultural milieu of the time. He often provides extensive footnotes and commentary to explain the socio-political circumstances surrounding particular revelations. This approach helps to mitigate patriarchal interpretations by highlighting the ethical principles and universal messages of the Qur'an rather than rigid, literalistic readings. One of Asad's significant contributions is his treatment of verse 4:34, which is often cited in discussions of gender roles. Asad translates the contentious term "qawwamun" (often translated as "maintainers" or "protectors") in a way that emphasizes the responsibilities and ethical obligations of men towards women, rather than implying authority or superiority. His footnotes further explain the context and intent behind the verse, advocating for a more balanced and equitable understanding of gender relations in Islam.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali was a British-Indian Islamic scholar whose translation and commentary, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary" (1934), remains one of the most widely read English translations. Yusuf Ali's approach combines deep religious devotion with a rational and literary analysis of the text. Yusuf Ali's translation is characterized by its poetic language and comprehensive commentary. He sought to make the Qur'an accessible to English-speaking audiences while preserving the majesty and rhythm of the original Arabic. His footnotes are extensive, providing historical context, linguistic explanations, and cross-references to other parts of the Qur'an and hadith literature. While not explicitly feminist, Yusuf Ali's commentary often mitigates patriarchal readings by providing context and emphasizing the ethical dimensions of the text. For example, in his interpretation of verse 4:34, Yusuf Ali discusses the conditions and limitations placed on men's responsibilities and actions, highlighting the reciprocal nature of marital relations and the overarching principle of justice and compassion in Islam. His notes often underscore the importance of mutual respect and kindness between genders.

Ahmed Ali was a Pakistani novelist and scholar whose translation of the Qur'an (1984) is noted for its literary elegance and contemporary relevance. His work reflects a deep understanding of both the classical Arabic language and modern English literary sensibilities.

Ahmed Ali's translation is marked by its literary quality, aiming to capture the beauty and eloquence of the Qur'anic text. He uses clear, modern English while maintaining the original's stylistic and rhetorical elements. His translation is accessible, making it appealing to a broad audience, including those unfamiliar with traditional Islamic scholarship. In his translation, Ahmed Ali pays particular attention to verses that have been traditionally interpreted in a patriarchal manner. For instance, his translation of verse 4:34 emphasizes the ethical treatment and mutual responsibilities of spouses. By providing a more nuanced translation, Ahmed Ali challenges interpretations that justify male dominance, instead promoting a view of gender relations based on equality and respect.

Muhammad Abdel Haleem is an Egyptian-British scholar whose translation, "The Qur'an: A New Translation" (2004), is praised for its clarity and modern relevance. Abdel Haleem's work is informed by his academic background in Arabic and Islamic studies, and his experience teaching in the United Kingdom. Abdel Haleem's translation is straightforward and accessible, aimed at both Muslims and non-Muslims seeking to understand the Qur'an. He avoids archaic language, opting instead for clear, contemporary English. His work is accompanied by explanatory notes that provide historical and contextual insights, helping readers grasp the broader implications of the text. Abdel Haleem's translation seeks to clarify verses that have been used to support patriarchal structures. For example, his interpretation of verse 4:34 focuses on the moral and ethical context, underscoring the principles of justice and compassion that underpin the Qur'anic message. His notes often address common misconceptions and provide a balanced perspective that challenges patriarchal readings.

While Muhammad Asad, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Ahmed Ali, and Muhammad Abdel Haleem are among the most prominent male translators who have addressed the patriarchal tone in Qur'anic translations, other scholars have also contributed to this effort:

- 1) **Thomas Cleary:** An American scholar known for his translation "The Essential Koran" (1993), Cleary emphasizes the spiritual and ethical dimensions of the Qur'an, offering interpretations that promote gender equality.
- 2) **Saheeh International:** Although produced by a group rather than an individual, the Saheeh International translation (1997) seeks to provide an accurate and contemporary interpretation of the Qur'an, with notes that often address and challenge traditional patriarchal readings.
- 3) **Irving K. A.:** A Russian-American translator, Irving's work includes "The Qur'an: Modern English Translation" (1994), which aims to present the Qur'an in clear, modern language, challenging patriarchal interpretations through

contextual analysis.

The efforts of these male translators and scholars reflect a broader movement within Islamic scholarship to reinterpret the Qur'an in a way that challenges traditional patriarchal readings. By emphasizing the ethical, moral, and universal messages of the Qur'an, they promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender relations in Islam. Their work contributes to an ongoing dialogue about the role of women in Islamic societies and the need for interpretations that uphold the principles of justice and equality inherent in the Qur'anic message. Table .1 shows the list of male translators who translated Qur'an into English from 1649-2023.

Table .1: The list of male translators who translated Qur'an into English

Title of Translation	Translator	Year of Publication	Publication
The Qur'an of Mahomet	Alexander Ross (c. 1590–1654)	1649	London, Anno Dom
Al Qur'an of Mohammed	George Sale (1697–1736)	1734	<i>London, C. Ackers</i>
The Qur'an	J. M. Rodwell (1808–1900)	1861	London, Williams and Norgate
Selections from the Qur'an	Edward William Lane (1801-1876)	1879	Trübner & Co. in London
The Qur'an Translated	E. H. Palmer (1840-1882)	1880	Clarendon Press, Oxford
The Holy Qur'an	Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan	1905	Azizi Press, India
The Qur'an Arabic Text and English Translation	Mirza Abul Fadl (1865–1956)	1910	G. A. Asghar & Co, India
The Holy Qur-An With English Translation And Explanatory Notes	Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad (1889-1965)	1915	Islam International Publications, Islamabad
The Qur'an	Hairat Dihlawi (1850-1929)	1916	India, H.M. Press

The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text English Translation and Commentary	Maulana (Maulvi) Muhammad Ali (1874- 1951)	1917	Islamic Review Office, Woking
The Holy Qur'an	Ghulam Sarwar (unknown)	1918	Singapore, Karachi
Extracts From The Holy Qur'an And Authentic Traditions Of The Holy Prophet Mohom	Abdullah Alladhin (unknown)	1922	-
An English Version Of The Holy Qur'an in Verse	M. A Rahman	1926	Rowjees Press.
The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an: An Explanatory Translation	Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936)	1930	Allen and Unwin, London
The Holy Qur'an: A Translation with Commentary According to Shia Traditions and Principles	A.f. Badshah Husain	1931	Moayyedul-Uloom Association and Madrasatul Waezin
The Holy Qur'an: Text Translation and Commentary	Abdullah Yusuf Ali(1872–1953)	1934	Islamic Foundation
The Holy Qur'an Arabic Text and English Translation	Maulvi (Maulawi) Sher Ali and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (unknown)	1936	Oriental Publishing, Pakistan
The Qur'an: Translated with a Critical Rearrangement of the Suwar	Richard Bell (1876 – 1952)	1937	T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh

The Holy Qur'an, English Translation	Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977)	1941	Taj Co, Pakistan
The Qur'an Interpreted A Translation	A.J. Arberry (1905, 1969)	1955	Allen & Unwin; London, New York: Macmillan
The Qur'an	N. J. Dawood (1927-2014)	1956	Penguin, London
The Qur'an: a New Translation and presentation	Henry Mercier (unknown)	1956	Luzac & Co.
The Wonderful Qur'an	Salahuddin Peer (1915-	1960	Rafter-i-Zamana, Pakistan
The Tarjuman Al- Qur'an	Syed Abdul Latif (1891-1971)	1962	Academy of Islamic Studies, Heidarabad
The Qur'an	Mohammedali Habib Shakir (1866-1939)	1968	Habib Ismail Benevolent Trust Publication, London
The Qur'an: Arabic Text and English	Muhammad Zafrulla Khan (1893- 1985)	1970	Curzon Press, London
The Message of the Qur'an	Athar Husain (unknown)	1974	U.P. Sunni Central Board of waqfs, Karachi
The Message Of The Qur'an Presented In Perspective	Hashim Amir-Ali (unknown)	1974	Muslim World, Rutland, USA
Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an	Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi ud-din al- Hilali	1977	Kazi Publication, Chicago
The Message of the Qur'an	Muhammad Asad (1900-1992)	1980	Muslim League, Makkah
Al- Muntakhab	Abdel Khalek Himmat (unknown)	1980	Al-Ahzar University, Cairo

The Holy Qur'an: Translation into English and Persian	Akbar Iranpanah (unknown)	1980	Dareeneh, Iran
Qur'an: The Final Translation	Rashad Khalifa (1935- unknown)	1981	Tucson, USA
Translations from the Qur'an	Altaf Gauhar (1923-2000)	1981	Sangemeel, Pakistan
The Holy Qur'an	Muhammad Sarwar (unknown)	1982	Islamic, Seminary
The Qur'an: The First American Version	T. B. Irving (1914-2002)	1985	Amana, Vermont, USA
The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an	Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953)	1989	Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Pakistan
Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation	Ahmed Ali (1910-1994)	1989	Princeton University Press, USA
Holy Qur'an Text & Translation	Yasin T. al-Jibouri (1946-2021)	1993	Create Space Independent Publishing Platform
Qur'an Selected Commentaries The Qur'an As Explained by the Qur'an	Muhammad M. Al-Akili (1929- unknown)	1993	Pearl Publishing House, Pakistan
The Qur'an Made Simple With Concise Commentary	Salman Tawhidi (1982- unknown)	1996	Fountain, USA
Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qur'an	Mahmoud Ghali (1911-1994)	1996	Dar An-Nashr Liljamiat, Cairo
Al-Qur'an Guidance For Mankind	Muhammad Farooq-i Azam Malik (1943-unknown)	1997	The Institute of Islamic Knowledge, Huston, USA
A Word for Word	Muhammad Mohar Ali (1943-	1998	Jam'iat 'Ihyaa'

Meaning of the Holy Qur'an	unknown)		Minhaaj al-Sunnah, Ipswich, Suffolk
Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations	Michael Sells (1949-unknown)	1999	Oneworld Academic
The Glorious Qur'an: English Translation of the Meaning of the Message of the Qur'an	Syed Vickar Ahamed (unknown)	1999	Books of Signs Foundation, Lombard, USA.
Translation and Commentary on the Holy Qur'an	Zohurul Hoque (1926-2017)	2000	Holy Qur'an Pub Project, India
The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an with Explanatory Notes	Hamid S. Aziz (unknown)	2000	Taleh, Saudi Arabia
The Qur'an An Attempt at a Modern Reading	M.M. Enani (1921-2009)	2000	Sareh, Sharjah
The Qur'an A Poetic Translation From the Original	Fazlollah Nikayin (1938-unknown)	2000	The Ultimate Book, USA
The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an	Hasan Qaribullah; Ahmad Darwish (unknown)	2001	Al-Bahr, Pakistan
Critical Introductory Translation and Commentary of The Qur'an	Kamal Omar (unknown)	2002	Al-Kitab, Pakistan
Qur'aan Made Easy	Afzal Husain Ilyas (1914-1999)	2002	Darul Kutub, UK
The Qur'an: A New Translation	M.A.S Abdel Haleem (1933-)	2004	Oxford University Press, UK
The Qur'an with a Phrase by Phrase English Translation	Ali Quli Qarai (unknown)	2004	The Center for Translation of the Holy Qur'an, Iran
The Qur'an: A New Translation	Thomas Cleary (1949-2021)	2004	Starlatch, USA

The Beloved and I: The Holy Qur'an	Thomas McElwain (1949-)	2005	Lulu.com
The Holy Qur'an	Abdul Mannan Omar (1918-2006) and Amatul Rahman Omar(-2008)	2005	Noor Foundation, USA
An Easy to Understand Translation of the Qur'an	Bijan Moeinian (1937-2015)	2005	Lulu.com
The Qur'an Handbook: An Annotated translation	Nicolas Starkovsky (1922-)	2005	Algora Publishing, USA
The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an In Today's English	Yahiya Emerick (1964-)	2005	Ifna.net
A Simple Qur'an Readable and Understandable/A Two Hour Qur'an/An Abridged Qur'an	Bill Warner (1941-)	2006	CSPI Publishing, USA
Towards Understanding the Qur'an	Zafar Ishaq Ansari (1932-2016)	2006	Islamic Foundation, Pakistan
The Qur'an: A Monotheist Translation (A Reformist Translation; a Pure and Litera	Edip Yuksel (1957-2022) ; Layth Saleh al-Shaiban; and Martha Schulte-Nafe	2007	Brainbow Press, USA
The Noble Quran: Meaning With Explanatory Notes	Taqi Usmani (1943-	2007	Turath Publishing, USA
The Gracious Qur'an: A Modern Phrased Interpretation in English	Ahmad Zaki Hammad (1944-2006)	2007	Lucent Interpretations, USA
The Holy Qur'an: Translations of Selected Verses	Martin Lings (1909-2005)	2007	Islamic Text Society, USA

The Qur'an Translated into English	Alan Jones (1933-2022)	2007	Gibb Memorial Trust, Oxford
The Qur'an: A New Translation	Tarif Khalidi (1938-)	2008	Penguin Classics, London
The Qur'an with Annotated interpretation in Modern English	Ali Unal (1955-)	2008	Tughra Books, USA
The Ascendant Qur'an Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture	Muhammad al Asi (1952-)	2008	ICIT, USA
Qur'an in English: Clear and Easy to Read	Talal Itani (1961-)	2009	Clear Qur'an Publishing, USA
The Qur'an: Translation and Commentary with Parallel Arabic Text	Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-)	2009	GoodWord Books, India
The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an for School Children	Yahiya Emerick (unknown)	2010	Ifna.net
How to Read the Qur'an A New Guide with Select Translations	Carl W. Ernst (1950-)	2011	The University of North Carolina Press, USA
The Qur'an as It Explains Itself	Shabbir Ahmed (1947-)	2012	LightHouse, USA
The Holy Qur'an in English Poetic rendering of verses and Mystical meanings	HeydarAli Yakeenullahah (unknown)	2012	Arabic
Decoding The Qur'an	Ahmed Hulusi (1945-)	2013	AhmedHulusi.org, Australia

What Is in the Qur'an? Message of the Qur'an in Simple English	Abdul Rahim Kidwai (1956-	2013	Sarup Book, New Delhi
The Qur'an: A New Annotated Translation	Arthur J. Droge (1953-)	2013	Equinox, UK
The Qur'an With References To The Bible	Safi Kaskas; David Hungerford (unknown)	2015	Bridges of Reconciliation, USA
The Study Qur'an	S.Hossein Nasr (1933-; C. Dagli; M. Dakake; J. Lumbard (1969; M. Rustom (1980-	2015	Harper One, New York
The Entire Noble Qur'an	Munir Munshey (unknown)	2016	The Institute of Islamic Knowledge, Texas
The Qur'an A Complete Revelation	Sam Gerrans (1969-)	2016	Quranite, UK
The Qur'an God's Message to Mankind New Millennium Exposition	Paigham Mustafa (unknown)	2016	Xeitre-Signat, USA
The Holy Qur'an Text Translation & Tafsir	Agha Mohammad (unknown)	2018	Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an
The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary	Gabriel Said Reynolds (1973-	2018	Yale University Press, New Haven
The Holy Qur'an Translation	Hasan Razavi	2020	ABWA Co.

English Translation of The Holy Qur'an with Arabic Text and Transliteration	Nasir Ahmad (unknown)	2023	Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, UK
---	-----------------------	------	---

Until the early twentieth century, non-Muslim English Orientalists predominantly controlled the market for English translations of the Qur'an. However, this changed when Indian Muslim intellectuals like Mirza Abu'l-Fadl began to challenge the non-Muslim dominance in presenting the Qur'an to Western European readers. These intellectuals, who often learned European languages as adults, had to confront the legacy left by Orientalists. Additionally, they had to consider the existing Muslim Qur'anic commentaries (tafsīr) and the influence of the Bible on Qur'an translations into languages like English, which lacked a religious vocabulary specific to Islam due to a long tradition of biblical translation and active Christian missionary work.

The approach taken by Muslim translators of the Qur'an into European languages varied based on their educational backgrounds and the audiences they aimed to reach. Some viewed the increasing availability of printing presses as an opportunity to connect with literate Muslims who had a European-style education, while others focused on engaging non-Muslim Europeans directly. Through their pioneering efforts, the genre of modern Muslim Qur'an translation gradually took shape, with its distinctive features becoming more defined over the first six decades of the twentieth century.

The translation process of the Qur'an is heavily influenced by the prevalent use of highly literal translations, primarily rooted in the belief that the Qur'an is the literal word of God. Many translators adhere to this literal approach in an effort to preserve the holiness of the Qur'an (Abdul-Raof, 2001). However, an overemphasis on literal translation can result in translations that, while mimicking the original wording, fail to accurately convey its content. Consequently, readers of the Qur'an and its translations often hold divergent views due to the failure of the translation to communicate the original ideas. This miscommunication is evident in various aspects, including the portrayal of women in Qur'anic translations, where women are frequently as subordinate to men. Allegedly, the Qur'an promotes the notion that "a woman is an inferior being, heartless, who must unconditionally bow to the man, having the purpose to keep the house clean and to procreate" (Nicolau, 2014). Such assertions are likely based on translations that do not faithfully represent the original meaning. The discourse surrounding

the empowerment of women is largely influenced by Western perspectives, drawing ideas from multiple Qur'anic translations (Ismail, 2017). Consequently, the West tends to perceive Muslim women as living in a backward and male-dominated world, where a woman's value is considered half that of a man, citing verses like 11 from chapter 4 regarding inheritance (Saifee et al., 2012).

The patriarchal tone found in many ancient Sacred Texts has sparked significant controversy in the realm of religious text translation. A persistent question revolves around how to justify what is now viewed as an excessive use of male-centered language. Poythress and Grudem's concept of "pure speech" suggests that the Deity intends to use masculine generic terms to convey male nuances and connotations, insisting that translators should mirror patriarchal elements in the target language. Feminist theologian Phyllis Bird shares a similar perspective, contending that it is essential to maintain the patriarchal tone of the original text. She argues that a Bible translator's role is to enable a modern audience to "overhear an ancient conversation rather than to hear itself addressed directly" (1988: 91). Bird, aligned with Poythress and Grudem's translation philosophy, aims to expose the male bias in religious texts, asserting that covering the male-centered language conceals deeper underlying issues. She emphasizes the androcentric nature of biblical language, advocating for its acknowledgment as a sign of its historically and culturally limited nature (Bird, 1988: 90).

This chapter has provided a comprehensive examination of the translation of the Qur'an and its impact on the representation of women, focusing on both female and male translators' approaches. The chapter began by highlighting the lasting impact of Qur'anic translations on Western perspectives regarding women, emphasizing the prevalence of literal approaches adopted by translators and their influence on portraying women in subordinate roles. It was noted that these translations often neglect historical, contextual, Islamic, and Qur'anic scholarship, leading to distorted representations in the target text (TT) and influencing perceptions of Muslim women in Western discourse.

The chapter then explored the emergence of a new generation of female translators challenging traditionalist interpretations by adopting contemporary and gender-friendly approaches. These female translators have significantly contributed to the revitalization of Qur'anic verses pertaining to women, offering unique perspectives that diverge from conservative patriarchal interpretations. Through their translations, they challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality, redefining how Islam is comprehended in the contemporary world.

Conversely, this chapter also examined the historical dominance of male translators in

Qur'anic translations and their impact on the portrayal of women. Male translators, rooted in traditionalist interpretations, have often perpetuated patriarchal perspectives, emphasizing male superiority and prescribing subordinate roles for women. Their translations, influenced by religious and theological convictions, have shaped perceptions of women in Islamic discourse and Western perspectives.

Furthermore, chapter 4 discussed the ongoing debate surrounding the translation process, particularly the emphasis on literal translations rooted in the belief that the Qur'an represents the literal word of God. This approach, while aiming to preserve the sanctity of the Qur'an, can result in translations that fail to accurately convey its content, leading to misinterpretations and misrepresentations of women.

Overall, this chapter underscores the significant role of Qur'anic translations in shaping perceptions of women in Islamic discourse and Western perspectives. It highlights the diversity of perspectives offered by female translators, challenging traditionalist interpretations and promoting gender equality. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of Qur'anic translations and their implications for the representation of women, urging scholars to consider the socio-cultural context, linguistic nuances, and diverse interpretations in their analysis. In the following chapter, we explore how Birk approached the representation of women in the Qur'an, portraying them as active participants in modern society or not.

**Women's Representation in Sadow Birk's
American Qur'an (2015)**

5.1. Sandow Birk's *American Qur'an*

In essence, the illuminations in *The Message of the Qur'an* not only contribute to its multifaceted auditory and semantic richness but also elevate it to the status of a visual masterpiece. Unlike any previous rendition, this latest edition stands alone, with its only comparable counterpart being Sandow Birk's graphic Qur'an. The American Qur'an, as a graphic representation, retains the essence of the text while employing a visual and metonymic approach that captivates through the eyes rather than the ears. Rather than offering a straightforward translation, it presents selected English verses that capture specific moments in American history, a concept Lawrence (2017) termed the Graphic Qur'an. This hybrid genre, spearheaded by Californian printmaker Sandow Birk, combines the visual and visionary to engage a new audience unfamiliar with the Qur'an or Islam.

Birk's journey to create "*The American Qur'an*" involved a decade of exploration in Islamic regions of Asia and Africa, followed by nine years dedicated to crafting what he calls a "personal Qur'an," printed in November 2015. Through his work, Birk sought to answer questions such as the meaning of the Qur'an for individual Americans in the 21st century and how its message could be applied to contemporary American life.

In 2015, he presented an alternative version of the Qur'an, illustrated with contemporary themes that resonated with both ordinary people and scholars. Despite facing rejection from some Muslim scholars and resistance to his California gallery exhibition in 2009, Birk, serving as an intersection translator, visually translated the Qur'an after 9/11. This visual framing showcased the political, social, cultural, and religious conditions of Americans alongside others from diverse races and religions.

Following the conventions of ancient Arabic and Islamic manuscripts, Birk spent the past nine years hand-transcribing the entire English-translated text of the Qur'an, adhering to traditional guidelines for ink colors, page formatting, margin size, and illuminations of page headings and medallions. His hand-lettered calligraphy draws inspiration from the American tradition of street letters found in urban graffiti around his Los Angeles neighborhood. Each transcribed chapter was then illuminated with scenes from contemporary American life, creating a unique blend of past and present, East and West, in a project that adapts techniques and stylistic devices from Arabic and Persian paintings and albums.

In summary, the *American Qur'an* is a comprehensive work that integrates transcription, adaptation, and illumination, creating a voluminous and opulent book. These three components

synergize to transform the book into more than just another Qur'an; together, they present the ancient text as a unique translation resembling a graphic Qur'an. According to Sandow Birk, who handled the project, the Qur'an takes on a metaphorical quality, akin to an onion, where delving deeper reveals layers of meaning unfolding. As Lawrence (2017: 140) stated that:

“Birk himself declares that he “uses copyright- free English translations of the Qur'an from various authors.” He does not translate afresh but transposes and copies each verse from a variety of extant translations”. Notably, Birk incorporates various English translations from multiple sources, adding a layer of complexity to our examination of his artistic choices. Based on Lawrence (2017), Birk displays a meticulous approach to reading, showcasing both careful analysis and creative expression. In his interpretation of the Qur'anic message, he introduces his own perspective, advocating for a sensitive and supportive tone rather than a harsh and harmful one when delivering admonitions. His bold reimagining of the Arabic Qur'an, particularly his rendition of Q 4:34, reveals a profound insight that extends beyond Birk's personal choices in the American Qur'an. It underscores the broader observation that all translations of the Qur'an are simultaneously influenced by previous interpretations and stand independently, necessitating an individual decision—whether by an artist, scholar, believer, or unbeliever—regarding the intended meaning.

The American Qur'an is so daring and complex that it requires analysis on three distinct levels:

- 1) The American Qur'an may initially appear as just another English rendition of the Qur'an, seemingly a mere compilation of existing translations. However, its creator goes beyond mere transcription by deeply engaging with these previous translations to create his own unique interpretation of the sacred text.
- 2) Moving beyond the textual content, the American Qur'an evolves into an artistic reinterpretation, blending scenes from American life such as urban landscapes, public areas, and rural settings. It specifically focuses on key moments that define the United States in the early 21st century. This adaptation not only presents new avenues for understanding the Qur'anic message but also transforms the lens through which others perceive, utilize, and apply its themes.
- 3) At its core, the American Qur'an transcends into an ethical beacon, shedding light on both everyday occurrences and situations that challenge the moral imagination of its readers/viewers. Whether depicting domestic seasonal disasters or U.S. military endeavors overseas over the past fifteen years, it presents familiar yet unsettling images that resonate with the Qur'anic message within an American

context. These cautionary narratives are both vivid and thought provoking.

In summary, these interpretations transform the Qur'an into not only a rich tapestry of sound and meaning but also a visually striking work of art. Among recent translations, the latest edition of *The Message of the Qur'an* stands out uniquely, with no comparable predecessor. Its only parallel is the graphic interpretation of the Qur'an by Sandow Birk. Birk's *American Qur'an* maintains the essence of the text but employs a visual, metonymic approach. Rather than providing a complete translation, it presents select English translations of specific verses chosen to reflect moments in American history. This rendition, termed the *Graphic Qur'an*, blends visual and visionary elements, serving as a hybrid genre intended to engage a new audience previously uninterested in the Qur'an or Islam. Sandow Birk, a Californian illustrator, is the primary innovator and practitioner of this approach. He embarked on a ten-year journey to various Islamic regions in Asia and Africa, adopting a dialogic method to engage with the Word of God.

The artist behind the "American Qur'an" project, used a variety of English translations of the Qur'an for his artwork. The translations include:

Yusuf Ali: Birk used Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation, which is widely recognized and used in the English-speaking Muslim community.

Marmaduke Pickthall: Birk also referred to Pickthall's translation, another classic English version of the Qur'an.

M. H. Shakir: The third translation mentioned from the HUC/USC website is by M. H. Shakir. Shakir's translation is known for its straightforward and literal approach.

Rodwell (1861): Birk mentioned using the translation by J.M. Rodwell, dating back to 1861, although he noted it as a somewhat reluctant choice. The sentence describes how Birk's adaptation closely resembles Rodwell's translation initially but then diverges into various other directions as the project progresses.

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful (Rodwell)

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe (Cleary)

Most Gracious, the Most Merciful (Yusuf Ali)

Master of the Day of Judgment (Pickthall, Yusuf Ali)

You alone we worship; You alone we ask for help

(Pickthall)

Guide us in the right path (Palmer, M. H. Shakir)

Those whom You have blessed, not of those who have

deserved wrath, nor of those who stray (Abdel Haleem, Yusuf Ali).

The next step in our project is to analyze the representation of women depicted in the illustrations within the American Qur'an. This project conducted a qualitative and analysis building upon Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, focusing on the representational, interactive and compositional meanings.

5.2. Women in The American Qur'an

In this section, we analyze 20 images from the American Quran illustrated by Sandow Birk. In most of the suwar, the illustrator has depicted women in the illustrations whenever women are mentioned. In some cases, despite the mention of issues related to women, the illustrator has not depicted any women in the images. And in rare cases, he has depicted women

5.2.1. Women in The Cow Surah

Birk interpreted the verse 102 of the cow surah (the second surah of Qur'an) as follows and illustrated fig. 1 based on the verses 91-116 of this surah. This verse discusses how these angels were sent as a test and were not to be followed in their teaching of magic, which led to moral and spiritual corruption. It also emphasizes the consequences of engaging in forbidden practices, such as magic, and the importance of faith and righteousness in Islam.

Surah 2: verse 102 They followed what devils declared against the kingdom of Solomon. Solomon was not an unbeliever, but the devils disbelieved teaching sorcery and what had been revealed to the two angels, Harut and Marut in Babylon. Yet none had they taught before until they said, "we are only a trial, so do not disbelieve". But from these two they learned what causes division between man and wife.

The verse refers to the angels Harut and Marut, who were sent to the people of Babylon to test them. They taught magic to the people but warned them that it was a trial and that they should not disbelieve by practicing it. Some people, however, learned the magic and used it to cause harm, such as separating a man from his wife. The verse emphasizes that such practices are harmful and that those who engage in them will have no share in the Hereafter.

This means, "The people learned magic from Harut and Marut and indulged in evil acts that included separating spouses, even though spouses are close to, and intimately associate with each other. This is the devil's work."⁴

This shows that the greatest demand was for magical arts and charms to sow discord

⁴ <https://quranhouse.online/quran-translation/al-baqarah/ayat-102/>

between a man and his wife and to procure the eventual seduction of the latter. This was the depth of moral depravity to which these people had fallen. A people cannot sink to a lower level of moral degeneracy than when adulterous affairs become their favorite pastime, and when seducing a married woman is considered a boastful achievement. The matrimonial relationship is, in truth, the very foundation of man's collective life. The soundness of human civilization depends on the soundness of the relationship between the two sexes. Hence, nothing could be worse than the person who strikes at the very foundations of the structure that supports both him and society as a whole.

There is a Tradition from the Prophet to the effect that Satan sends his agents on their missions to all parts of the world. On their return, these agents report their achievements with each mentioning his own special evil act. However, Satan is not completely satisfied with any of them. It is only when an agent reports that he has succeeded in separating a wife from her husband that Satan is filled with joy and embraces him. In the light of this Tradition, it is understandable why the angels who were sent to the Israelites to test them were asked to disclose those magical arts, which would lead to separation between a husband, and his wife, for the inclination of a people to learn such arts is a sure index of its moral decadence.

The phrase "But from these two they learned what causes division between man and wife" refers to the negative consequences of engaging in magic, which in this context, leads to harm and discord in relationships. It suggests that magic, as taught by Harut and Marut, can be used to create problems and disharmony between spouses, potentially causing marital disputes or even divorce. Islamic scholars interpret this verse as a warning against the use of magic and sorcery, which can lead to severe spiritual and moral consequences. It underscores the importance of maintaining trust, harmony, and stability within marital relationships, and the severe consequences for those who engage in practices that disrupt these bonds.

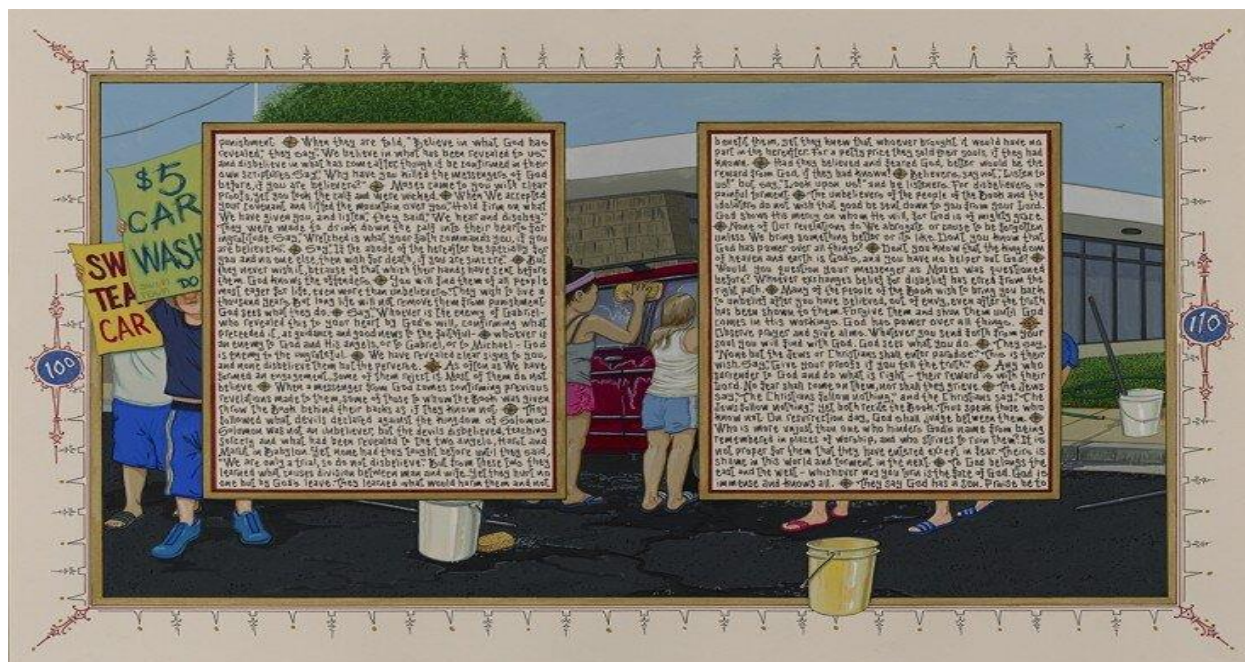


Fig. 1

Representational: Fig. 1 uses a non-transactional action process in which the two women are shown as the major actors, whose arms generate vectors connecting them with a car, thus making the car Goal. This image can be transcoded women as car washers. This image also uses an analytical process. Thus, the participants (the men on the left side) are carriers in relation to his Possessive Attributes (placards), which create visual concepts as they looks like as car washers too.

Interactional: With regard to the interactive meanings, fig. 1 can be classified as an ‘offer’ because none of the represented participants looks at the viewer. The represented participants are offered to the viewer as “items of information”, so the image invites the viewer to observe the represented participants, not to identify with them. Women as the main represented participants are from back. A very wide perspective is created in the photo because more than four participants are seen. Therefore, this distance is for people who are represented as strangers. The represented participants are portrayed at a frontal horizontal angle, and the two women participants are observed in a detached manner from the back. In this case, the viewer is detached from the participants and their world. The final visual resource in interactive relations is the vertical angle from which the represented participants are at eye-level. Consequently, there is no power difference involved between the represented participants and the viewer.

Compositional: In connection with the compositional organization, fig. 1 utilizes a

centre/ margin scheme of information value. The two women are positioned in the central part of the image as the nucleus of information and the other participants (the two men) are represented as ancillary elements (subservient).

Continuing with the examination of other verses from this same surah, we will explore how Birk has included women in the illustrations of his book based on those verses. "Birk interpreted these verses as follows:

Surah 2: verse 221 Do not marry idolatrous women until they believe. A slave who believes is better than an idolater, though she please you more. Wed not your daughters to idolatrous men until they believe, for a slave who is a believer is better than an idolater, though he please you.

Surah 2: verse 228 Divorced women shall keep themselves in waiting three courses, nor should they conceal what god has created in their wombs, if they believe in God and the last day. Their husband have the better right to take them back in that period if they desire what is right. Women shall have rights similar to their rights against them, according to what is equitable. But men are a step above them.

Surah 2: verse 229 You may divorce your wives twice. Keep them honorably or put them away with kindness. It is not allowed you to take anything from what you gave them, unless both fear they cannot keep within the bounds set by God. If you fear that you cannot observe the bounds of God, no blame shall be on either of you for what the wife gives herself for her freedom. These are the bounds set by God. Do not overstep them, for whoever oversteps the bounds of God-they are evil doers.

Surah 2: verse 233 Mothers, when divorced, shall suckle their children two full years for those who wish to complete the nursing. The father shall provide food and clothing. No person shall be charged beyond his means. A mother shall not be made to suffer because of her child, nor a father for his child. The same with the father's heir. But if they choose to wean the child by agreement, if shall be no fault on them...

These verses address various aspects of family and marital relations, particularly in the context of divorce, marriage, and the rights and responsibilities of women:

- 1) **Waiting Period for Divorced Women (Suarh 2: verse 228):** Divorced women are required to observe a waiting period (iddah) of three menstrual cycles or three months (whichever is longer) before they can remarry. During this period, they are not to conceal any potential signs of pregnancy. The verse emphasizes the importance of belief in God and the Last Day.
- 2) **Divorce Guidelines (Suarh 2: verse 229):** The verse allows men to divorce their

wives twice, with an opportunity for reconciliation. The emphasis is on treating wives with kindness and maintaining equitable behavior. The verse also prohibits taking back any gifts or dowry given to the wife unless there are concerns about violating the bounds set by God. If divorce is inevitable, the woman may choose to free herself by returning part or all of her dowry.

- 3) **Child Custody and Support (Surah 2: Verse 233):** In the case of divorce, mothers are encouraged to breastfeed their children for two full years if both parties agree and wish to complete the nursing. The father is responsible for providing food and clothing for the child. The verse emphasizes that no person should be burdened beyond their means, and mothers and fathers should not suffer due to their children.
- 4) **Marriage to Believers (Surah 2: verse 221):** The verse advises against marrying idolatrous women to believing men or vice versa. It suggests that a believing slave is better than an idolater, emphasizing the importance of faith over personal preferences in marriage. According to this law, then, marriage of a Muslim man to Jewish, Christian and Sabian women is lawful, although marriage to an idolatress is not.

Islam safeguards a woman's rights from her birth. Given the rarity of women working during that era, the Qur'an mandates that her male guardians are responsible for providing her with financial support. Regarding this verse, Stowasser (2022: 18) mentioned that "the Qur'anic divorce laws which stipulate the obligatory idea (a waiting period of some three months after the final pronouncement of the divorce formula) also have to be mentioned here, as they entail a slight amelioration of women's position at divorce. While pre-Islamic wives could be repudiated and turned out by their husbands immediately, the Qur'an legislates as follows. Sharawi (2017: 86) stated that "almost all of the rights protected within contemporary society were first established by Islam. Islam protects a woman's rights and emphasize their importance.

Birk painted these verses (221-235) of the cow (Al-Baqarah) surah as shown (fig. 2). As the illustration shows, a bride stood between nine bridesmaids in a wedding but she is partly as the main actor.

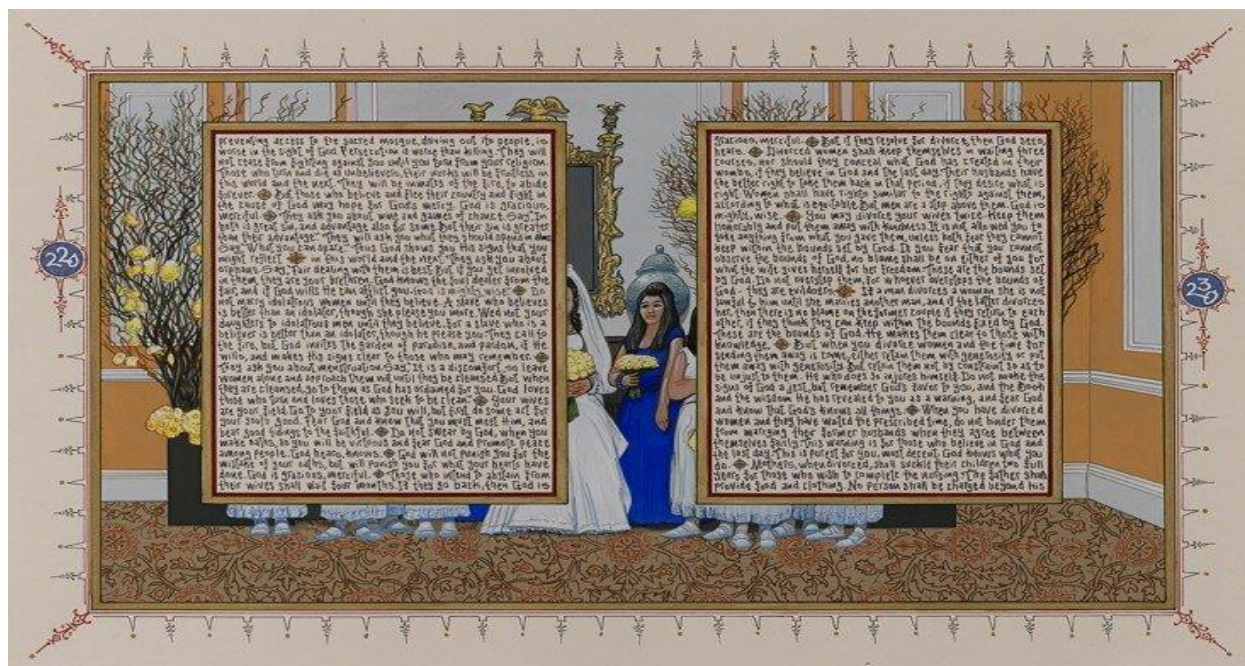


Fig. 2

Representational: There are ten women including one bride and her nine bridesmaids whose only one's face is visible. As for the conceptual process, fig. 2 uses an analytical process. In this image, the bride is a carrier, making the bouquet possessive attribute. This image seems to be an instance of a conceptual process, more specifically, an analytical process. In such processes, human participants usually show themselves in a standing or sitting pose to the viewer for no reason just, displaying himself or herself. Accordingly, the represented participants stand up posing for a picture. In this image, the woman (in the blue dress) is a Major Actor whose arms generate a vector connecting her with the bouquet, making it the Goal. Thus, this image utilizes a transactional action process.

Interactional: If the participants directly look at the viewers, it means they are making a demand and they want something from us. In this illustration, only one woman's face is visible but looking at something out of the picture not at the viewers. Therefore, it can be considered as an offer image. The demand image (as opposed to the offer image) can be seen as a sign of resistance in a world (the filmic reality) where women are asked to be modest and submissive by their faith. This illustration has been from a wide perspective where the whole figures with space around them is visible. This suggests a far social distance with the viewers. Concerning the analysis of the vertical angle, it has revealed that women in this illustration have been portrayed from the eye level angle, which suggests an equality of power between them and the viewers. This means that, the viewers are involved with the represented

participants in equal way as if they belong to the same world and they are part of it.

Compositional: The bride is in the center surrounded by nine bridesmaids. Fig. 2 depicts a woman who is placed in the center of the picture to suggest that she is considered as the important and valued element of the image. The illustrator only gave salience to one woman through placing her in the central part and colored her dress in blue, making her as the heart of this illustration. Although the main message of the verses is about marriage and women rights but the bride is not as the heart of this illustration but marginalized as if her face and body are represented partly hidden. By not showing the individuality of the woman and focusing on specific body parts, the illustration may contribute to the objectification of women, reinforcing their status as 'others' rather than complete human beings.

5.2.2. Women in The Family of Al-Imran (Imran Family) Surah

Maryam is the mother of the Prophet Issa (AS). She is the only woman that Allah mentioned by her name in the Qur'an. Moreover, in the Qur'an, there is Surah Maryam which Allah mentioned in her story. She had an exalted position in Islam for her purity and devotion. As stated before, the holy Qur'an is the major source of Islamic law. It recognizes the position of women to be the same as that of man. In surah Al-Imran, it has been made clear that good deeds bring the same reward to both the male and the female.

Surah 3: verse 42 And the angels said” Mary, God has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the world.

This verse is often cited to illustrate the respect and high regard Islam holds for Maryam, portraying her as an exemplar of faith, purity, and obedience to Allah's will. It underscores the importance of righteous women in Islamic teachings and their potential to be chosen for significant roles in serving Allah and humanity.

Birk illustrated the verses 27-55 as follows. He painted a pregnant woman looking at the monitor during the fetus monitoring.

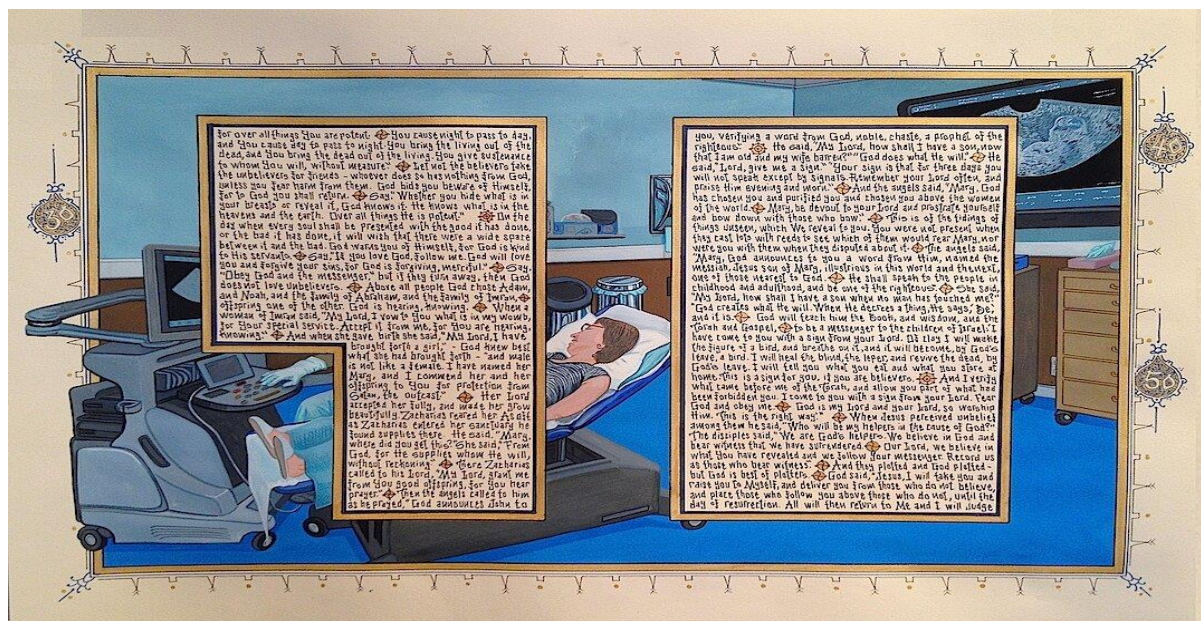


Fig. 3

Representational: On the visual level, in terms of a representational structure, the main represented participant is a pregnant woman, and the represented object: the monitor. In Image 3, a non-transactional action process is used in its representation. The woman is shown as a Major Actor whose eyes creates a vector connecting her with the image of the fetus on monitor; hence, making the fetus Goal, leading the viewer to see that the woman is looking at the monitor. Accordingly, this image can be transcoded as the woman is pregnant. As the illustration shows, only the hand of the doctor is visible and the gender is not discernible. The neutral representation of the doctor's gender aims to convey that healthcare is a universal service, and the care provided is not limited by gender.

Interactional: This illustration is an offer one as there is no connection between the represented participant and the viewers. As concern distance, this illustration creates a far social distance. This illustration demands the viewer to have a formal and impersonal relationship with the participants. For the angle of interaction, the horizontal angle is frontal for this picture. The illustrated the character of a woman in a frontal plane horizontal angle that reflects the creator's intention to interact with the viewer, involve, and engage him / her with the represented participants. The represented participants are viewed at the same eye-level angle as that of the interactive participants where they are equal and no power relation is involved (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Compositional: As previously stated, compositional meaning is concerned with the organization of the RPs within an image and involves features such as the distribution of

information, framing and position. The juxtaposition of the elements within the composition are primarily to be understood in terms of centre/margin and given/new. The image depicts a woman who is placed in the center in order to show her prominence and that she is the focal point of the illustration.

5.2.3. Women in The Women (Al-Nisa) Surah

Al-Nisa (Women) Surah stands out as one of the most compelling and intricate Surah in Qur'an. "Women," a frequently referenced chapter, explores provocative themes and verses across eight pages. The narrative weaves through a cycle-of-life story, each episode marked by the presence of the American flag. The sequence begins on the steps of a US government federal building, featuring scenes such as the return of a coffin and a wedding.

Based on Lawrence (2017), Verse 34 of this surah is one of the most contested verses of Qur'an. The critical terms in question are *nushuz* (نشوزهن), denoting disloyalty and ill-conduct, and *daraba* (اضربو), signifying a light form of beating. Thorough exploration of the exegetical challenges arising from this verse reveals a more comprehensive understanding, which is best achieved through examinations in German rather than English translations of the Qur'an. These efforts align with Yusuf Ali's intention to restrain the punitive connotation of *daraba* (اضربو), interpreting it as a gentle form of beating or striking (ibid).

These various initiatives collectively represent an ongoing endeavor, akin to a feminist jihad, striving to reconcile the principles of social justice with the authority of scripture in both the tangible and virtual realms of the twenty-first century. The discourse surrounding verse 34th of the fourth surah and its pivotal terms persistently resonates in the modern era, becoming a recurring theme in contemporary discussions (ibid). He mentioned that Birk, primarily an artist rather than a Qur'an scholar, acknowledges the complexity of this particular verse. While his translation choice may be unconventional, it is not implausible, considering both the specific verse or chapter and the overall tone of the Qur'an (ibid). Birk's interpretation is as follows:

Surah 4: verse 15 if any of your women act like whores, call four witnesses against them from amongst you, and if these give, evidence confirming it, then confine them to their houses until death takes them or God makes a way for them.

Surah 4: verse 19 believers, it is not permitted for you to become heirs to your wives against their will. Do not hinder them from marrying in order to take from them part of the dowry you had given them, unless they have been guilty of immoral conduct. Associate with them kindly, for if you are unhappy with them, it may be that God has put much

good in something you dislike.

Surah 4: verse 24 Forbidden to you are married women, except those you possess through wedlock. This is God's law for you. But lawful to you are all women beyond these, for you to seek out, offering them your possessions, taking them in honest wedlock not in fornication..

Surah 4: verse 25 and whoever of you is not rich enough to marry free believing women, then let him marry believing women you possess as slaves...

Surah 4: Verse 34 Men shall take care of women by what God has given one more than the other, and by what they provide from their property. (Cleary) Virtuous women are obedient, careful, who guard the intimacy that God has ordained to be guarded. As for those you have reason to fear rebellion, admonish them, remove them to beds apart, then restrain them. And if they obey you, do not seek to harm them.

The following interpretations can be deducted from the above-mentioned verses:

1. Surah 4: verse 34:

- Men are considered protectors and maintainers of women.
- The verse suggests that men are given a degree of responsibility over women due to the qualities and advantages that God has bestowed upon them.
- It also provides guidance on dealing with a wife perceived to be rebellious, advising steps such as admonishment, separation in beds, and restraint, with an emphasis on reconciliation.

2. Surah 4: verse 15

- This verse discusses the punishment for women accused of engaging in immoral behavior, specifically adultery.
- It emphasizes the importance of having four witnesses to establish the credibility of the accusation.
- If proven guilty, the punishment involves confining such women to their houses until death or until God provides a way for them.

3. Surah 4: verse 19

- This verse addresses the issue of inheritance and marital relationships.
- It asserts that men are not permitted to inherit from their wives against their will.
- The verse advises against hindering women from marrying in order to take back part of the dowry, unless the women have been guilty of immoral conduct.

4. Surah 4: verse 24

- This verse outlines the regulations regarding marriage and relationships, specifying that married women are generally forbidden except those obtained through wedlock.
- It permits seeking lawful relationships with women beyond those already married, with an emphasis on entering into honest wedlock rather than engaging in fornication.

5. Surah 4: verse 25

- This verse suggests that if someone is not financially able to marry free believing women, they may marry believing women who are in their possession as slaves.
- It implies that marriage is preferable to other forms of relationships, even if it involves those who are in a subordinate position.

While some interpretations of Islamic scripture have been criticized for their perceived lack of gender equality, others argue that the Qur'anic verses, including those in Surah An-Nisa, promote principles of justice, fairness, and equity for both men and women. These verses can be interpreted as affirming the inherent dignity and worth of women and advocating for their rights and equal treatment within the family and society.

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of caring for orphan girls and advocates for their rights and protection within society. This reflects a concern for the vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children, and underscores the responsibility of the community to safeguard their well-being. The illustrator depicted the following illustrations (fig. 4 and 5) based on the above-mentioned verses representing a return of a casket of a deceased veteran draped in a united states flag, surrounded by a group of nine men and five women in a snowy and foggy environment, and a wedding ceremony from a wide perspective view. Considering the American flag and scene, it is visible that these two scenes happened in one place.

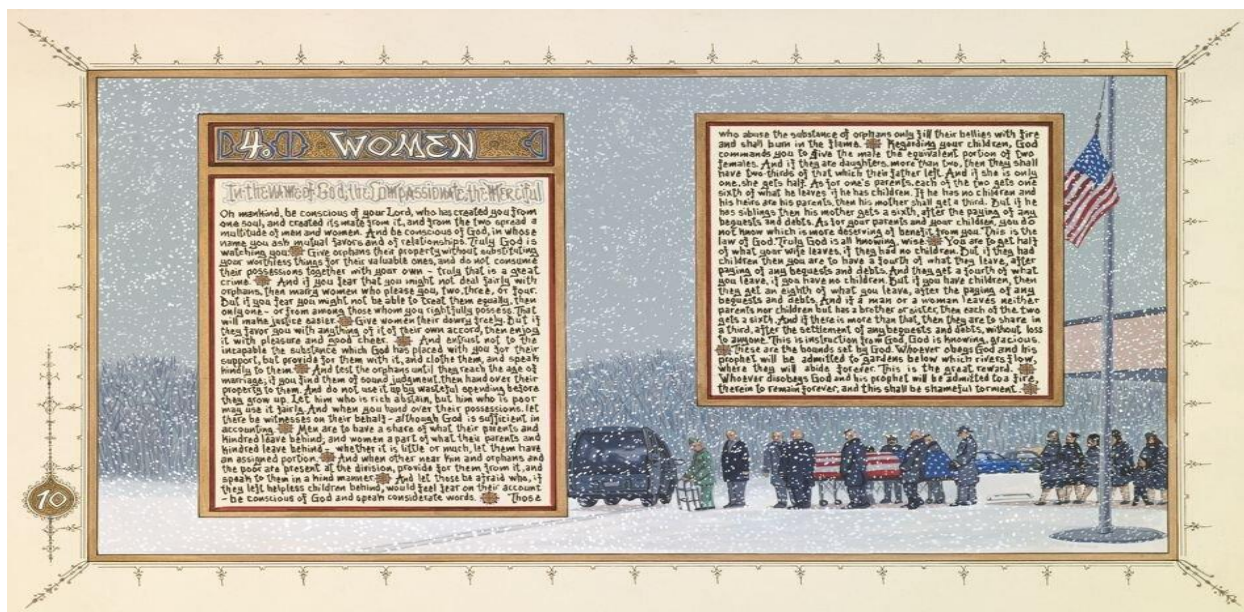


Fig. 4

Representational: Fig. 4 has narrative and conceptual patterns. As for the narrative structure, the main represented participants are the nine men and five women. The men (on the left hand) are the Major Actors whose arms generates vectors relating them with the cascade; hence, making the cascade Goal. Consequently, this image utilizes non-transactional action processes. The women appear to be looking at the cascade as they are following it, so the eye lines formed are vectors emanating from the women to the cascade. Regarding the conceptual processes, nine men are Carriers in connection with their Possessive Attributes (the casket of an American veteran draped in the USA flag), generating the visual concepts of their affiliation to the American army. For the conceptual process of representation, a symbolic process is used. The represented participants (the men) are the Carrier of army forces, and this meaning is established employing their Symbolic Attributes, a United States flag drapes the casket of the deceased veteran.

Interactional: With reference to the interactive meanings, the lack of eye contact between the viewer and the represented participants presents fig. 4 as an 'offer'. The represented participants are offered to the viewer as objects of interpretation. Concerning the horizontal angle, the represented participants are at an oblique angle, which shows that the viewer is detached from this world. At the vertical angle, the picture is from an eye-level, creating a sense of symbolic equality and the possibility of participation between the viewer and the represented participants.

Compositional: The compositional visual mode of the image above contains a left/right

scheme of the information value system. The men and the cascade is placed on the left hand as the given (that is, known information). The women on the right hand are classified as the new information that requires particular attention. Besides, the represented participants are in brighter and more realistic colors than the foggy background.

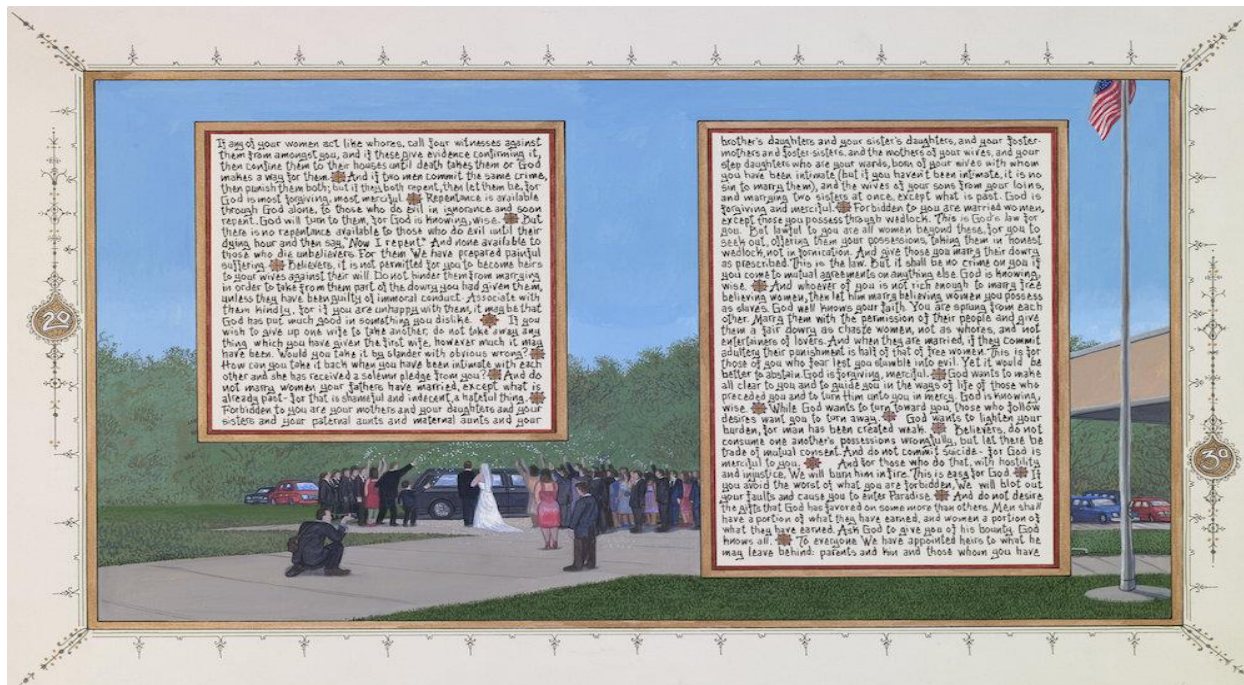


Fig. 5

Representational: On the visual level, in terms of the representational structure, there are two kinds of participants: people (a couple, a photographer and guests) and things (the USA flag, the cars and trees). Fig. 5 has narrative and conceptual patterns. As for the narrative structure, the main represented participant is the bride. The bride (on the right hand) is a Major Actor whose arm generates a vector relating her with the groom; hence, making the groom Goal. The man (on the left) is also the Major Actor whose arms create a vector relating him to the couple, thus making the couple Goal. Consequently, this image utilizes non-transactional action processes. The guests also appear to be sprinkling flowers on the head of the couple, creating vectors emanating from them to the couple. Therefore, this image employs a non-transactional reactional process, and the guest and the photographer can be classified as Reactors and the couple as a Phenomenon. Regarding the conceptual processes, the analytical process is employed. The flag has a symbolic meaning.

Interactional: the lack of eye contact between the viewer and the represented participants presents fig. 5 as an 'offer'. The represented participants are offered to the viewer as objects of interpretation. Concerning the horizontal angle, the represented participants are at

an oblique angle, which shows that the viewer is detached from this world. At the vertical angle, the illustration is depicted from an eye-level, creating a sense of symbolic equality and the possibility of participation between the viewer and the represented participants.

Compositional: The compositional visual mode of the image above contains a left/right scheme of the information value system. The couple is placed on the left hand as the given (that is, known information), which signifies the marriage. The American flag on the right hand is classified as the new information that requires particular attention. Another compositional organization is salience; the USA flag is clearly in brighter and more realistic colors than the represented participants in the background.

5.2.4. Women in the Table Surah

The theme of this verse revolves around establishing justice and deterrence against theft in Islamic law. It emphasizes that the punishment for theft, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator (male or female), is the amputation of their hands. This severe penalty is intended as a deterrent and serves to maintain societal order and security. The verse reflects the Qur'anic perspective on ensuring fairness, accountability, and the protection of property rights within the community. In Islamic law, punishments are generally applied universally based on the nature of the crime and the circumstances, rather than being gender-specific. Therefore, while the verse addresses theft and its consequences, it does not specifically relate to women in terms of differentiating their treatment under the law for this particular offense.

Surah 5: verse 38 As for the thief, male and female, cut off their hands in reward for their deeds, an example from God.

The illustrator depicts the verses 37-55 and 57-81 of this surah as fig. 6 and 7, respectively.

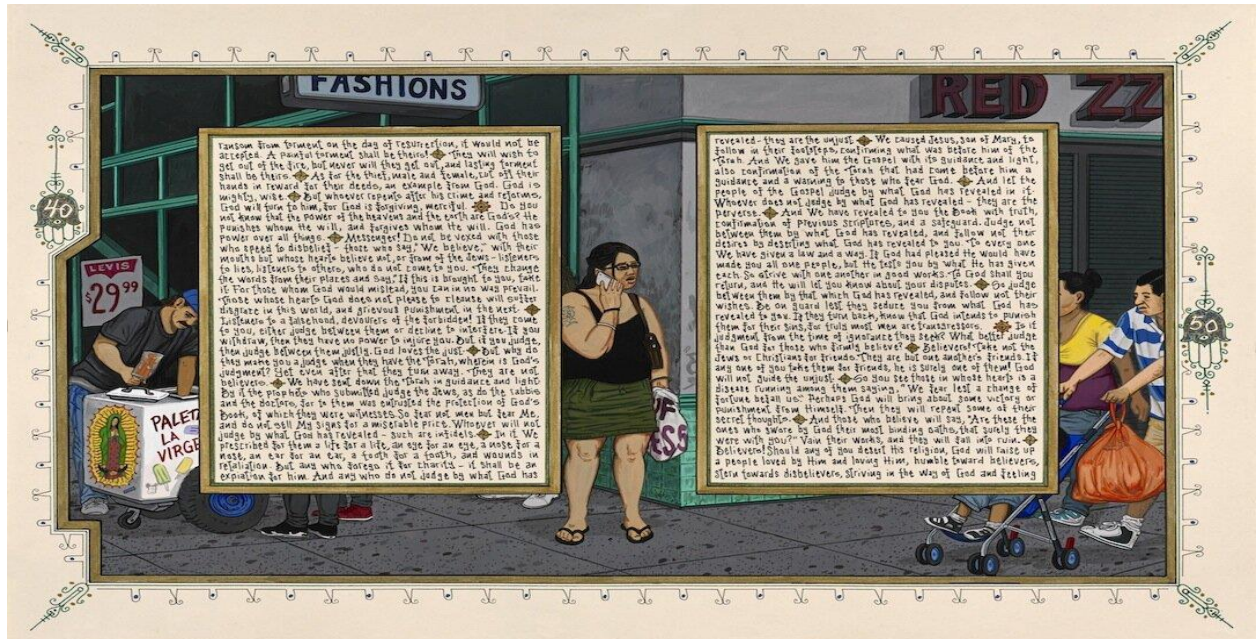


Fig. 6

Representational: Fig. 6 uses a non-transactional action process in which the woman is shown as a major actor whose arms generate a vector connecting her with a phone, thus making the phone Goal. The other two men also create vectors by pushing the stroller and taking out the ice creams. One of the conceptual processes is the symbolic process that is used in this image. This process is concerned with what the participant symbolizes. The woman stands at the entrance of a Levis shop. In this image, the woman is the Carrier in relation to the Symbolic Attributes (the shop bag and Levis logo) that defines her as a fan of Levis brand.

Interactional: the eyes of the woman are directed not at the viewer. As a result, it can be categorized as an 'offer' where the represented participant offers herself to the viewer as an item of information. Accordingly, the represented participant is preoccupied with her world that the viewer is excluded from. She is looking out of the picture space towards the space we occupy as viewers. According to the horizontal angle, the represented participant (the woman in the right) is seen from the side at an oblique angle, indicating that the viewer is detached from the represented participant and his world. The participant is seen from the vertical angle at eye-level so that a sense of symbolic equality is created between the woman and the viewer.

Compositional: In terms of compositional aspects, fig. 6 uses one of the information value systems that is a centre/margin system. In this system, the vector creating by the woman is considered as the nucleus of information so that the focus is on her.

Birk depicted the following image (fig. 7) based on verses 57-80 of the same surah (the table), showing women alongside men participating in a demonstration, chanting slogans,

while government officials control them.

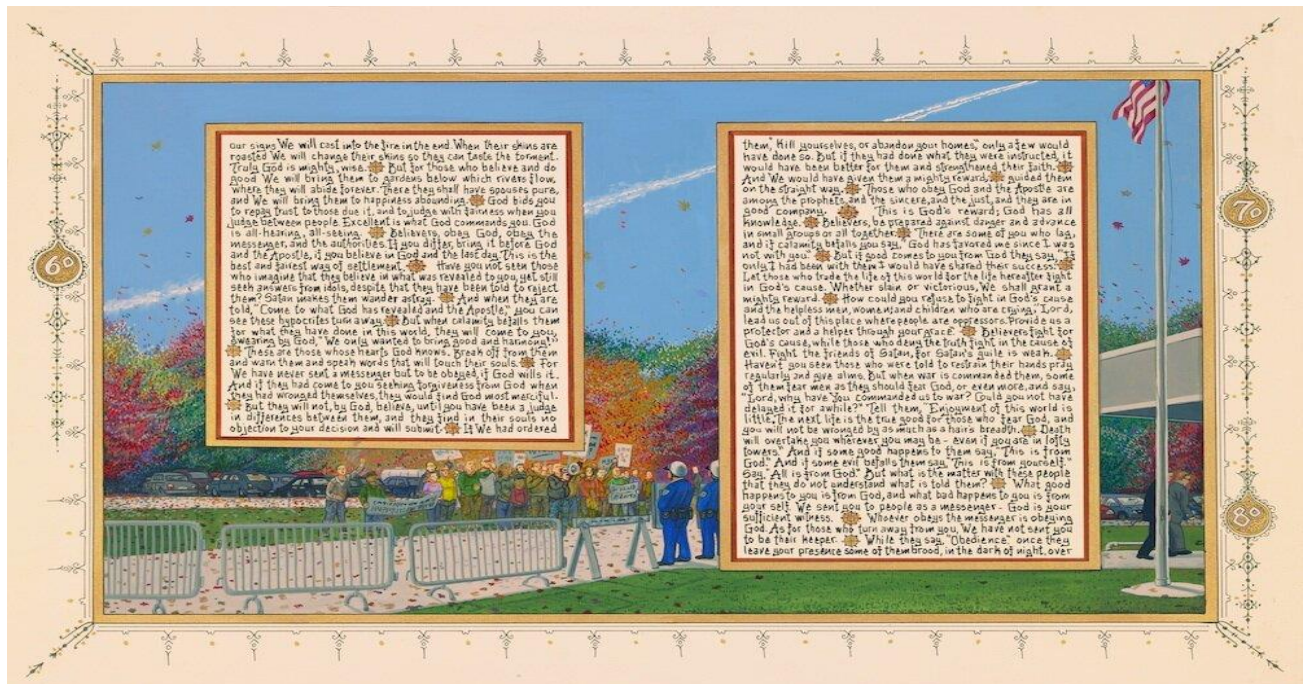


Fig. 7

Representational: Fig. 7 uses the narrative process of representation. The protestors (women and men) are the Major Actors whose arms create vectors relating them with the police officers making them Goals, which can be transcoded as the people protest. The people's eyes appear to be looking at the police officers; it can be considered that the eye-line formed is another vector. As a result, this image utilizes transactional action processes. For the conceptual process of representation, a symbolic process is used. The represented participants (people) are the Carrier of protestors in America, and this meaning is established employing their Symbolic Attributes, the USA flag.

Interactional: in terms of the interactional meanings, fig. 7 is classified as an 'offer' because of the lack of eye contact between the viewer and the represented participants. The participants are offered to the viewer as "items of information" or objects of contemplation" that can be observed. A wide perspective is created because the whole figures of the represented participants are shown with some space around them. Consequently, the distance between the viewer and the represented participants is formal and impersonal. At the horizontal angle, the represented participants are represented from an oblique angle, creating a sense of detachment. In this case, the viewer is detached from the represented participants and their world. From the vertical perspective, the represented participants are depicted a slightly high angle so that the viewer appears to be having a more symbolic power.

Compositional: The fact that men and women are both actively participating in the protest highlights a commitment to gender equality and shared activism. The compositional structure of Fig. 7 has a centre/margin system. The information value of this illustration shows that it is center-based. The police officers and the two men (in the foreground) are the nuclei of information to which all other parts of the image are subservient. Saliency, another compositional aspect, is represented through the police officer's location in the foreground in relation to the protestors in the background. The two politicians and police officers are in brighter and more vivid colors than the represented participants (protestors) in the background.

5.2.5. Women in The Rock (Al-Hijr) Surah

In surah Al-Hijr (15th surah of Qur'an) verse 71 refers to the event involving Prophet Lut and his daughters. In this verse, after the angels informed Prophet Lut about the impending destruction of the sinful people of his community, Lut realized that his people were determined to commit immoral acts. In the face of this, Lut expressed his helplessness and concern for his daughters, saying:

Surah 15: verse 71 He said, "Here are my daughters, if you must act (Yusuf Ali)

Lut, a prophet, does not offer his daughters in any adulterous relationship. He simply reminds the menfolk of the natural way to satisfy their urge. He knew that if they responded to his appeal they would not want to be adulterous. Hence, his offer sought recourse to their human nature, if only it would respond. However, that was unlikely.⁵

By "My daughters", Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) might have meant either of the two things. He might have referred to the daughters of the community as "my daughters" because the relationship of a Prophet to his people is as of a father to his children. However, it is also possible that he have meant by this his own daughters. Anyhow, this could not have been an offer of adultery, for the succeeding sentence "they are purer for you" leaves no room for such a misunderstanding. This makes it obvious that Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) admonished them in this way to turn them to the females for the lawful gratification of their sexual desires instead of seeking unnatural ways.⁶

In this context, Prophet Lut, in his desperation to protect his guests (the angels), offered his own daughters in marriage to the people of the city as a lawful alternative to their immoral intentions. This illustrates the severity of the situation and the moral decay of the people to

⁵ <https://www.quran-wiki.com/ayat.php?sura=15&aya=71>

⁶ <https://islamicstudies.info/reference.php?sura=11&verse=78>

whom Prophet Lut was sent. It is important to note that the Qur'an does not condone such actions but uses this narrative to emphasize the extreme consequences of the sins committed by the people of Prophet Lut's community. Birk painted the following illustration based on this story of Lut showing women and men in a camping site.

In this verse, there is a specific mention of Lut's wife, who is instructed not to look back when they leave the city. According to Islamic tradition, Lut's wife disobeyed this command and glanced back at the city, leading to her being included in the punishment. From a feminist perspective, some interpretations may highlight the agency of Lut's wife in making her own choices, even if they were against divine command, and explore the implications of her actions within the broader narrative.

The story of Prophet Lut and his offer of his daughters has been the subject of various feminist interpretations and critiques. Here are some perspectives from feminist writers and scholars:

- 1) As a prominent Islamic feminist scholar, Amina Wadud, in her book "Qur'an and Woman," explores (1999) the gender dynamics and moral implications of this story. She suggests that Prophet Lut's offer reflects the extreme measures taken in desperate situations and emphasizes that the Quran does not endorse such actions universally. Wadud highlights the importance of contextualizing such stories within the broader ethical framework of the Quran, which advocates for justice and protection of human dignity.
- 2) In "Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an," Barlas (2002) discusses how patriarchal interpretations have often overshadowed the ethical teachings of the Quran. She critiques the traditional exegesis that justifies offering daughters as a means to placate a mob, arguing that it reflects cultural norms rather than divine injunctions. Barlas advocates for a reading that recognizes the inherent dignity and autonomy of women, consistent with the Quran's overarching message.
- 3) In "Women and Gender in Islam," Ahmed (1992) explores the historical and cultural contexts in which Islamic texts have been interpreted. She points out that the offer of Lut's daughters has been used to justify patriarchal practices, but this should be understood within the specific historical and social circumstances. Ahmed calls for a reexamination of such narratives to uncover the liberating and egalitarian potential of Islamic teachings.

These feminist critiques often emphasize the need for a nuanced and contextual

understanding of the Quranic text. They argue that traditional interpretations have sometimes been influenced by patriarchal cultures and do not always reflect the Quran's intent to promote justice, compassion, and equality for all individuals, including women.

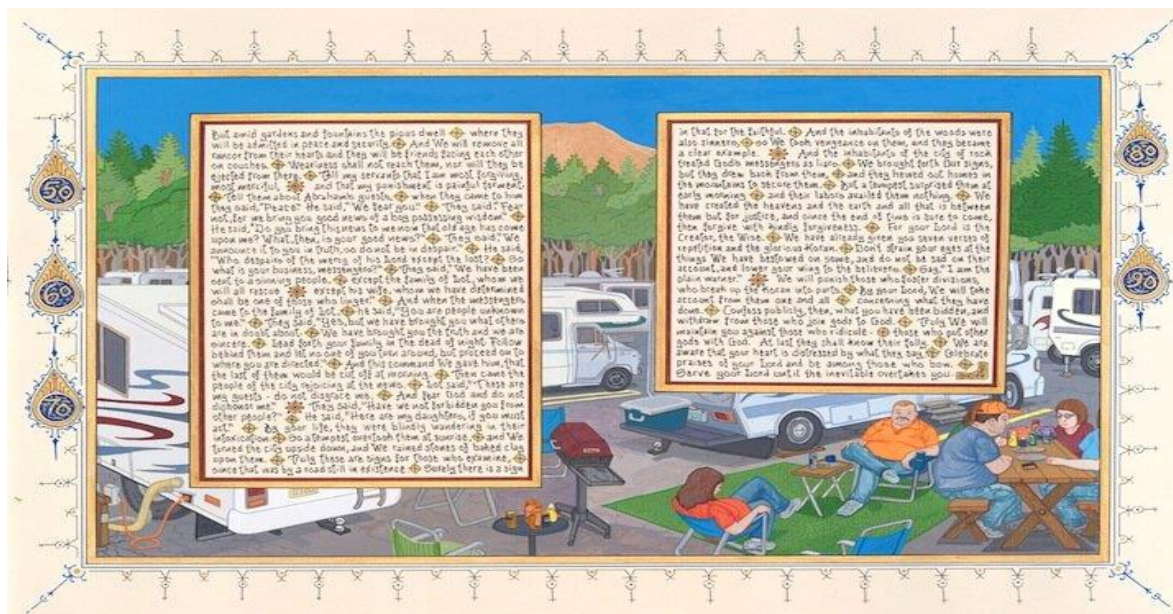


Fig. 8

Representational: On the visual level, in terms of the representational structure, there are two kinds of participants: people (men and women) and things (vans, tables, chairs), and the natural landscape (mountains and trees). As for the narrative process, fig. 8 uses a transactional action process. This image seems to be an instance of a conceptual process, more specifically, a symbolic process. In such processes, human participants usually show themselves in a standing or sitting pose to the viewers for no reason just, displaying themselves. Accordingly, the represented participants (the women and the men) sit on the bench and chairs. The main represented participants are two men and two women. This image utilizes transactional action processes. The woman's eyes appear to be looking at the man, so the eye lines formed are vectors emanating from the woman to the man. Therefore, this image employs a transactional reactional process, and the woman can be classified as Reactor and the man as a Phenomenon.

Interactional: Concerning the interactive meanings, fig. 8 is categorized as an offer due to the absence of direct eye contact between the viewer and the individuals portrayed. The participants are presented to the viewer as objects of contemplation that can be observed. A wide shot is employed, displaying the complete figures of the individuals with some surrounding space. Consequently, the gap between the viewer and the portrayed participants is

characterized as formal and impersonal. Horizontally, the participants are from an oblique perspective, instilling a sense of detachment. In this instance, the viewer is distanced from both the portrayed participants and their environment. Vertically, the participants are represented from a slightly elevated angle, creating an impression that the viewer holds a more symbolic authority. One of the women is from back which might convey a sense of anonymity or detachment, as the viewer is denied direct access to the facial expressions and nuanced details of the individual. The intentional choice to portray someone from back may signify a deliberate effort to emphasize the person's privacy, mystery, or perhaps a deliberate separation between the viewer and the subject.

Compositional: The men and women on the right hand are classified as the new information that requires particular attention. Salience is represented through the participants' place in the foreground in relation to the setting in the background. The vector created by the woman is in focus and in the foreground.

5.2.6. Women in The Bee Surah

In surah An-Nahl (The Bee, 16th surah of Qur'an), verses 57 and 58 discuss the concept of having daughters and the reaction of some people when they are informed of the birth of a female child. In these verses, Allah highlights the concept of having daughters as a source of blessing and mercy. The verses encourage gratitude for the gift of daughters and reject the negative cultural attitudes of burying female infants alive, which were prevalent in pre-Islamic societies.

The verse 57 refers to a tradition of the ancient Arabs. They regarded their goddesses and angels as daughters of God. Regarding to the verse 58, this attitude of contempt towards daughters has been mentioned to bring home to them the height of their folly, ignorance and impudence concerning God. This is why they did not hesitate to assign daughters to Allah, though they themselves felt that to have daughters was a matter of disgrace for them. Besides this, it shows that they had a very low estimation of Allah, which had resulted from their ways of shirk. Therefore, they felt nothing wrong in ascribing such foolish and absurd things to Allah Who is above such things.

Birk interpreted the verses as below and illustrated (fig. 9) these verses through depicting four nurses working in a hospital's infant's room, taking care of newborn children. The illustration complements these verses by depicting a scene of nurturing and care in a hospital setting, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the value of human life, especially the

vulnerable newborns.

Surah 16: verse 57 And they ascribe daughters to God, but desire them not for themselves.

Surah 16: verse 58 For when the birth of a daughter is announced to any, a dark shadow

Wadud (1999) interprets verses like 57-58 of Surah An-Nahl as part of the Quran's broader mission to promote gender justice. Wadud might argue that these verses illustrate the Quran's opposition to the cultural devaluation of daughters, emphasizing the need for contemporary Muslims to uphold the equal value and dignity of women. Regarding these verses, Barlas (2002) highlight how the Quran condemns the disdain for female births, using this as evidence that the Quran promotes gender equity and challenges patriarchal attitudes. Ahmed (1992) explores how early Islamic teachings sought to improve the status of women. She might interpret verses 57-58 of Surah An-Nahl as part of the Quran's critique of pre-Islamic gender discrimination and its efforts to elevate the status of women. Ahmed would likely focus on how these verses reflect the Quran's broader commitment to justice and equality.

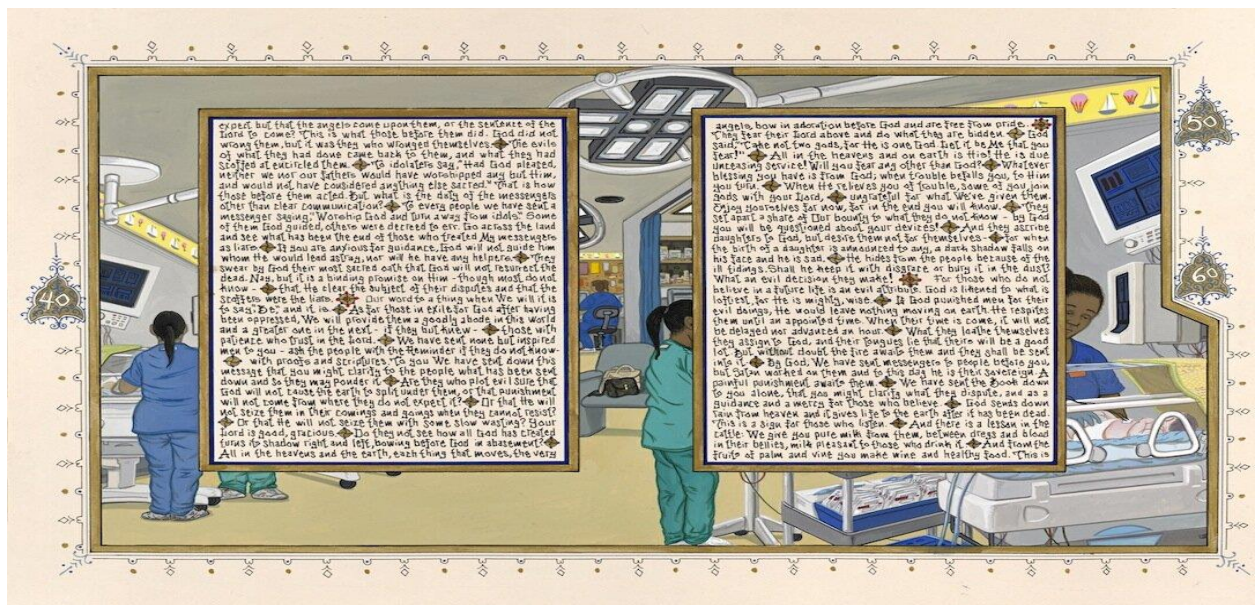


Fig. 9

Representational: Fig. 9 uses a non-transactional action process in which the nurse is shown as a Major Actor whose arms generate a vector connecting her with the baby, thus making the baby Goal. The main represented participants are the nurse and the baby, and the represented objects: the neonatal incubators. There is another vector from the woman's eyes, which leads the viewer to see that the woman is looking at the baby. Accordingly, this image

can be transcoded as the woman is a nurse. This image appears to be an instance of a conceptual process, more specifically, a symbolic process. The represented participant (the nurse) is a Carrier in relation to her Symbolic Attributes (hospital and the uniform) that identify her as a nurse.

Interactional: Concerning interactive meanings, fig. 9 represents an 'offer' because the gaze of the represented participant is directed away from the viewer. This image invites the viewer to observe the nurse, not to identify with her. As a result, the viewer is invited to relate to her in a friendly and cooperative way. The represented participants are portrayed at an oblique horizontal angle, and the participants are observed in a detached manner from the side. In this case, the viewer is detached from the participants and their world. Vertically, the viewer indicating a relation of equality between the viewer and the represented participants sees the represented participants at eye-level. A very wide perspective is created in the image because more than three participants are seen.

Compositional: Salience, another compositional aspect, is represented through the participant's (the nurse and baby) location in the foreground in relation to the participants in the background. The compositional visual mode of the image above contains a left/right scheme of the information value system. The nurse (from back) is placed on the left hand as the given (that is, known information). The main actor with the goal on the right hand is classified as the new information that requires particular attention.

5.2.7. Women in The Maryam Surah

Surah Maryam gives an account of the birth of Jesus, son of Mary, which it presents as an extraordinary act of God. God. This account is preceded by that of the birth of John son of Zachariah, which was just as remarkable. Despite the fact that Zachariah and his wife were old and frail, and his wife moreover infertile, God had graced them with a son. In these two instances God demonstrated that He was not only capable of allowing an infertile elderly wife to conceive from her elderly and frail husband and give birth, but He had also the power to cause a young virgin to conceive and have a baby without being touched by a man. by Birk, He a middle-aged woman with her two children is leaving a supermarket. This conceptual illustration diverges from the context of the Qur'anic verse, which discusses the skepticism of an elderly man about having a son. Instead, it depicts a middle-aged woman with two children leaving a supermarket. The woman pushing a carrier with her baby suggests a maternal role, possibly emphasizing the care and responsibility associated with parenting.

Surah 19: verse 6 He said, "My lord! How shall I have a son when my wife is barren and I have reached old age?"

Barlas (2002) points out that the desire for an heir in verse 6 of Surah Maryam reflects historical and cultural contexts rather than a divine endorsement of patriarchy. Ahmed (1992) critiques how such verses have been used to reinforce patriarchal structures while also highlighting the significant roles women play in the Qur'anic narrative, as seen with figures like Maryam. Wadud (1999) argues that while Zakariya's request for an heir is understandable within his cultural context, it is important to recognize the broader Qur'anic principles of gender equality and the spiritual and moral contributions of women.



Fig. 10

Representational: this image consists of two kinds of participants: the human presence, represented by the five participants (a man, a woman, and 3 children), and the setting (composed by the supermarket, the butcher shop. Fig. 10 uses non-transactional action processes in its representation. The woman is seen as a Major Actor whose arms create vectors connecting her with the little boy in the stroller, thus making the boy Goal. Besides, the woman's eyes appear to be looking at the boy so that the eye-lines formed can be assumed vectors that making him the Goal. Therefore, the image can be transcoded as the woman gives a feeling of safety to the child in the stroller.

Interactional: Fig. 10 represents an 'offer' because the gaze of the represented participants is directed away from the viewer. This image invites the viewer to observe the woman, not to identify with her. As a result, the viewer is invited to relate to her in a friendly and cooperative way. Regarding the social distance, a very wide perspective is created in the illustration because

more than four participants are seen. Therefore, this distance is for people who are represented as strangers. Consequently, the viewer is detached from the participant and her world. Vertically, the represented participant is seen from a low

Compositional: In connection with the compositional organization, fig. 10 utilizes a centre/ margin scheme of information value. The woman with her two children is positioned in the central part of the image as the nucleus of information and the other participants (the man and the shops landscape) are represented as ancillary elements (subserving).

5.2.8. Women in Ta-Ha Surah

The main account the surah covers is that of Adam. It begins by giving the reasons for Adam's weakness before Satan and how he came to be expelled from Paradise. The wool was pulled over Adam's eyes, and his will-power wilted. When God ordered Adam not to eat the fruit of the tree, Adam understood the instructions quite clearly, but as time went by began to lose consciousness of them. Consequently, when Satan, said to him "Shall I show you the tree of immortality and everlasting prosperity?" Adam's curiosity and desire to eat of the fruit grew stronger. As his defenses crumbled, Adam rushed to eat from the forbidden tree, persuading his wife to do likewise, which led to their expulsion from Paradise. The Qur'an is very specific here; Adam bears full responsibility for this decision and its outcome, and his wife's only fault was not to try to deter or prevent him from eating the forbidden fruit. Thus, Adam and his wife forfeited a blissful life in Paradise and were brought to earth to start a new life full of hardship and suffering. Birk illustrated and interpreted the following illustration (fig.11) based on the verses 100-155 of Ta-Ha Surah, representing a backstage crew producing a movie with Adam and Eve in a jungle. In illustration 11, the visual organization has three kinds of participants: the human presence (two actors and production team), the represented objects (cameras and lights) and the setting (a jungle).

Surah 20: verse 117 We said, "Adam, This is a foe to you and your wife. Do not let him drive you out of the garden for joy will become a wretched.

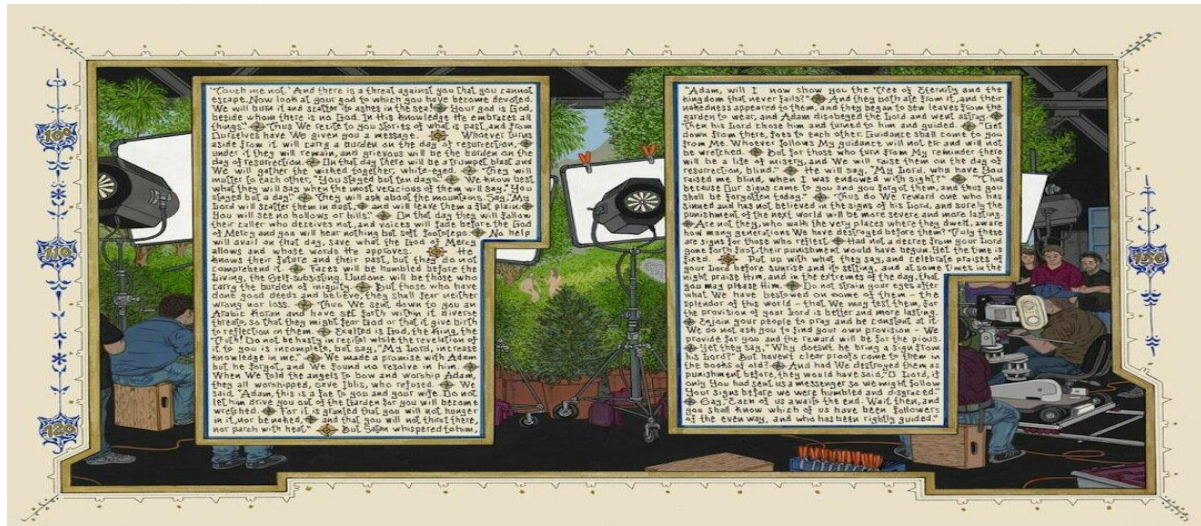


Fig. 11

Representational: Fig. 11 has narrative and conceptual patterns. As for the narrative structure, the main represented participants are an actor, an actress and directors. The man (on the right hand) is a Major Actor whose arm generates a vector relating him with the camera; hence, making the camera Goal. Consequently, this image utilizes non-transactional action processes. The directors' cameras appear to be looking at the actor and actress as Adam and eve, so the eye lines formed are vectors emanating from the directors to the two actors. Therefore, this image employs a transactional reactional process, and the directors can be classified as Reactors and the actors as Phenomena. Moreover, this image utilizes the symbolic process where the represented objects such as the jungle as the scene, and the two actors, are conceptualized as symbolic attributes that identifying them as Adam and eve in heaven.

Interactional: Fig. 11 is classified as an 'offer' because of the lack of eye contact between the viewer and the represented participants. The participants are offered to the viewer as "items of information" or objects of contemplation" that can be observed. A wide perspective is represented because the whole figures of the represented participants are shown with the space around them. Therefore, the distance between the viewer and the represented participants is formal and impersonal. At the horizontal angle, the represented participants are displayed from an oblique angle, creating a sense of detachment. In this case, the viewer is detached from the represented participants and their world.

Compositioanl: The compositional organization is actualized by the information value system. In the centre/margin system, the placement of the actor and actress in the center of the illustration is realized as the nucleus of information, which indicates that adam and Eve are in focus. Salience is given to the directors as represented participants who are clearly in brighter

and more realistic colors than the represented participants in the background.

5.2.9. Women in the Believers Surah

There are indications in the surah that the prophets were all male, possibly because as men they would be stronger and more suited to deal with the realities of hardship and persecution. These verses discuss the concept of guarding one's private parts and maintaining chastity, emphasizing the sanctity of intimate relationships within the bounds of marriage. The believers are instructed to protect their chastity and limit their sexual relations to lawful channels, such as their spouses or those whom their right hands possess (which refers to slaves or captives in the context of that time). The verses underscore the importance of ethical conduct and responsible behavior in matters related to intimacy.

Birk depicted a funeral of a soldier to show the verses 1-35 of this surah.

Surah 21: verse 5 And who guard their modesty.

Surah 21: verse 6 for their spouses or those who their right hands possess, for they are free from blame

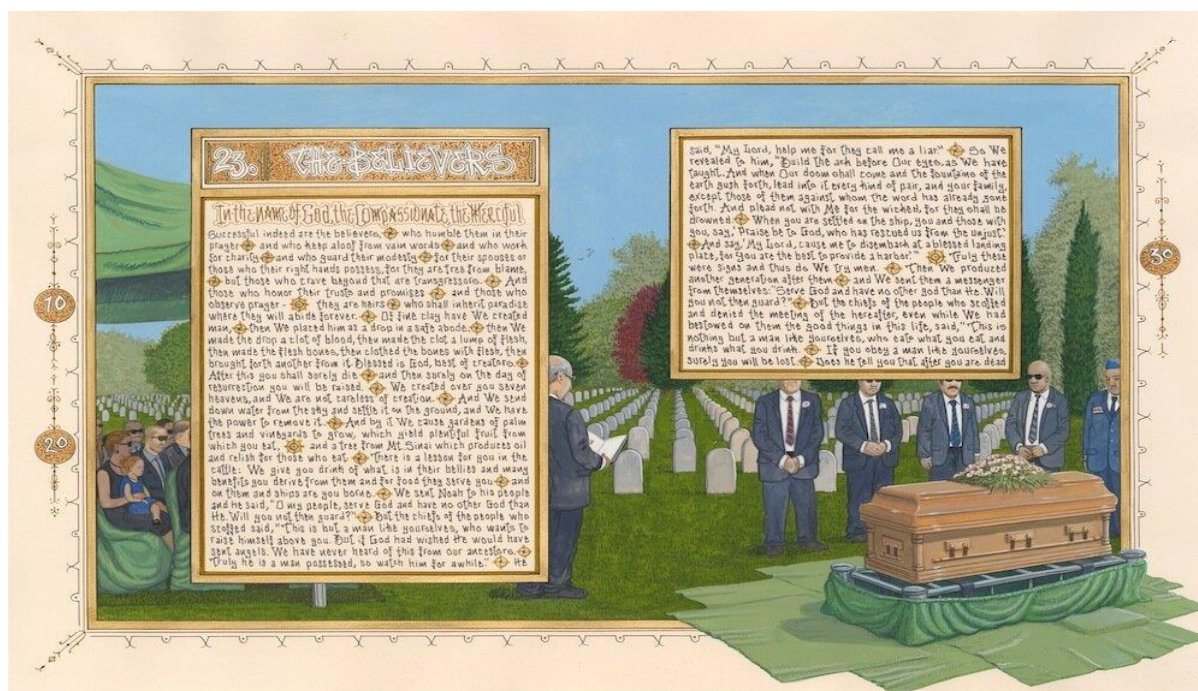


Fig. 12

Representational: On the visual level, as for the representational structure, illustration 12 uses the narrative process of representation. The woman is a Major Actor whose arms create a vector relating her with the girl making her the Goal, which can be transcoded as the mother embraces her daughter. As a result, this image utilizes non-transactional action processes. The

five men's eyes appear to be looking at the coffin, so the eye lines formed are vectors emanating from the men to the coffin. The three men can be classified as Reactors and the coffin as a Phenomenon.

Interactional: the represented participants' gazes are away from the viewer, so fig. 12 is depicted as an 'offer'. The represented participants are shown as "items of information" or "objects of contemplation" that can be observed by the viewer. As for the social distance, the represented participants are at a wide perspective because their whole figures appear with some space around them. At this distance, the relationship between the viewer and the represented participants is impersonal. The woman and her daughter is from the sideline at an oblique horizontal angle. If something is from the side, the viewer literally and figuratively remains on the sidelines (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001). Thus, the viewer is detached from the represented participants and their world. From the vertical angle, the woman and her daughter are portrayed at eye-level, creating a sense of symbolic equality between them and the viewer.

Compositional: In terms of the compositional structure, salience is represented through the coffin's place and five men in the foreground in relation to the cemetery in the background composing the setting. The compositional visual mode of the image above contains a left/right scheme of the information value system. The woman is placed on the left hand as the given (that is, known information) while the coffin on the right hand is classified as the new information that requires particular attention.

5.2.10. Women in the Light Surah

Verse 31 in Surah An-Nur addresses the issue of women's dress, including covering their heads:

Surah 24: verse 31 "And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not to expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not to expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed."

Feminist scholars agree that verse 31 aims to protect women's dignity and privacy by encouraging modesty in dress. They stress the importance of understanding the verse within its

historical and cultural context, cautioning against rigid interpretations that may overlook the diversity of practices among Muslim communities. Feminist interpretations emphasize women's agency and personal choice in matters of dress, advocating for interpretations that respect individual autonomy and reject patriarchal controls.

Surah 24: verse 4 Those who accuse honorable women without four witnesses, flog them eighty strokes and never again take their testimony, for they are immoral.

Ahmed (1992) interprets verse 4 as part of the Qur'an's broader effort to protect women's rights and dignity, highlighting the progressive nature of such injunctions for their time.

In illustrating this surah that calls for women to cover their heads, Birk came up with the idea for a panel showing a woman whose head and face are protected by a heavy hat and scarf. Walking next to her another woman also covered and wearing glasses, both of them braving the fierce wind of a Chicago snowstorm (Lawrence, 2017: 152).

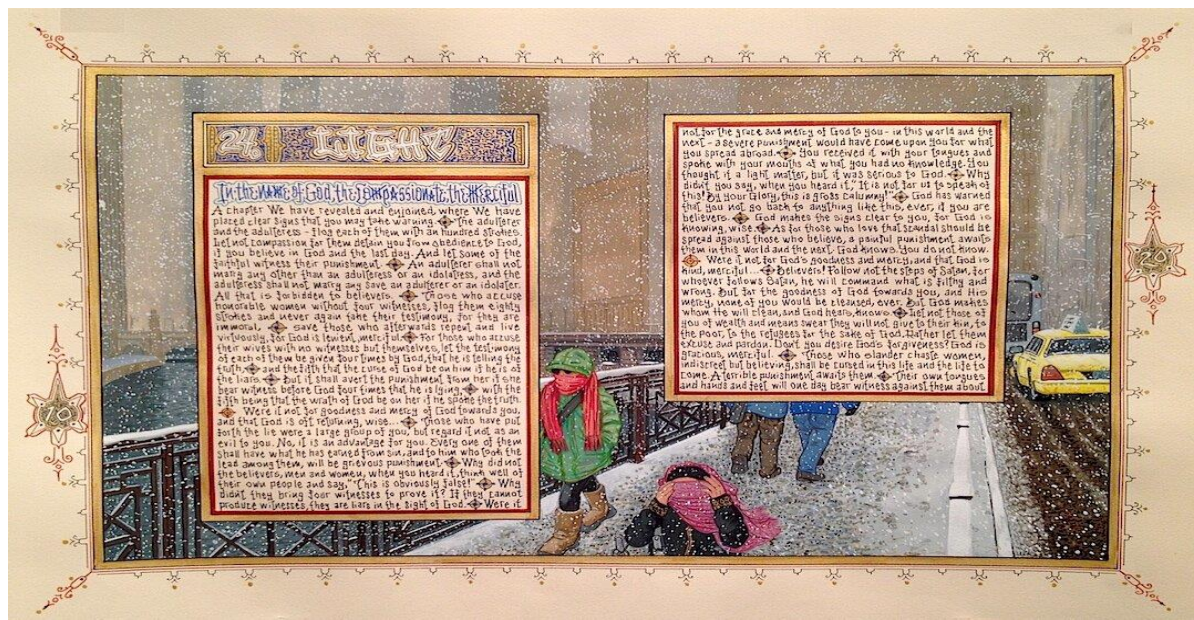


Fig. 13

Representational: according to the visual organization, concerning the representational component, there are two kinds of represented participants: people (two women and two men) and things (cars, the bridge and the buildings). This illustration uses a non-transactional action process in which the woman is shown as a major actor whose arms generate a vector connecting her with her scarf, thus making the scarf Goal. This illustration can be transcoded as it depicts the woman holding onto her scarf to prevent it from being blown away by the wind. This illustration appears to be an instance of a conceptual process, more specifically, a symbolic process. The represented participant (the woman) is a Carrier in relation to her Symbolic

Attribute (her scarf as hijab) that identify her as a Muslim person.

Interactional: With regard to the interactive meanings, fig. 13 is classified as an 'offer' because none of the represented participants looks at the viewer. The represented participants are offered to the viewer as "items of information", so the image invites the viewer to observe the represented participants, not to identify with them. A very wide perspective is created in the illustration because more than four participants are seen (two men and two women). Therefore, this distance is for people who are represented as strangers. The represented participants are portrayed at an oblique horizontal angle. In this case, the viewer is detached from the participants and their world. The final visual resource in interactive relations is the vertical angle from which the represented participants are at eye-level. Consequently, there is no power difference involved between the represented participants and the viewer.

Compositional: In terms of compositional aspects, this illustration uses centre/margin system. In this system, the vector creating by the woman's arm is considered as the nucleus of information so that the focus is on her hijab. Another compositional organization in this image is salience. It is realized by the placement in the foreground or background, contrasts in colour, relative size. Within this image, there is a clear contrast between the represented participants' (the women) prominence in the foreground comparing with the other participants (buildings, the two men) in the background composing the setting.

5.2.11. Women in The confederation (AL-Ahzab) Surah

Regarding verse 28 in this surah, the instructions concerns the behavior of the Prophet's wives and the general conduct of his household. The illustrator depicted a wedding ceremony to show this verse representing a bride from back at the center of the illustration (fig. 14). Birk interpreted it as follows:

Surah 33: verse 28 Prophet, say to your wives, if you desire this present life and its finery, come and I will provide for you and divorce you on the best of terms.

Verse 28 mentions that the wives of the Prophet are not like other women; they have a special status and responsibility. It highlights the importance of their conduct as examples for the broader Muslim community. This does not necessarily imply inequality but underscores the unique role and responsibility of the Prophet's wives. The verse mentions that Muslim men and women are protectors and friends of one another. This concept of mutual support and partnership is indicative of an egalitarian relationship. The verse underscores the idea that each individual, regardless of gender, is accountable for his or her actions. It does not distinguish

between men and women in terms of moral responsibility.

The message brought by this surah to the Prophet concerns his choice of spouses. Not all women would have been suitable for the great honor and title of "Mothers of the Faithful." A wife must provide support for her husband in the task with which he has been charged, or at least she should not stand as an obstacle in his path. In the case of Prophet Muhammad, it must be acknowledged that his wives were most faithful, understanding, and supportive. Islam allows a man to marry not more than four wives at any one time. When a man who had ten wives converted to Islam, the Prophet ordered him to keep only four and release the others.

Surah 33: verse 35 for the men who resign themselves and the women who resign themselves, and the devout men and the devout women, and the men of truth and the women of truth, and patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women. And the men who give alms and the women who give alms, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and the men who oft remember God and the women who oft remember God-for them has god prepared a forgiveness and a rich reward.

This verse mentions both men and women who guard their private parts, indicating the shared responsibility for modesty and chastity. This is often interpreted as emphasizing the importance of modest behavior and dress for both men and women. In terms of women's rights, this verse is often cited to argue for equality in spiritual standing and rewards between men and women in Islam, while acknowledging the differences in roles and responsibilities as understood within Islamic teachings.

Feminist scholars and others interpret verse 35 of Surah Al-Ahzab as encouraging all believers, including women, to actively engage with religious teachings and wisdom. It challenges traditional interpretations that might limit women's roles to domestic spheres, promoting a more inclusive understanding of gender roles within Islamic discourse. Regarding this verse, Barlas (2002) emphasizes the importance of women's active participation in religious and intellectual pursuits, challenging restrictive gender norms.

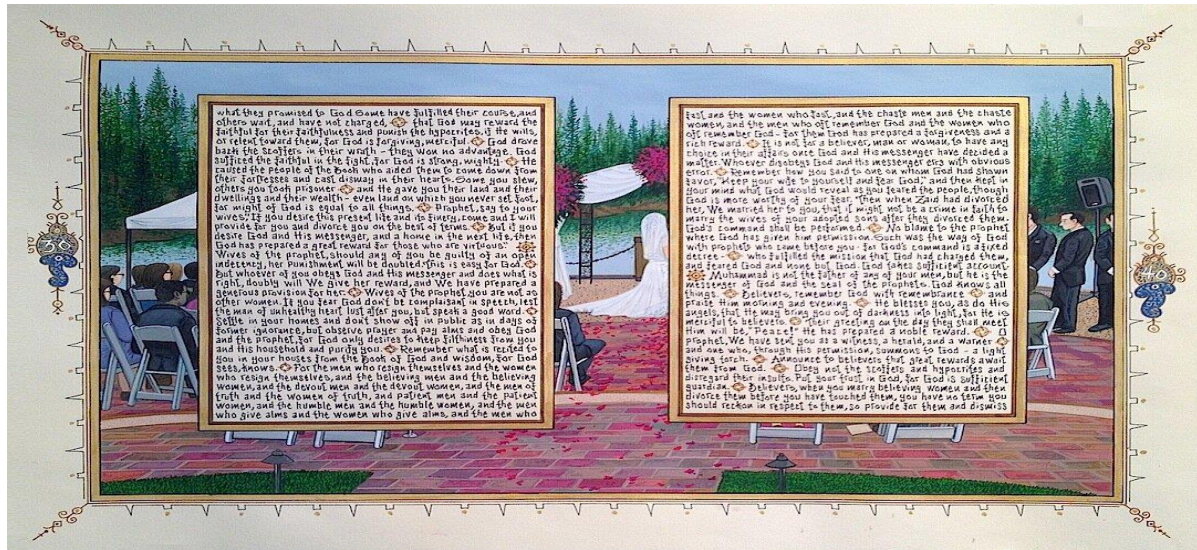


Fig. 14

Representational: Representing the bride from back may suggest a depersonalization or deindividualization, focusing more on the symbolic aspect of the bride rather than her individual identity. In fig. 14, the visual organization has three kinds of participants: the human presence (a bride and the guests), the represented objects (chairs, gazebo, and a loud speaker) and the natural landscape (mountains, trees and the sky). This illustration uses the narrative process of representation. The man is a major actor whose eyes appear to be looking at the bride (goal); it can be considered that the eye-line is the main vector. As a result, this image utilizes transactional action processes.

Interactional: the represented participants' gazes are away from the viewer, so fig. 14 is manifested as an 'offer'. The represented participants are shown as "items of information" or "objects of contemplation" that can be observed by the viewer. As for the social distance, the represented participants are depicted at a wide perspective because their whole figures appear with some space around them. At this distance, the relationship between the viewer and the represented participants is impersonal. The participants are depicted from back at an oblique horizontal angle. Thus, the viewer is detached from the represented participants and their world. From the vertical angle, the represented participants are portrayed at eye-level, creating a sense of symbolic equality between them and the viewer.

Compositional: fig.14 utilizes a centre/ margin scheme of information value. The bride is positioned in the central part of the image as the nucleus of information and the other participants (the guests and the natural landscape) are represented as ancillary elements (subserving).

The final instruction the surah brings to the Prophet relates to his wives' dress. It says:

Surah 33: verse 59 Prophet, speak to your wives and your daughters and to the wives of the faithful to put on their outer garments. This will be more proper, that they may be known and thus will not be given trouble. God is indulgent, merciful.

The verse promotes the concept of modesty in dress for Muslim women. By covering their bodies with outer garments, women are encouraged to conceal their physical beauty from unrelated men. The verse also mentions that this practice is to distinguish believing women from others. By adhering to this dress code, Muslim women can be identified as followers of Islam. Another aspect is the protection of women from potential harm or harassment. By dressing modestly, women are less likely to attract unwanted attention or advances. It emphasizes the respect and dignity afforded to women in Islam. By covering themselves, women are seen as more than just objects of physical desire but as individuals deserving of respect for their intellect, character, and contributions to society.

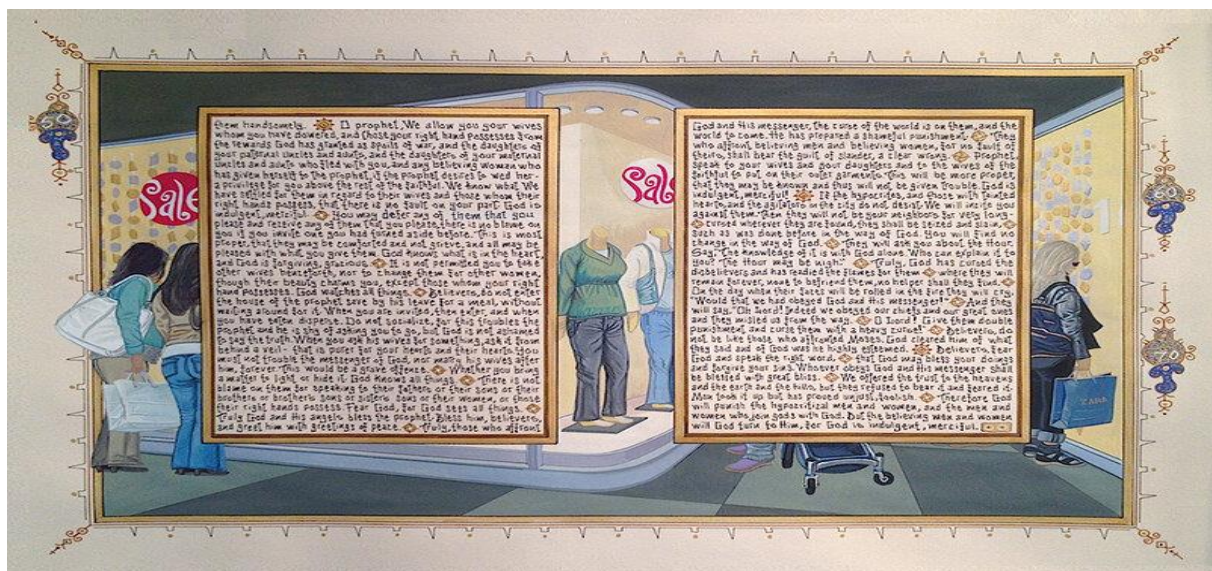


Fig. 15

Representational: three women are the represented participants, and the represented objects: mannequins. In fig.15, a transactional action process is used in its representation. The women are shown as major actors whose looks create vectors connecting them with the mannequins (goals), which leads the viewer to see that the women are looking at the mannequins. Moreover, this illustration appears to be an instance of a conceptual process, more specifically, a symbolic process. The represented participant (the woman) is a Carrier in relation to her Symbolic Attributes (a shopping bag with Zara logo) that identify her as a fan of Zara products.

Interactional: women as the represented participants have been depicted from back. Concerning interactive meanings, fig.15 represents an 'offer' because the gaze of the represented participants is directed away from the viewer. This image invites the viewer to observe the women, not to identify with them. As a result, the viewer is invited to relate to them in a friendly and cooperative way. Regarding the social distance, a very wide perspective is created in the illustration because more than three participants are seen (a pair of shoes with the wheels of a carrier denotes the fourth person). Therefore, this distance is for people who are represented as strangers. The represented participants are portrayed at an oblique horizontal angle, and the participants are observed in a detached manner from the back. In this case, the viewer is detached from the participants and their world. The final visual resource in interactive relations is the vertical angle from which the represented participants are at eye-level. Consequently, there is no power difference involved between the represented participants and the viewer

Compositional: In connection with the compositional organization, fig.15 utilizes a centre/ margin scheme of information value. The mannequins are positioned in the central part of the image as the nucleus of information and the women are represented as ancillary elements (subserving).

5.2.12. Women in the Table (Al-Ma'idah) Surah

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned in the verse in a position of agency and independence. While her role as a mother is acknowledged, she is not defined solely by her relationship to her son. Instead, the verse emphasizes her adherence to monotheism and her submission to God's will, as highlighted by the statement attributed to Jesus, where he directs people to worship God, his Lord and theirs.

The verse rejects the notion that God can be equated with any human being, including Jesus, and specifically refutes the idea of Jesus being the literal son of God. This can be seen as a rejection of patriarchal constructs that elevate men, even prophets, to divine status, while affirming the transcendence and uniqueness of God.

The verse emphasizes the importance of individual belief and worship, regardless of one's gender. It affirms that salvation or condemnation is based on one's actions and beliefs, not on gender. This can be empowering from a feminist perspective, as it emphasizes the spiritual agency and accountability of individuals, regardless of societal expectations or gender norms. While not explicitly stated in this verse, within the broader context of the Qur'an, there are

narratives that challenge societal norms and practices that oppress women. Mary herself is revered as a symbol of purity, devotion, and strength in Islamic tradition, challenging stereotypes and misogyny that degrade or diminish women's roles.

Surah 5: verse 72 Those who say God is the Messiah son of Marry have blasphemed, for the Messiah said, “children of Israel, worship God, God shall forbid them the garden and their abode shall be the fire. The wicked have no savior.

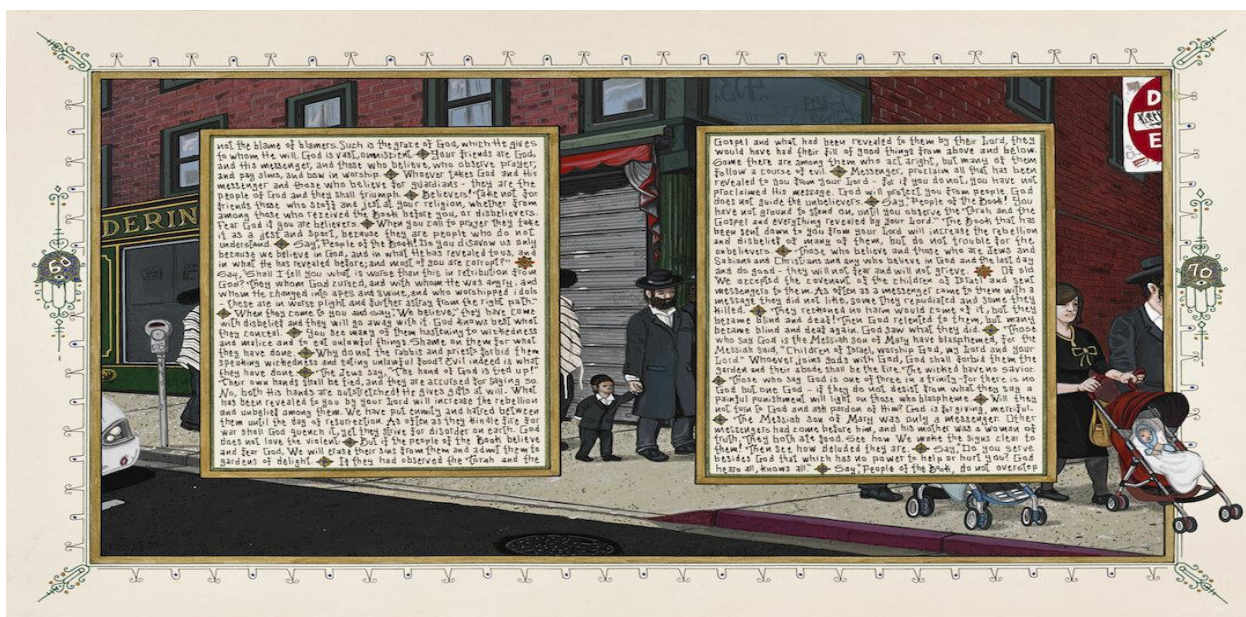


Fig. 16

Representational: This illustration consists of male and female participants represented by the seven participants (four men, a woman, and two children). Fig. 16 uses non-transactional action processes in its representation. The woman and the man as Major Actors whose arms create vectors connecting them with the little boy and the baby in the stroller, thus making the boy and the baby Goals. Therefore, the image can be transcoded as the woman and the man give a feeling of safety to the children. This image also uses a symbolic process. Thus, the male participants are Carriers in relation to their symbolic Attributes, tallit. It is a Jewish religious accessory in the form of a shawl used in religious services in Judaism. The tallit is worn by men at the time of prayer in the synagogue and at the Sacharit prayer that create visual concepts as they are Jewish.

Interactional: As concerns the interactive meanings, the eyes of the woman are directed not at the viewer but out of the picture. As a result, fig. 16 can be categorized as an 'offer' where the represented participant offers herself to the viewer as an item of information. Accordingly, the represented participant is preoccupied with her world that the viewer is

excluded from. According to the horizontal angle, the represented participant is seen from the side at an oblique angle, indicating that the viewer is detached from the represented participant and his world. The participant is seen from the vertical angle at eye-level so that a sense of symbolic equality is created between the woman and the viewer.

Compositional: The compositional visual mode of the image above contains a left/right scheme of the information value system. The Jewish men are placed on the left hand as the given that is known information. The woman with her baby in the stroller on the right hand is classified as the new information that requires particular attention.

5.2.13. Women in Divorce Surah

This surah addresses various aspects of matrimony and family life, emphasizing the importance of establishing strong foundations for the family and addressing issues that threaten its stability. Divorce is treated as a significant matter with wide-ranging consequences, not only affecting the individuals directly involved but also affecting the wider community. Therefore, regulations are set forth to prevent its abuse and minimize potential injustice.

God has specified specific times when divorce is permissible, prohibiting it during menstruation, confinement, or post-menstrual periods involving sexual intercourse. Additionally, divorce must be witnessed by two witnesses. Upon receiving a divorce notice from her husband, the wife is instructed to remain in her home, as the pronouncement serves as a warning signal rather than the immediate termination of the marital relationship. This period allows for potential reconciliation if circumstances change, such as anger subsiding or the desire to reconcile prevailing within two or three months. The surah contains numerous admonitions and mentions of faith in the unseen, resurrection, and fear of God. These are highlighted as essential elements for resolving tensions that may threaten familial unity and promoting mutual tolerance and reconciliation.

Despite divorce being practiced within the Muslim community, it has often led to significant unhappiness and unfairness. Muslim jurists have tended to be lenient in handling divorce cases, making it easy for people to divorce for trivial reasons. This leniency has led to perceptions of cruelty and unfairness towards women, perpetuated by individuals' behavior and interpretations rather than the true spirit of Islam. The rules outlined in this surah are rarely followed by Muslims today, with many jurists readily granting divorce for unsatisfactory reasons, resulting in the breakdown of homes and families.

Such irresponsible interpretations and practices have tarnished Islam's reputation and

hindered its growth, as critics exploit these negative aspects of Muslim life. The second part of the surah serves as a warning to Muslims who disregard proper rulings on divorce (Al-Ghazali, 2000).

Birk interpreted the verses as follows:

Surah 65: Verse 1 O Prophet! When you divorce women, release them for their waiting period, and calculate the waiting period being conscious of God, your lord; do not expel them from their homes, nor shall they be made to leave, unless they are openly guilty of immoral conduct. And those are the bounds set by God; and he who transgresses the bounds of God surely imperils himself. For although you do not know it, God may well cause something new to come about.

This verse emphasizes the importance of observing the waiting period (Iddah) after divorce and advises against expelling women from their homes during this period unless they have committed a clear immorality. This provision aims to protect the rights and dignity of women during the transition period of divorce.

Surah 65: Verse 2 And when the women have reached the end of the waiting period, then keep them with kindness, or else part with them fairly, calling to witness two fair members of your community, and prove your testimony to God. This is a caution to whoever believes in God and in final judgment. When someone is conscious of God, God provide him a way out of unhappiness.

This verse outlines the options available to the parties involved in divorce regarding the continuation or termination of the marriage contract. It emphasizes the need for fairness and justice in the process and encourages the involvement of witnesses to ensure transparency and accountability. Some feminist interpretations emphasize the importance of mutual respect and fairness in divorce proceedings, ensuring that women are not disadvantaged or marginalized during this period. Verse 2 of this surah highlights the significance of seeking forgiveness from God, which is seen as an aspect of gender equality in the context of Islamic teachings.

Surah 65: verse 4 as for those of your wives who are past the age of monthly courses, if you are uncertain, the waiting period is three months, as it is for those who have not yet menstruated. As for those who are pregnant, their period is until they have delivered their burden. And whoever is conscious of God, God will calm his concerns.

This verse addresses the waiting period (Iddah) for women who are divorced and covers various situations, including women who have reached menopause, those who have not yet menstruated (such as young girls), and pregnant women. It ensures that women are provided with a specified period of time during which their status is recognized and certain rights are

protected.

Surah 65: verse 6 let the women in this period live in the manner you live yourselves, according to your means; do not harass them and make them miserable. And if they are pregnant, then provide for them freely until they deliver. And if they nurse your offspring after the divorce, then give them their due recompense, and confer with each other reasonably about the child's future. But if you both find it difficult, then let another woman nurse the child.

This verse highlights the obligation of the husband to provide housing and financial support for his divorced wife during the waiting period (Iddah), especially if she is pregnant. It emphasizes the prohibition of harming or oppressing women and encourages mutual agreement and fair treatment between the parties involved. Barlas (2002) critiques traditional interpretations of Quranic verses on divorce, including this verse, which she argues have been used to reinforce patriarchal norms. Ahmed's broader work on gender in Islam encourages critical engagement with Quranic verses related to women, advocating for interpretations that challenge patriarchal readings and support women's rights.

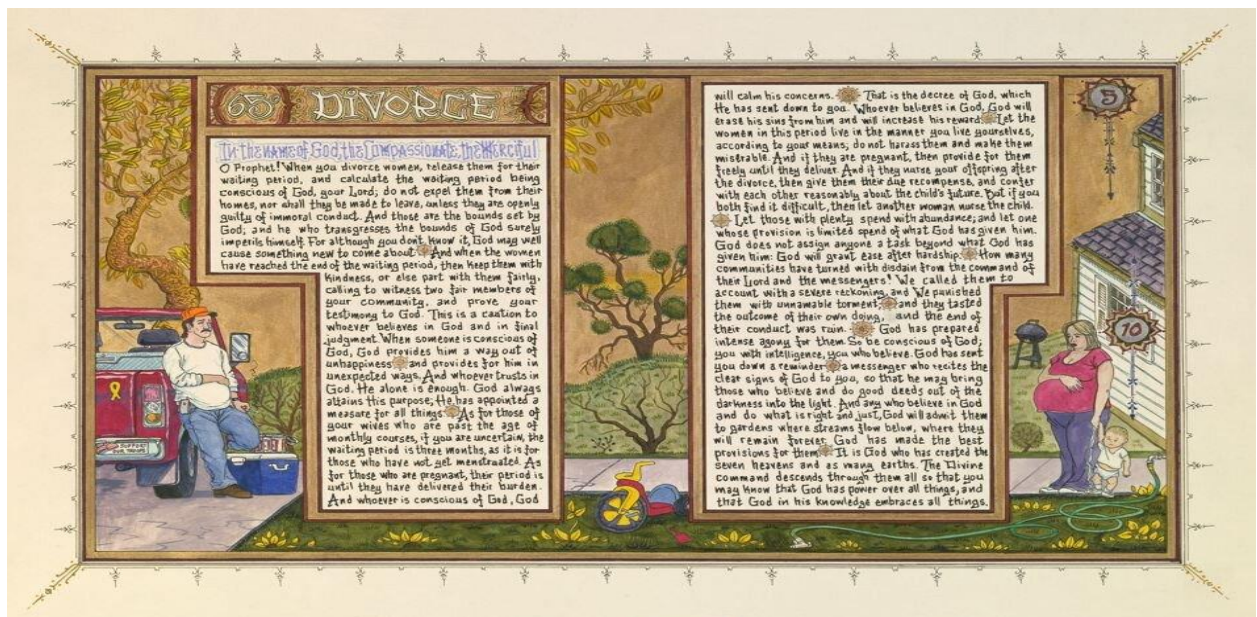


Fig. 17

Representational: Fig. 17 uses the transactional action process of representation. The pregnant woman is a Major Actor whose arms create a vector relating her with the little boy and her belly making them Goals, which can be transcoded as the mother protects her children. The man and woman's eyes appear to be looking at each other; it can be considered that the eye-line formed is another vector. As a result, this image utilizes transactional action processes.

For the conceptual process of representation, an analytical process is used. The represented participants (the man and the woman) are the Carrier of divorced persons. The spatial arrangement of the characters, with the man positioned on the left and the pregnant woman and the little boy on the right, implies a certain distance between them, potentially suggesting an emotional separation.

Interactional: Regarding the interactional metafunction, the represented participants' gazes are away from the viewer, so it is manifested as an 'offer'. The represented participants are shown as "items of information" or "objects of contemplation" that can be observed by the viewer. As for the social distance, the represented participants are at a wide perspective because their whole figures appear with some space around them. At this distance, the relationship between the viewer and the represented participants is impersonal. The participants are from the sideline at an oblique horizontal angle. Thus, the viewer is detached from the represented participants and their world. From the vertical angle, the man and woman are portrayed at eye-level, creating a sense of symbolic equality between them and the viewer.

Compositional: The compositional visual mode of the image utilizes a left/right scheme to convey information value. The man, situated on the left, represents the given or known information, while the woman positioned on the right signifies new information deserving particular attention.

5.2.14. Women in the Prohibition Surah

The wives of the Prophet Muhammad were renowned for their exceptional chastity, virtue, and esteemed status, standing as the epitome of respectability in history. Throughout his life, they stood by him, providing unwavering support in his mission. While they generally fulfilled their roles and met the expectations outlined in the Qur'an, they faced criticism on two occasions. Initially, some expressed discontent with the Prophet's modest lifestyle, collectively requesting a higher spending allowance. However, upon his clarification that his life's purpose was to serve God and seek His blessings in the hereafter rather than amassing wealth, they accepted his terms. The second instance occurred when certain wives, motivated by jealousy, attempted to exploit the Prophet's kindness. One wife, reportedly Aisha, remarked on the smell of his breath after consuming honey at another wife's house, Zaynab. Despite her sarcastic comment, the Prophet vowed not to consume Zaynab's honey again and requested Aisha to keep the incident confidential. It later emerged that multiple wives colluded out of jealousy, intending to diminish the Prophet's affection for Zaynab. Distressed by their actions, the Prophet

distanced himself from all his wives to the extent that some speculated he had divorced them all (Al-Ghazali, 2000).

It was in order to ease the tension and censure the culprits that this surah was revealed, opening with the words:

Surah 66: verse 1 O prophet! Why do you, out of a desire to please one or another of your wives, impose on yourself a prohibition of something that God has made lawful to you?

Surah 66: verse 3 It so happened that the prophet confided a recent occurrence as a secret to one of his wives and then she disclosed it. God revealed that to him, so he told her part of it and withheld part. And when he had told her of it, she said, "Who told you this?" and he answered, "the all-knowing, the all-aware, told me.

Aisha and Hafsa faced harsh reprimands for their error and were warned to stop their actions and apologize, or else they would face punishment and isolation. The Surah then advises the Prophet's wives to treat him with kindness, rationality, and respect in their interactions, cautioning them that their behavior should be considerate and courteous.

Surah 66: verse 5 Wives of the prophet: if he divorced you all, his lord might well give him in exchange better wives than you instead, women who acquiesce to the will of God- Faithful, devout, repentant, worshipful women who fast, women married before or virgins.

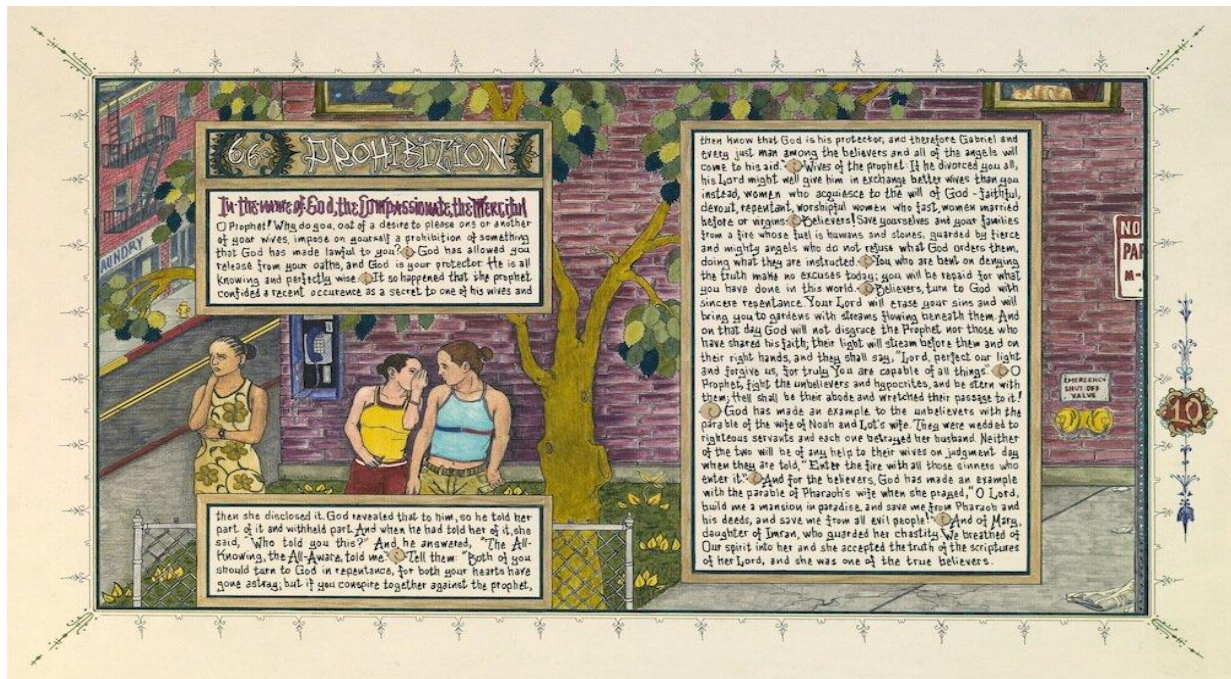


Fig. 18

Representational: the main represented participants are three women. In this illustration, a non-transactional action process is used in its representation. The woman between the other two women as a major actor whose arm creates a vector creating a scene of gossiping. There is another vector from the woman's eyes on the right, which leads the viewer to see that the woman is looking at the third woman on the left that making her a goal. Accordingly, this image can be transcoded as the woman is gossiping.

Interactional: Fig. 18 is classified as an 'offer' because none of the represented participants look at the viewer. The represented participants are offered to the viewer as "items of information", so the illustration invites the viewer to observe the represented participants, not to identify with them. A very wide perspective is in the image because more than two participants are seen with the space around them. Therefore, this distance is for people who are represented as strangers. The represented participants are portrayed at an oblique horizontal angle, and the participants are observed from the front. In this case. The final visual resource in interactive relations is the vertical angle from which the represented participants are at eye-level. Consequently, there is no power difference involved between the represented participants and the viewer. Regarding the social distance, a medium shot is created in which the women are from knee up; hence, this is considered a close social distance between the viewer and the represented participants.

Compositional: this illustration utilizes a centre/ margin scheme of information value. The women are positioned in the central part of the image as the nucleus of information and the other participants (the houses, streets, and the natural landscape) are represented as ancillary elements.

5.2.15. Women in the Examine her Surah

This surah speaks generally about forming friendships with others, in particular with those who do not believe and those who seek to harm. It concludes with a focus on women who believe or fail to believe, and it speaks about the types of relationships one should establish with a woman who leaves her faith or returns to it.

During the treaty of Hudaibiyyah in 628 CE, the Makkans imposed a unique condition that Muslims in Madinah could not offer refuge to those fleeing Makkah, while the Makkans could provide asylum to defectors from Madinah. Despite this condition, Prophet Muhammad agreed to it. However, it later had unintended consequences for the Makkans, who eventually requested its cancellation. During this time, numerous Makkan women converted to Islam but

found themselves stranded in a hostile environment. Conversely, some women left the Muslim camp and returned to Makkah. It was during this period that divine revelation instructed the Muslims to welcome and provide refuge to Muslim women from Makkah in Madinah. In response to these circumstances, the Muslims were instructed to compensate the Makkans whose wives had converted to Islam. (Al-Ghazali, 2000).

Surah 60: Verse 10 believers, when believing women come to you as refugees, examine them-God knows their faith best- and if you recognize them as believers, then do not return them to the disbelievers. They are not lawful wives for them, and they are not lawful husbands for them. But give the disbelievers what they have spent and let them ask for what they have spent. That is God's judgment, he judges between you. God is knowing, wise.

Surrounding this verse, Birk placed a scene of people shopping in a mall as follows (fig. 19):



Fig. 19

Representational: there are features of sixteen people, but only twelve are with enough details that viewers can specify their gender. Of these twelve, nine are women, and two are recognizably Muslim because they wear the hijab. Although the illustrator has included a variety of different races and ethnicities, it seems that he is biased toward some specific ones. Muslim women are others in this context. The women's eye lines form and the directions of their bodies seem to be moving in some different directions; it appears that they do not know each other; women walking both toward and away from those figures wearing the hijab. On

the visual level, in terms of a representational structure, the main represented participants are women, and the represented objects: a baby, shopping carts and baskets. In Image 19, non-transactional action process is used in its representation. The women are shown as Major Actors whose arm creates vectors connecting them with a baby, shopping carts and baskets; hence, making them Goals.

Interactional: it is obvious that this illustration is not a 'demand'. In this illustration, the represented participants are not involved with the viewers through their gaze. The viewers see them from a high angle, which suggests the interactive participants in power. This is done through the strategy of 'disempowerment', which depicts social actors as below downtrodden. Muslim women are shown generically as people wearing hijab showing social distance. The viewer has not involved with women and they are offered as strangers and objects of scrutiny for the viewers to think about rather than as subjects addressing the viewers with their gaze. This has been done through the strategy of objectivation (Van Leeuwen, 2008). A very wide perspective is presented in the photo because more than four participants are seen. The positioning of the people in the picture below (from below) and the viewers looking at them from above signifies a power dynamic where the viewers hold a position of authority or superiority over the individuals.

Compositional: The compositional organization is actualized by the information value system. In the center/margin system, the placement of the woman in the center of the picture is realized as the nucleus of information, which indicates that the woman is in focus. From the vertical perspective, the represented participants are depicted a slightly high angle so that the viewer appears to be having a more symbolic power.

5.2.16. Women in the Tattle Surah

Surah 6: Verse 92 This book which we have sent down is blessed, confirming that which came before it, in order that you might warn the Mother of Cities and those around her. Those who believe in the next life will believe in it and keep to their prayer.

In this verse, the Mother of Cities" refers to the city of Mecca, which is considered the holiest city in Islam. The verse is emphasizing the significance and importance of the Qur'an as a blessed book that confirms the messages of previous scriptures and warns the people of Mecca and its surroundings about the consequences of disbelief and the importance of belief in the Hereafter.

Among the translations, Birk has chosen to use the pronoun "her" instead of "it" to refer

to "the Mother of Cities" (Mecca) in order to emphasize the reverence and personification of the city. By using "her," it adds a sense of honor and respect to the city, treating it as a living entity deserving of feminine pronouns, which is a common literary device in many languages. Most of the translators have opted for the pronoun "it" in their translations, following a more literal approach to the text without assigning gendered pronouns to inanimate objects or concepts.

Additionally, in some translations and interpretations of religious texts, there is a tendency to personify certain entities or concepts for rhetorical effect or to convey a deeper emotional or spiritual connection. Referring to Mecca as "her" could be seen as a way to evoke a sense of reverence and affection toward the city among believers.

For verse 6:92, Wadud (1999) emphasizes the importance of understanding the Qur'an's revelation as a blessing and a guide for all, including women. She advocates for an inclusive reading that recognizes women's spiritual agency and their essential role in upholding and living by the teachings of the Qur'an. Wadud's exegesis often underscores how maintaining prayers and faith is a universal obligation that includes women equally.

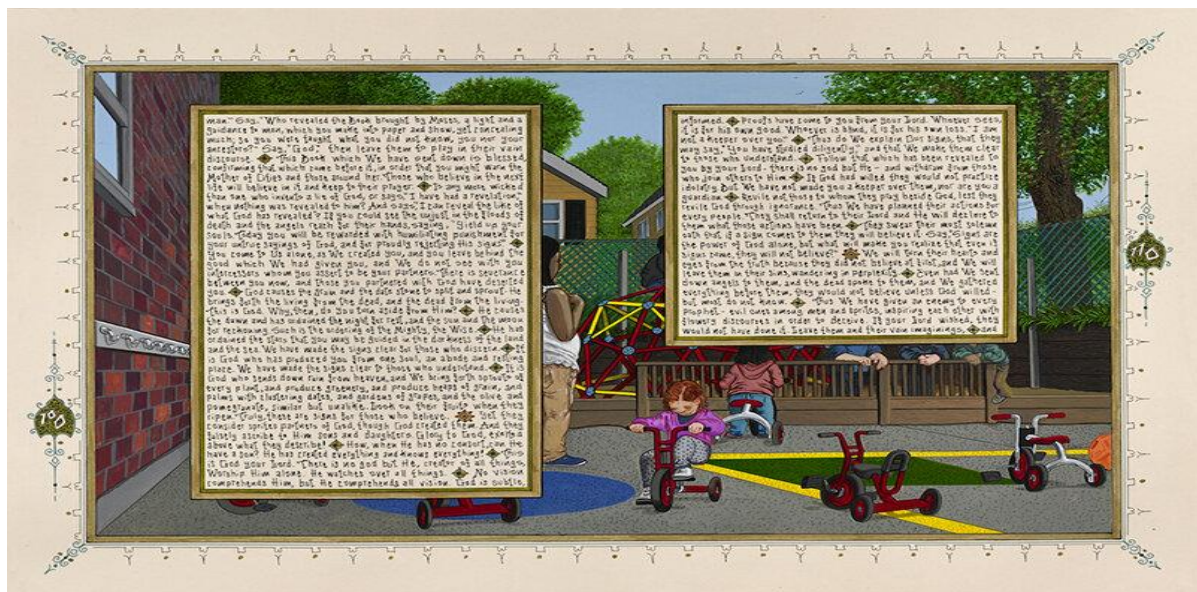


Fig. 20

Representational: the main represented participants are two little girls with a woman in a park. In this illustration, a transactional action process is used in its representation. The woman is shown as a Major Actor whose eyes creates a vector connecting her with the girls. Accordingly, this image can be transcoded as the woman protects the girls. The hands and feet of three men are visible in the picture, as if they are watching the woman and two girls. This illustration has a narration pattern. As for the narrative structure, the main represented

participants are a woman and two girls. The woman (on the right hand) is a Major Actor whose eyes generates a vector relating her with the girls; hence, making the girls Goals. Consequently, this image utilizes transactional action processes. Therefore, this image employs a transactional reactional process, and the three men can be classified as Reactors and the woman as a Phenomenon.

Interactional: Fig. 20 represents an 'offer' because the represented participants are not looking at the viewer. This image invites the viewer to observe the woman and girls, not to identify with them. As a result, the viewer is invited to relate to her in a friendly and cooperative way. Regarding the social distance, more than three persons are represented with the space around them from a wide perspective. From the horizontal angle perspective, the represented participant is illustrated at an oblique angle from the side. Consequently, the viewer is detached from the participant and her world. Vertically, the participants are observed at the viewer's eye level, suggesting an equal relationship between the viewer and the subjects being represented.

Compositional: This illustration uses one of the information value systems that is a centre/margin system. In this system, the vector creating by the woman's is considered as the nucleus of information so that the focus is on the woman and the girls. Another compositional organization in this image is salience. It is realized by the placement in the foreground or background. Within this image, there is a clear contrast between the represented participants' (the woman and girls) prominence in the foreground comparing with the other participants (three men and buildings) in the background.

Discussion

In this section, the statistical distributions of the main visual categories along with their subcategories are briefly detailed. The quantitative analysis of the images tends to enhance the qualitative analysis done above. Based on the framework of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) reading images, the analysis of visual structure is done. The quantitative analysis of the images in the American Qur'an has indicated that there are relative variations in the use of visual categories related to the illustrations.

Table 1. The Statistical Distribution of visual categories of the selected images in American Qur'an (Compositional)

Number of Picture.	Composition				
	Salience		Information Value		
	Foreground/Background	Color	Left/Right	Centre/Margin	Top/Bottom
1				•	
2				•	
3	•			•	
4					
5				•	
6	•	•	•		
7				•	
8	•		•		
9	•		•		
10				•	
11	•				
12					
13	•			•	
14					
15				•	
16			•		
17			•		
18				•	
19				•	
20	•			•	
Freq.	7	1	5	11	0
Freq.	35%	5%	25%	55 %	0%

With regard to the compositional aspects, Table (1) manifests that a centre/margin scheme is the most frequent type with the rate (55%) in comparison with the other information value systems. This indicates that women as the main represented participants are positioned

in the central part of the image as the nuclei of information. This suggests that the images under study primarily feature women as subjects or characters, emphasizing their importance and centrality within the visual narrative. Therefore, women are not only central in terms of their physical positioning within the image but also in terms of conveying information or being the focal points of meaning within the visual compositions.

Table 2. The Statistical Distribution of visual categories of the selected images in American Qur'an (Representational)

No.	Representation					
	Narrative				Conceptual	
	Action		Reactional		Analytical	Symbolic
	Transactional	Non-Transactional	Transactional	Non-Transactional		
1		•			•	
2	•				•	
3		•				
4				•	•	
5		•			•	
6			•			•
7		•				
8		•				
9		•				
10		•				
11		•				
12				•		
13		•				
14		•				
15		•				
16		•				•
17			•			
18		•				
19		•				
20	•					
Freq.	2	14	2	2	4	2
Freq.	10%	70%	10%	10%	20%	10%

The visual category of representation has two sub-categories, namely, narrative processes and conceptual processes. Based on table.2, the conceptual process has a lower frequency than the narrative process. This means that there is a relative focus on actions and events more than, on what the participants represent.

Table. 3 The Statistical Distribution of visual categories of the selected images in American Qur'an (Interactional)

No.	Interaction									
	Gaze		Social Distance			Attitude				
	Demand	Offer	Close perspective	Medium perspective	Wide perspective	Horizontal Angle		Vertical Angle		
						Frontal	Oblique	High	Eye level	Low
1					•	•				
2					•	•				
3					•					
4					•		•			
5					•					
6					•		•			
7					•	•				
8					•					
9					•					
10					•					
11					•					
12					•	•				
13					•	•				
14					•		•			
15					•		•			
16					•		•			
17					•		•			
18					•					
19					•					
20					•	•	•			

Freq.	0	20	0	0	20	6	7	3	8	0
Freq.	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	30%	35%	15%	40%	0%

As for the interactional meanings, Table (3) displays that the dimension of 'offer' getting the highest rate of frequency (100%) in comparison with the dimension of 'demand' that comprising (0%). This shows that the lack of eye contact between the viewer and the represented participants (women) making the illustrations more realistic. The fact that the dimension of 'offer' receives a frequency rate of 100% while 'demand' has a frequency rate of 0% indicates a one-sided interaction within the visual narratives. This suggests that the depicted women are primarily portrayed as offering or presenting something rather than actively engaging in interactions that involve demands or requests. This imbalance in interactional dynamics may reflect power dynamics or societal expectations regarding women's roles as caregivers or providers.

For a social distance, a wide perspective is the dominant one with (100%). This shows that the distance between the viewer and the represented participants (women) is impersonal, depicting participants as if they are strangers. This suggests a social distance or separation between the viewer and the portrayed individuals, emphasizing a lack of personal connection or engagement.

As to the horizontal perspective, the oblique angle gets the highest rate of frequency (35%) in comparison with the frontal angle (30%), indicating that women are portrayed in a detached manner. This choice of perspective creates a sense of distance or separation between the viewer and the subjects, further emphasizing their lack of direct engagement or interaction with the viewer.

Vertically, the illustrations are depicted at eye-level, comprising the highest rate of frequency (40%) in comparison with the other angles. This illustrates that there is no difference of symbolic power between the viewer and the represented participants. This suggests that there is no perceived hierarchy or imbalance in power dynamics between the viewer and the portrayed individuals, contributing to a sense of egalitarianism within the visual compositions.

Based on the analysis of *American Qur'an's* illustrations, it can be concluded that a centre/margin scheme is the most frequent type of compositional meaning in comparison with the other information value systems. This indicates that women as the main represented participants are positioned in the central part of the image as the nuclei of information in this case study. This suggests that the images under this study primarily feature women as subjects

or characters, emphasizing their importance and centrality within the visual narrative. Therefore, women are not only central in terms of their physical positioning within the image but also in terms of conveying information or being the focal points of meaning within the visual compositions.

The visual category of representational has two sub-categories, namely, narrative processes and conceptual processes. The conceptual process has a lower frequency than the narrative process in some illustrations. This means that there is a relative focus on actions and events more than, on what the participants represent.

As for the interactional meanings, the pictures displayed that the dimension of 'offer' getting the highest rate of frequency in comparison with the dimension of 'demand' that comprising. This shows that the lack of eye contact between the viewer and the represented participants (women) making the illustrations more realistic. The fact that the dimension of 'offer' receives a frequency rate of 100% while 'demand' has a frequency rate of 0% indicates a one-sided interaction within the visual narratives. This suggests that the depicted women are primarily portrayed as offering or presenting something rather than actively engaging in interactions that involve demands or requests. This imbalance in interactional dynamics may reflect power dynamics or societal expectations regarding women's roles as caregivers or providers.

For a social distance, a wide perspective is the dominant one with (100%). This shows that the distance between the viewer and the represented participants (women) is impersonal, depicting participants as if they are strangers. This suggests a social distance or separation between the viewer and the portrayed individuals, emphasizing a lack of personal connection or engagement.

As to the horizontal perspective, the oblique angle gets the highest rate of frequency (35%) in comparison with the frontal angle (30%), indicating that women are portrayed in a detached manner. This choice of perspective creates a sense of distance or separation between the viewer and the subjects, further emphasizing their lack of direct engagement or interaction with the viewer.

Vertically, the illustrator depicted the illustrations of *American Qur'an* mostly at eye-level, comprising the highest rate of frequency (40%) in comparison with the other angles. This illustrates that there is no difference of symbolic power between the viewer and the represented participants. This suggests that there is no perceived hierarchy or imbalance in power dynamics between the viewer and the portrayed individuals, contributing to a sense of egalitarianism within the visual compositions.

The analysis of the illustrations in the *American Qur'an* using Kress and van Leeuwen's framework reveals key insights into the visual structure and meanings:

1. **Centre/Margin Scheme:** This is the most frequent type of compositional meaning. Women are often positioned centrally, making them the focal point and emphasizing their importance in the visual narrative.
2. **Representational Categories:**
 - **Narrative Processes:** These are more frequent than conceptual processes, indicating a focus on actions and events involving the participants.
 - **Conceptual Processes:** These occur less frequently, suggesting less emphasis on what participants represent.
3. **Interactional Meanings:**
 - **Offer vs. Demand:** The 'offer' dimension is dominant, with a 100% frequency, indicating a lack of eye contact and a realistic portrayal where women are seen as presenting rather than engaging in interaction.
 - **Social Distance:** A wide perspective is predominant (100%), creating an impersonal view and depicting the participants as strangers, emphasizing social distance.
 - **Horizontal Perspective:** The oblique angle is more common (35%) than the frontal angle (30%), portraying women in a detached manner and reinforcing a sense of separation from the viewer.
 - **Vertical Perspective:** Most illustrations are at eye-level (40%), suggesting an egalitarian relationship with no symbolic power differences between the viewer and the participants.

Sandow Birk portrays women in diverse roles and situations throughout his illustrations. They are depicted as central figures in many scenes, highlighting their importance and presence in various contexts. Women are often shown engaging in non-transactional and transactional action processes. For instance, in some illustrations, they are portrayed actively participating in actions like protesting, caring for others, or interacting with symbolic objects. Birk's illustrations emphasize women's agency and role diversity. They are depicted not only as passive subjects but also as active agents driving the narrative or the action within the scenes. In terms of compositional choices, women are frequently positioned centrally within the frame, suggesting their importance or centrality to the narrative. This placement often draws attention

to their actions or interactions within the image.

Symbolic attributes and identity markers are used to define women's roles and significance within the illustrations. This includes their attire, gestures, and interactions with other elements in the scene, which contribute to conveying deeper symbolic meanings. The images generally present an 'offer' to the viewer, inviting them to observe and interpret the depicted scenes and characters. This approach encourages viewers to contemplate the roles and actions of women within the contexts presented by Birk. Contextual elements such as settings, backgrounds, and interactions with other characters provide insights into the social and cultural roles that women occupy in Birk's interpretations of various narratives and scenarios.

Across the analyzed illustrations, women are prominently featured as central characters in various roles such as protesters, caretakers, symbolic figures, and active participants in social settings. They are depicted engaging in both transactional and non-transactional action processes, which highlight their agency and importance within the visual narratives. His illustrations often position women centrally within the frame, emphasizing their significance and role in driving the depicted actions or narratives.

Women are often depicted as active participants in non-transactional action processes (e.g., car washers, observers of significant events). They are shown engaging in everyday tasks or significant moments, emphasizing their roles within these contexts. Women are also depicted in analytical processes, where their roles are defined by their relationships to objects or other participants, often emphasizing traditional or culturally significant roles (e.g., brides, caretakers).

The illustrations use possessive attributes to highlight specific roles and attributes of women (e.g., a bouquet for a bride, an object being washed). These attributes serve to anchor women within culturally and socially defined roles. Symbolic elements, such as the American flag or traditional dress, are used to convey broader cultural and social meanings, positioning women within these larger contexts.

Most illustrations are 'offer' images, where women do not directly engage with the viewer through eye contact. This creates a sense of observation rather than interaction, placing the viewer in a detached, observational role. The lack of direct engagement can also signify modesty or reservedness, aligning with certain cultural and religious expectations. The use of wide perspectives and eye-level angles creates a sense of equality and detachment. Women are portrayed as part of the scene, observed from a respectful distance, without any power imbalance between the viewer and the represented participants. The distance also suggests a formal and impersonal relationship between the viewer and the participants, reinforcing the

observational role of the viewer.

Women are often placed centrally in the compositions, indicating their importance within the scene. However, they are sometimes visually marginalized through partial visibility or focus on specific body parts, which can contribute to their objectification. The use of color and positioning (e.g., placing a bride in the center with a blue dress) highlights specific women, emphasizing their significance within the narrative. The compositional arrangement often uses a center/margin or left/right scheme, where women are central but sometimes subordinated to broader themes (e.g., the American flag, the cascade). This positioning reflects their roles within the narrative while also hinting at their subordinate status in certain contexts.

Women in Birk's illustrations are depicted in a manner that balances traditional roles and modern contexts. They are active participants in various scenes but are often portrayed within culturally and socially defined frameworks. The use of 'offer' images, wide perspectives, and compositional techniques reflects a respectful and observational approach, highlighting women's roles and attributes without direct engagement or empowerment. This representation aligns with the thematic content of the Qur'anic verses while also reflecting broader social and cultural dynamics.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Proposals

This study establishes the exploration of the intersection between language, gender equality, and religious texts, focusing specifically on the Qur'an. Feminist writers and translators have critiqued the patriarchal language embedded in sacred texts, highlighting its impact on gender representation. Historically, Qur'anic translations, rooted in patriarchal societies, have often reflected male-dominated interpretations. Recent efforts by female scholars aim to reinterpret these texts through a gender-inclusive lens, addressing the need to redefine contemporary understanding of Islam and promote gender equality, especially given the rise in violence against women.

Sadow Birk's 2015 illustrated adaptation of the Qur'an for American readers is a significant contribution to this discourse. Birk's work combines visual and textual translation, using contemporary American imagery to make the Qur'an's teachings more accessible. This study employed a Multimodal Social Semiotic Analysis to examine Birk's illustrations and their portrayal of women's identities in society, addressing a gap in the multimodal analysis of religious texts, particularly the Qur'an. The theoretical framework of visual communication grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen, derived from Halliday's systemic functional grammar, guided this research. The study investigated how Birk's illustrations challenge the patriarchal tone of the Qur'an, uncovering strategies used to depict women as active societal participants, contrasting traditional roles defined by patriarchal interpretations. The analysis aimed to show how the illustrator creates images conveying social, political, and aspirational messages about women in Qur'anic verses. Overall, this study contributed to the broader discourse on gender, religion, and translation, providing new insights into the visual and textual reinterpretation of the Qur'an in contemporary contexts.

In summary, this thesis provided a multifaceted understanding of the Qur'an's role in shaping attitudes towards women, both historically and in contemporary contexts. It sets the stage for subsequent chapters that delved into the translations of the Qur'an by female translators, shedding light on their perspectives and contributions to the discourse on women's roles and rights within Islam. This research aims to contribute nuanced insights into the intersections of culture, language, and religion, offering a comprehensive view of the representation of women in the sacred text and its implications for contemporary society.

The discourse surrounding women's status and gender equality, particularly within the context of Islam and the Middle East, remains multifaceted and complex. Despite efforts to address these issues, significant challenges persist, including societal norms, legal frameworks,

and interpretations of religious texts.

Throughout history, Islamic feminism has emerged as a distinctive movement, advocating for gender equality within the framework of Islam and challenging patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. Scholars and activists have highlighted the importance of contextualizing women's rights within diverse Muslim societies, acknowledging the wide range of experiences and challenges faced by women across different regions.

Western perceptions often oversimplify the complexities of women's lives in the Middle East, portraying them as passive and oppressed, while failing to recognize the diversity and agency that exist within these communities. It is crucial to move beyond stereotypes and engage in nuanced discussions that take into account the cultural, religious, and socio-political contexts in which women navigate their lives.

Furthermore, the intersectionality of feminism and Islamic feminism underscores the importance of addressing not only gender inequality but also other forms of oppression and discrimination that women may face, including those based on race, class, and ethnicity. In moving forward, it is imperative to continue promoting dialogue and collaboration between diverse feminist movements, both within and outside of Muslim-majority societies, to work towards a more inclusive and equitable world for all women. This necessitates challenging ingrained patriarchal structures and promoting progressive interpretations of religious texts that uphold the principles of justice, equality, and human rights for women everywhere.

This comprehensive exploration of the Qur'an and its representation of women, contextualized within the broader socio-historical evolution, has unveiled intricate layers of significance. The Qur'an, revered as the divine revelation, forms the bedrock of Islamic ideology and plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions, beliefs, and societal norms. The unique linguistic and cultural challenges posed by the Qur'an's original Arabic form have historically contributed to debates surrounding translations and interpretations. The sanctity attributed to the Qur'an has presented a dilemma, especially in its translation, with concerns about maintaining the divine essence of the text. The research posits that the cultural nuances, linguistic complexities, and sociopolitical contexts have contributed to distinct representations of women in American and Middle Eastern social media. This hypothesis lays the foundation for an in-depth exploration of social semiotics to analyze the visual imagery, linguistic cues, and symbolic representations of women in these diverse cultural contexts.

This project addresses the longstanding issue of patriarchal language in Qur'anic translations and interpretations. By critiquing male-dominated readings of the text, it highlights the need for more gender-inclusive approaches. This critique is vital for understanding how

religious texts can perpetuate gender inequality and for promoting more equitable interpretations. Through the focus on feminist writers and translators, we emphasize recent efforts to reinterpret the Qur'an from a gender-inclusive perspective. This reinterpretation is crucial for redefining contemporary understandings of Islam and for advocating gender equality, particularly in contexts where violence against women is prevalent.

This thesis employs Multimodal Social Semiotic Analysis to examine Birk's illustrated adaptation of the Qur'an. This methodological approach is significant because it goes beyond traditional textual analysis by incorporating visual elements, thus addressing a gap in the multimodal analysis of religious texts. This method allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how gender is represented and can be reinterpreted in religious discourse.

By using Kress and van Leeuwen's visual communication grammar framework, which is based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar, we provide a structured approach to analyzing visual elements. This application is innovative in the context of religious texts and contributes to the development of methodologies for studying multimodal representations of gender in sacred texts.

The examination of Birk's adaptation of the Qur'an is a unique contribution. Birk's work is notable for its combination of visual and textual translation, using contemporary American imagery to make the Qur'an's teachings more accessible. By analyzing how Birk's illustrations portray women's identities and challenge traditional patriarchal interpretations, we provide insights into alternative ways of understanding and visualizing religious texts.

The narrative also delves into the historical perspective, unraveling the unique features of the Qur'an's organization and the challenges of translating its profound verses. The Qur'an's emphasis on orality, memorization, and recitation sheds light on its intended mode of consumption and the role of religious scholars in disseminating its teachings. The first research question of this study was as follows:

How did the attitudes towards women and their societal status evolve during the period of the Qur'an's revelation when Prophet Muhammad resided in Mecca and Medina, and what transformative impacts did the Qur'anic revelations have on the treatment and perception of women in early Islamic society?

Regarding this research question, the first chapter drew attention to the evolving status of women during the time of the Qur'an's revelation, challenging prevailing societal norms and advocating for their rights. The Qur'an's position on women's rights emerges as a progressive force in the seventh-century Arabian context, addressing issues such as inheritance, marriage, and economic participation. Explained in the second chapter, we suggested that during the

period of the Qur'an's revelation, there was a significant transformation in the attitudes towards women and their societal status, driven by the teachings of the Qur'an. In Mecca, where the early revelations began, women might have experienced initial improvements in their status. The Qur'anic messages emphasized the equality and dignity of women and rejected harmful practices like female infanticide, thus laying the groundwork for more equitable treatment.

As the Islamic community began to take shape in Medina, women's roles and participation in various aspects of community life likely expanded. This period would have seen women engaging more in economic activities, participating in social and political matters, and gaining legal rights that offered them greater protection and autonomy. The first chapter aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's actions contributed to shaping the attitudes towards women and their status in early Islamic society, reflecting a progressive shift from the pre-Islamic norms that often marginalized and oppressed women. Due to the historical evidence and Qur'anic teachings indicate a significant transformation in the attitudes towards women and their societal status during the period when Prophet Muhammad resided in Mecca and Medina, the transformative impact of the Qur'anic revelations led to a progressive shift in the treatment and perception of women in early Islamic society, confirming our hypothesis.

The second research question of this study was:

How do social representations of women in American and Middle Eastern media differ in terms of visual imagery, linguistic cues, and symbolic representations?

Chapter 3 convincingly supports the hypothesis that American media and Middle Eastern media portray women differently, reflecting their respective cultural values and societal norms. American media emphasizes themes of individualism, empowerment, and diversity, showcasing women as independent, capable, and multifaceted individuals. In contrast, Middle Eastern media often presents women within traditional roles, emphasizing cultural norms and conservative values. These differences underscore the broader cultural and societal contexts in which these media operate. American media's focus on empowerment and diversity aligns with contemporary feminist ideals, while Middle Eastern media's emphasis on traditional roles reflects the cultural and religious influences that shape societal expectations.

The portrayal of women in American and Middle Eastern media exhibits profound disparities shaped by cultural, social, and political contexts. In Middle Eastern media, women are often depicted in traditional roles, frequently shown as mothers, homemakers, or in subordinate positions, which mirror long-standing societal norms. Following the events of 9/11, Western media has increasingly portrayed Middle Eastern women as oppressed and

passive, perpetuating stereotypes despite some efforts to present a more nuanced perspective. Conversely, American media tends to emphasize themes of empowerment, individualism, and diversity, although it frequently frames these within gendered and racial stereotypes. Despite advancements in depicting women in leadership and diverse roles in American media, significant gaps persist, especially in the representation of women of color and in addressing gender equality issues comprehensively. These contrasting representations not only reflect cultural differences but also highlight the media's role in reinforcing and challenging societal norms and stereotypes. This comparative analysis underscores the necessity for a more balanced and accurate portrayal of women in both regions, capturing their diverse realities and contributions.

In conclusion, the contrasting portrayals of women in American and Middle Eastern media highlight the impact of cultural, religious, and societal factors on gender representations. This reinforces the importance of considering these contexts when analyzing media portrayals of women, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in gender representation across different regions. The research then transitions to the contemporary landscape, exploring the global transformation in Qur'anic translations and the increasing role of women in interpreting and translating the sacred text. This shift signifies a departure from historical reliance on male clergy, mirroring broader societal changes and women's empowerment movements. Furthermore, the examination of women's rights in the Qur'an highlights its egalitarian principles, emphasizing spiritual and moral equality. The Qur'anic verses cited affirm the equal standing of men and women, dispelling misconceptions about gender hierarchy within Islam. The discussion on women's economic rights, inheritance, and participation in various spheres of life underscores Islam's commitment to gender equity.

The translation of the Qur'an has been a subject of significant scholarly exploration, particularly concerning its portrayal of women and the impact of various translation approaches on Western perceptions. The third research question of this project was as follows:

How do the personal, cultural, and socio-political backgrounds of female and male translators influence the representation of women's rights in the English translations of the Qur'an?

This hypothesis suggested that the perspectives and biases of translators, which are shaped by their cultural and social contexts, play a substantial role in the representation of women in these translations. In chapter 4 of this project, we did the examination of English translations of "the women" (al-nisah) surah and identified variations in how verses related to women and women's rights were translated and interpreted by four female translators. We

substantiated that various translators may interpret Qur'anic verses related to women differently, depending on their personal and political beliefs, cultural and social values, and the specific audience they are catering to. Therefore, a translator with a feminist perspective might emphasize gender equality in their translation, while a translator with a conservative viewpoint might lean towards a more traditional interpretation. The English-speaking audience's understanding of women's roles and rights in Islam can be heavily influenced by the translators' choices. It assumes that these translations may not always faithfully represent the original Arabic text but may rather reflect the translator's interpretation, which can sometimes lead to variations in how women and their rights are perceived.

The last and fourth research question was as follows:

To what extent does Sandow Birk's American Qur'an challenge and reinterpret patriarchal elements within the Qur'an while maintaining the essence of the original text, and how does this artistic reinterpretation influence perceptions of women's roles and rights in the Qur'anic narratives?

The hypothesis of this research question is that Birk's American Qur'an, through its artistic reinterpretation, may partially succeed in subverting patriarchal elements within the Qur'an while simultaneously retaining the essence of the original text. This hypothesis suggests that Birk's reinterpretation may introduce alternative perspectives on women and their roles in Qur'anic narratives, potentially ameliorating or reimagining instances where women are traditionally perceived as marginalized or subservient. This hypothesis Birk might engage with the Qur'an's text to challenge or question its patriarchal aspects, encouraging viewers to reconsider their understanding of gender dynamics within the Qur'an. This hypothesis also suggests that Birk may retain the core themes and narratives of the Qur'an, indicating that his reinterpretation is not a complete departure from the original text but rather a critical engagement with it. By keeping the essence of the Qur'an intact, Birk's work might appeal to a broader audience, including those with a deep reverence for the Qur'an's content, while still promoting a more egalitarian view of women's roles.

Based on the analysis of Birk's illustrations of the Qur'an in modern America, it is evident that his approach to representing women is complex and multifaceted. Through his visual interpretations, he seeks to explore the intersection of Islamic teachings with contemporary American life, particularly focusing on themes such as marriage, women's rights, and societal dynamics.

One notable aspect of his illustrations is his use of contemporary themes and imagery to convey the messages of the Qur'an. By incorporating elements of modern American society,

Birk aims to make the ancient text more relatable and accessible to a diverse audience, including both ordinary people and scholars. Based on the results, the illustrator portrayed men in higher-status social occupations compared with women within society. In other words, 10 images portrayed men in political leadership positions of a country. Additionally, professions such as engineering, firefighting, politics, and policing were predominantly assigned to men (Appendix 3 and 4). Women in these images were shown in occupations such as nurses or homemakers with children. These findings suggest a significant gender disparity in the portrayal of occupational roles within the analyzed images. Men are predominantly in high-status and prestigious occupations, including political leadership roles, while women are confined to more traditional and stereotypical roles such as nursing or homemaking. This portrayal confirms gender stereotypes and perpetuates unequal gender roles within society. Further examination and efforts to promote gender equality in visual representations are warranted to challenge and change these ingrained biases.

While women are positioned centrally within the visual compositions, their roles as brides, pregnant women, or caregivers are emphasized. This positioning and emphasis suggest that these roles are deemed significant within the visual narratives, potentially reflecting broader societal values and perceptions regarding women's roles and identities. In conclusion, based on the analysis within the framework of visual grammar proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen, the visual representations studied reinforce traditional gender norms and stereotypes by depicting women primarily in roles associated with caregiving and domesticity while excluding them from high-status professions. This reflects and perpetuates broader societal trends and cultural values regarding the portrayal and representation of women in visual media, emphasizing their limited roles within traditional gender hierarchies.

However, the analysis also reveals tensions and complexities in Birk's representation of women. While he endeavors to engage with themes related to women's rights and marriage, there are instances where the portrayal of women appears to be marginalized or obscured. For example, the illustration featuring a bride with her face and body partly hidden suggests a nuanced approach to depicting women's roles and identities within the context of marriage and societal expectations. Moreover, the compositional choices in Birk's illustrations contribute to the overall interpretation of women's representation. The placement of elements such as the coffin and men in the foreground, juxtaposed with the cemetery in the background, highlights the broader social and cultural dynamics surrounding women's experiences and roles in modern America.

The absence of women in high-status professions like politicians, engineers, or police

officers within the visual narratives indicates a limited representation of women in positions of authority, leadership, and power. This absence reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and hierarchical structures that assign men to positions of authority and women to roles associated with caregiving and support. By consistently depicting women in roles aligned with traditional gender stereotypes, the visual representations perpetuate and reproduce these stereotypes, contributing to the reinforcement of gendered expectations and limitations within society.

In conclusion, Sandow Birk's illustrations of the Qur'an in modern America offer a thought-provoking exploration of themes related to women, marriage, and societal norms. Through his visual interpretations, Birk invites viewers to reconsider traditional interpretations of Islamic teachings and their relevance to contemporary American life. However, his representations also raise questions about the complexities of gender dynamics and societal expectations, prompting further reflection and discussion on these important issues. The illustrations confirmed the detachment and impersonality of the depicted women, portraying them primarily in caregiving roles with limited interaction or engagement with the viewer.

Birk's depiction of women was influenced by prevailing social attitudes and norms regarding gender roles and relationships. Societal expectations regarding women's roles as caregivers and nurturers, as well as the perceived division of labor between men and women, could shape how women were portrayed in the illustrations. Birk's ideological beliefs or perspectives on gender and religion could also influence his depiction of women in the American Qur'an. Ideological frameworks that prioritize traditional gender roles or reinforce patriarchal interpretations of religious texts may shape how women are represented in the illustrations.

While illustrations have the potential to influence perceptions and challenge societal norms, the illustrations of American Qur'an did not effectively challenge the patriarchal context in the Qur'an. Instead, Birk reinforces traditional gender roles and power dynamics by depicting women primarily in roles of offering rather than demanding, and by maintaining a sense of detachment and impersonality in their portrayal. Further research of these influences can provide valuable insights into the portrayal of gender in visual representations of religious texts and its potential implications for challenging or reinforcing patriarchal contexts.

To reduce the patriarchal context in the Qur'an through illustration and to bold the role and status of women, illustrators as intersemiotic translators should reconsider the visual representations and strive to depict women in a more empowered and active manner. This involves portraying women in a variety of roles beyond traditional stereotypes, showing them engaging in meaningful interactions with the viewer, and highlighting their agency, autonomy,

and contributions to society. Additionally, Birk could explore visual strategies that challenge patriarchal narratives and promote gender equality within the visual compositions.

6.1. Further Research

Regarding this thesis, future research can explore several areas to build upon the findings and insights presented:

- 1) **Influence of Translator Gender on Qur'anic Interpretation:** Future research could investigate how the gender of translators affects the translation of gender-related verses in the Qur'an. By comparing translations by male and female scholars, researchers could uncover biases and differences in interpretation, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of gender representation in religious texts.
- 2) **Impact of Multimodal Texts on Religious Understanding:** Further studies could focus on how visual adaptations, such as Sandow Birk's *American Qur'an*, alter readers' perceptions and understanding of the Qur'anic text. This research could involve surveys and interviews with readers, combined with visual and textual analysis, to assess the effectiveness of multimodal translations in conveying religious teachings.
- 3) **Comparative Study of Gender Representation in Sacred Texts:** A comparative analysis of the representation of women in the Qur'an and other religious texts, such as the Bible and the Torah, could provide insights into common themes and differences in gender portrayal. This research would highlight the impact of cultural and historical contexts on gender narratives in sacred texts.
- 4) **Historical Evolution of Gender-Inclusive Qur'anic Translations:** Future research could examine the evolution of gender-inclusive translations of the Qur'an over the past century. By analyzing different translations from various periods, researchers could trace changes in gender representation and the influence of feminist scholarship on Qur'anic interpretation.
- 5) **Role of Visual Media in Shaping Gender Perceptions in Religious Narratives:** Investigating how illustrations in religious texts influence societal attitudes towards gender roles and equality could provide valuable insights into the power of visual media. This research would analyze the content and reception

of illustrated religious texts to understand their role in shaping gender perceptions.

- 6) **Reader Reception of Gender-Inclusive Religious Texts:** Future studies could assess how contemporary readers, particularly women, perceive and respond to gender-inclusive translations of the Qur'an. Through surveys and focus groups, researchers could explore the acceptance and impact of these translations on readers' understanding of gender roles in Islam.
- 7) **Linguistic Strategies for Achieving Gender Neutrality in Qur'anic Translations:** Research could focus on the linguistic strategies used to achieve gender neutrality in modern Qur'anic translations, revealing the challenges and innovations in translating gender-related language. This would contribute to the broader field of translation studies and gender linguistics.
- 8) **Contributions of Feminist Scholarship to Qur'anic Interpretation:** Future research could explore the contributions of feminist scholars to the reinterpretation of gender-related verses in the Qur'an. This study would examine the methodologies and findings of key feminist scholars and their influence on gender-inclusive translations.
- 9) **Cultural Impact of Gender-Inclusive Translations in Muslim Communities:** Studies could examine the social and cultural effects of gender-inclusive Qur'anic translations on Muslim communities worldwide. By analyzing the reception and integration of these translations, researchers could provide insights into their role in promoting gender equality within different cultural contexts.
- 10) **Visual Semiotics in Religious Text Illustrations:** Research could analyze the use of visual semiotics in the illustrations of religious texts to convey gender-related messages, revealing the strategies employed by illustrators to challenge or reinforce traditional gender roles. This would contribute to the understanding of visual communication in religious texts.

These researches can further expand the understanding of gender representation in religious texts and contribute to ongoing discussions about gender equality and religious texts translation.

References

- 1) Abdulmajid, A. (2019). Media and ideology in the Middle East: A critical discourse analysis. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, 28(1), 23–47.
- 2) Abdul-Raof, H. (2001). *The Qur'an translation: Discourse, texture, and exegesis*. Routledge.
- 3) Abukari, A. (2014). Education of women in Islam: A critical Islamic interpretation of the Qur'an. *Religious Education*, 109(1), 4-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2014.868203>
- 4) AbuKhalil, A. (2005). Women in the Middle East. Retrieved from https://ips-dc.org/women_in_the_middle_east/
- 5) Adham, S. A. (2012). A semiotic analysis of the iconic representation of women in the Middle Eastern media (Master's thesis, The University of Birmingham, Birmingham).
- 6) Ahmed, L. (1992). *Women and gender in Islam: Historical roots of a modern debate*. Yale University Press.
- 7) Al-Ahmadi, H. (2011). Challenges facing women leaders in Saudi Arabia. *Human Resource Development International*, 14(2), 149–166.
- 8) Al-Ariqi, A. (2009). *Middle Eastern women in the media: A battle against stereotypes, Al Jazeera: A case study*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved from <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/Middle2520Eastern2520Women2520in2520the2520Media2520A2520Battle2520Against%2520Stereotypes.pdf>
- 9) Al-Bundaq, M. S. (1980). *Al-mustashriqun watarjamat al-Qurān al-karim* [The orientalists and the translation of the Holy Qur'ān]. Dar AlAfaq Al-Jadida.
- 10) Al-Ghazali, S. M., Shamis, A. A., & Alawiye, Z. (2000). *A thematic commentary on the Qur'an*. International Institute of Islamic Thought. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh4zg9>
- 11) Allam, R. (2008). Countering the negative image of Arab women in the Arab media: Toward a “Pan Arab Eye” media watch project. *The Middle East Institute: Policy Brief*, 15.
- 12) Al-Munajjed, M. (2010). Women employment in Saudi Arabia: A major challenge. The Ideation Centre, Booz and Company.
- 13) Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2016). The woman as member of the society: When is a woman allowed to work? In *The status of women in Islam* (trans. M. Gemeaah). Century Association. Retrieved from

http://www.centuryassociation.org/download/marriage_2016/books/The_Status_of_Women_in_Islam_by_Yusuf_al_Qaradawi.pdf

- 14) Al-Shafie, H. (2004). Harakat al-ta'wil al-nisawiya lilQur'ān waddīn wakhataruha alā al-bayan al-Arabīi waturathih (The Qur'an, faith and the impact of the feminist interpretative movement on the Arabic text and its legacy). *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 6(2), 170-153.
- 15) Alshakhs, S. (2012). The evaluation of Saudi women's status through a media lens (Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, Omaha).
- 16) Akhmetova, E. (2014). Women in Islamic civilizations: Their rights and contribution. *Islam and Civilizational Renewal Journal*, 7(4).
- 17) Ali, K. (2006). *Sexual ethics and Islam: Feminist reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and jurisprudence*. Oneworld.
- 18) Amini, A. (2010). Representation of women in commercials in Iran and the world. *Book of the Month: Social Science*, 26, 91-103.
- 19) Ammu, J., & Kalpana, S. (Eds.). (2006). *Whose news? The media and women's issues*. Sage.
- 20) An-Na'im, A. A. (2006). Shari'a and Islamic family law: Transition and transformation. *Ahfad Journal*, 23(2), 2-30.
- 21) Azin, N., & Tabrizi, H. H. (2015). Analysis of women's image in Iranian TV commercials based on Barthes visual semiotic. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(6).
- 22) Badawi, J. (2014). The status of women in Islam. Islam's Women. Retrieved from http://www.islamswomen.com/articles/status_of_women_in_islam.php
- 23) Badran, M. (2009). Islamic feminism. Retrieved from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/569/cu1.htm>
- 24) Bakhtiar, L. (2011). The sublime Qur'an: The misinterpretation of Chapter 4 Verse 34. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 18(4), 431-439. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506811415206>
- 25) Barlas, A. (2002). *"Believing women" in Islam: Unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'ān*. University of Texas Press.
- 26) Bell, P. (2001). Content analysis of visual images. In van Leeuwen, T., & Jewitt, C. (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (pp. 10-34). Sage Publications.
- 27) Bevilacqua, A. (2013). The Qur'an translations of Marracci and Sale. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 76, 93-130. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/5710234/The_Qur'an_Translations_of_Marracci_anSale
- 28) Bird, P. A. (1988). Translating sexist language as a theological and cultural problem.

- Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 42(1), 89-95.
- 29) Bird, R. (2005). Arab women in image trap. *Boloji.com*.
- 30) Birk, S. (2015). *American Qur'an*. Liveright: W.W. Norton & Company.
- 31) Bishin, B. G., & Cherif, F. M. (2017, July). Women, property rights, and Islam. Retrieved April 19, 2019, from <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/cuny/cp/2017/00000049/00000004/art00005?crawler=true>
- 32) Braude, A. (2004). Riffat Hassan: Muslim feminist theologian. In *Transforming the faith of our fathers: Women who changed American religion*. St. Martin's Press.
- 33) Byng, M. D. (2010). Symbolically Muslim: Media, hijab, and the West. *Critical Sociology*, 36(1), 109-129.
- 34) Caldas-Coulthard, C. R., & Iedema, R. (2008). *Identity trouble: Critical discourse and contested identities*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- 35) Camiciottoli, B. C. (2007). *The language of business studies lectures*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- 36) Carland, S. (2017). *Fighting hislam: Women, faith and sexism*. Melbourne University Press.
- 37) Carter, C., & Steiner, L. (2004). Introduction to critical readings: Media and gender. In *Critical readings: Media and gender*.
- 38) Chandler, D. (2002). *Semiotics for beginners*. Routledge.
- 39) Chick, K. A. (2006). Gender balance in K-12 American history textbooks. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 1(3), 284-290.
- 40) Clark, R., Ayton, K., Frechette, N., & Keller, P. J. (2005). Women of the world, re-write. *Social Education*, 69(1), 41-45.
- 41) Cohen-Almagor, R. (2022). Discrimination against Jewish women in Halacha (Jewish law) and in Israel. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 45(2), 290-310.
- 42) Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. University of New Mexico Press.
- 43) Cooke, M. (2001). *Women claim Islam: Creating Islamic feminism through literature*. Routledge.
- 44) Cortese, A. (2016). *Provocateur: Images of women and minorities in advertising* (4th ed.). Rowman and Littlefield.
- 45) Creswell, J. W., & Miller, G. A. (1997). Research methodologies and the doctoral process. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 1997(99), 33-46.

- 46) Dahlan, K. R. (2011). Between us and them: Deconstructing ideologies behind the portrayal of Saudi women in Canadian media (Master's thesis). University of Ottawa, Canada.
- 47) Darwaish, I. (2015). The media representation of Afghan women in post-Taliban Afghanistan: A content analysis of women's media in Afghanistan [Unpublished master's thesis].
- 48) Davaki, K. (2012). Gender equality policies in the USA. European Parliament.
- 49) Diem-Ville, G. (2001). A therapeutic perspective: The use of drawings in child psychoanalysis and social science. In T. van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of visual analysis* (pp. 119-133). Sage Publications.
- 50) Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- 51) Elyas, T., & AlJabri, A. S. (2020). Representations of Western newspapers on Saudi male's guardianship system & women's freedom to travel: A critical discourse analysis. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 7(3), 124-143.
- 52) Engineer, A. A. (2004). *The rights of women in Islam*. New Dawn Press.
- 53) Fahmy, S. (2004). Picturing Afghan women: A content analysis of AP wire photographs during the Taliban regime and after the fall of the Taliban regime. *International Communication Gazette*, 66(2), 91-112.
- 54) Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman.
- 55) Fan, J. (2006). Charles Morris's semiotic model and analytical studies of visual and verbal representations in technical communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 36(2), 121-139.
- 56) Freyer Stowasser, B. (2022). The status of women in early Islam. In *Routledge Library Editions: Women and Religion*. Taylor & Francis.
- 57) Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18, 373-393.
- 58) Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- 59) Global Media Monitoring Project. (2015). Who makes the news? Highlights. Available at: http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/highlights/highlights_en.pdf (03/03/2018)
- 60) Goldberg, M. (2013). Moral problems in Halacha: Women. Retrieved from <http://truetorah.blogspot.com/moral-problems-in-halacha-women-with.html>
- 61) Goldfeder, M. (2012). Defining equality in Judaism. Retrieved from <http://morethodoxy.org/defining-equality-in-judaism-by-rabbi-mark-goldfeder/>

- 62) Grewal, Z. (2014). *Islam is a foreign country: American Muslims and the global crisis of authority*. New York University Press.
- 63) Guta, H., & Karolak, M. (2015). Veiling and blogging: Social media as sites of identity negotiation and expression among Saudi women. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 16(2), 115-127.
- 64) Haddad, Y. Y., Smith, J. I., & Moore, K. M. (Eds.). (2006). *Muslim women in America: The challenge of Islamic identity today*. Oxford University Press.
- 65) Hall, E. (1964). Silent assumptions in social communication. *Disorders of Communication*, 42(1), 41-55.
- 66) Hall, E. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. Doubleday.
- 67) Halliday, M. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Edward Arnold.
- 68) Harrison, C. (2003). Visual social semiotics: Understanding how still images make meaning. *Technical Communication Journal*, 1(50), 2-10.
- 69) Haroun, Y. (2022). When women and men collaborate to translate the Qur'an: An 'interactive' approach. *Paralleles Journal*, 34(1).
- 70) Hartmann, H., Rose, S. J., & Lovell, V. (2006). How much progress in closing the long-term earnings gap? The declining significance of gender. In F. Blau, M. C. Brinton, & D. B. Grusky (Eds.), *The declining significance of gender* (pp. 125-155). Russell Sage Foundation.
- 71) Hassen, R. (2012). *English translations of the Qur'an by women: Different or derived* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick]. University of Warwick Repository.
- 72) Hassen, R. (2011). English translation of the Qur'an by women: The challenges of 'gender balance' in and through language. *MonTI. Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación*, 3, 211-230.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f6fc/52fe664e7919d4d96393bc87bc706811f12d.pdf>
- 73) Hausmann, R., & Tyson, L. (2012). *The global gender gap report*. World Economic Forum.
- 74) Hidayatullah, A. A. (2014). *Feminist edges of the Qur'an*. Oxford University Press.
- 75) Hietala, V. (1996). *The end: Esseitä elävän kuvan elämästä ja kuolemasta*. BTJ Kirjastopalvelu.
- 76) Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- 77) Hofstede, G. (1997). *Culture and organizations: Software of the mind*. McGraw-Hill.

- 78) Horowitz, J., & Igielnik, R. (2020). A century after women gained the right to vote, majority of Americans see work to do on gender equality: About three-in-ten men say women's gains have come at the expense of men. Pew Research Center.
- 79) Huang, J., Krivkovich, A., Starikova, I., Yee, L., & Zanoschi, D. (2019). Women in the workplace 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/women-in-the-workplace-2019>
- 80) Huntington, S. P. (2000). The clash of civilizations? In L. Crothers & C. Lockhart (Eds.), *Culture and politics: A reader* (pp. 99–118). Springer Publishing.
- 81) Hussain, M. (2020). *The majestic Qur'an: Guidance and good news for the mindful*. Invitation Publishing.
- 82) Iedema, R. (2003). Multimodality, resemiotization: Extending the analysis of discourse as a multisemiotic practice. *Visual Communication*, 2(1), 29–57.
- 83) Ibrahim, C. (2020). *Women and gender in the Qur'an*. Oxford University Press.
- 84) Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2003). The true clash of civilizations. *Foreign Policy*, 63–70.
- 85) Irvine, M. (2005). Media and semiotic theory – Key terms and concepts. Retrieved from <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/TheoryKeyTerms.html> [Accessed October 22nd 2011].
- 86) Isanović, A. (2006). Media discourse as a male: Gender representation in the daily newspaper of Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia & Serbia. In T. J. Nirman Moranjak Bamburac (Ed.), *Stereotyping: Representation of women in print media in South East Europe* (pp. 48-80). Media Center Sarajevo.
- 87) Ismail, N. B. (2017). The Qur'anic exegesis, reformism, and women in twentieth-century Indonesia. *Studia Islamika*, 24(3), 469-501. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v24i3.5187>
- 88) Jafri, G. (1998). The portrayal of Muslim women in Canadian mainstream media: A community-based analysis. Online Afghan Women's Organization. Retrieved January 19, 2012 from http://www.fmw.org/political_activities.htm.
- 89) Jewitt, C., & Oyama, R. (2001). Visual meaning: A social semiotic approach. In T. van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of visual analysis* (pp. 134-158). Sage.
- 90) Jewitt, C. (2014). Multimodal approaches. In S. Norris & C. Maier (Eds.), *Interactions, images and texts: A reader in multimodality* (pp. 127–136). De Gruyter.
- 91) Jewitt, C. (2009). *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis*. Routledge.
- 92) Kabir, N. (2007). Muslims in Australia: The double edge of terrorism. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(8), 1277–1297.
- 93) Kamali, M. H. (2002). *Freedom, equality and justice in Islam*. Ilmiah Publishers.

- 94) Karolak, M. (2013). Saudi Arabian women's rights and the Arab Spring uprisings: Contextualizing grassroots activism and state reforms. In M. S. Olimat (Ed.), *Arab women and Arab Spring* (pp. 134–145). Routledge.
- 95) Kidwai, A. R. (1978). Translating the untranslatable: A survey of English translations of the Qur'an. *Muslim World Book Review*, 7(4), 66-71.
<https://www.islamicstudies.info/Qur'an/translationssurvey.htm>
- 96) Kiwanuka, S. A., Parker, A., & Shitrit, L. B. (2023). Media representations of gendered minority practices: The case of polygamy in Israel. *Religions*, 14(2), 162.
- 97) Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Routledge.
- 98) Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- 99) Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. Arnold.
- 100) Kurtz, J. (1997). Dream girls: Women in advertising. *USA Today*, 125(2620), 70-80.
- 101) Lamrabet, A. (2018). *Women and men in the Qur'ān* (M. Salem-Murdock, Trans.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- 102) Lawrence, B. B. (2017). *The Qur'an in English*. Princeton University Press.
- 103) Lemish, D. (2004). Exclusion and marginality: Portrayals of women in Israeli media. In *Women and media: International perspectives* (pp. 39-59).
- 104) Lemke, J. (1990). *Talking science: Language, learning, and values*. Ablex.
- 105) Le Renard, A. (2014). *A society of young women: Opportunities of place, power, and reform in Saudi Arabia*. Stanford University Press.
- 106) Lindsay, J. E. (2005). *Daily life in the medieval Islamic world*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- 107) Machin, D. (2007). *Introduction to multimodal analysis*. Hodder Arnold Publication.
- 108) Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. Sage.
- 109) Maan, B., & McIntosh, A. (2000). The whole house of Islam, and we Christians with them: An interview with the 'Last Orientalist' the Rev Prof William Montgomery Watt. Retrieved from http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2000_watt.htm (accessed 2 September 2016).
- 110) Macionis, J. J. (1996). *Society: The basics*. Prentice-Hall.
- 111) Manatu, N. (2003). *African American women and sexuality in the cinema*. McFarland.

- 112) Matos, K., & Galinsky, E. (2011). *Workplace flexibility in the United States: A status report*. Families and Work Institute.
- 113) Meacham, T. (2021). Legal-religious status of the Jewish female. *Jewish Women Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/legal-religious-status-of-jewish-female>.
- 114) Miller, C. C. (2018). The number of female chief executives is falling. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/23/upshot/why-the-number-of-female-chief-executives-is-falling.html>.
- 115) Mishra, S. (2007). Liberation vs. purity: Representations of SW in the American press and American women in the Saudi press. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 18(3), 259–276.
- 116) Mirzoeff, N. (2011). The year's work in critical and cultural theory. 19(1), 286-296. doi:10.1093/ywcct/mbr013.
- 117) Moebius, W. (1986). Introduction to picturebooks codes. *Word and Image*, 2, 141–158.
- 118) Mohammed, Kh. (2005). Assessing English translations of the Qur'an. *Middle East Quarterly*, 12(2), 58-71.
- 119) Mojab, S. (2001). *Women of non-state nation, the Kurds*. Costa Mesa.
- 120) Moriarty, S. (1995). Visual semiotics and the production of meaning in advertising. Retrieved from <http://spot.colorado.edu/~moriarts/vissemiotics.html> (accessed October 23rd 2011).
- 121) Moshe, M., & Aharoni, M. (2020). The silent women: The representation of Israeli female soldiers in Israeli women's films. *Journal of Screenwriting*, 11(1).
- 122) Murtuza, A. (2004). Muhtasib's role: Safeguarding the public interest during the Islamic Middle Ages. *American Accounting Association 2004 Mid-Atlantic Region Meeting Paper*. Retrieved from SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=488882>.
- 123) National Partnership for Women and Families. (2022). 2010 statistics: Record high employment discrimination claims. Washington, DC: National Partnership for Women and Families.
- 124) Ndlovu, M. W. (2015). What is the state of South African journalism? *African Journalism Studies*, 36(3), 114-138.
- 125) Nicolau, I. (2014). Women's rights in Islam. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 6(1), 711–720.
- 126) Nodelman, P. (1988). *Words about pictures: The narrative art of children's picturebooks*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

- 127) Payandeh, H. (2006). *A critical review of TV commercials*. Tehran: Rooz Negar publication.
- 128) Perry, I. (2003). Who (se) am I? The identity and image of women in hip-hop. In G. Dines & J. Humez (Eds.), *Gender, race, and class in media: A text-reader* (2nd ed., pp. 136–148). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 129) Price, D. (2015). Surveyors and surveyed: Photography out and about. In L. Wells (Ed.), *Photography: A critical introduction* (5th ed., pp. 75-133). London: Routledge.
- 130) Quamar, M. M. (2013). Education as a ladder for Saudi women: An overview. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 3(2), 265–277. DOI: 10.1080/21534764.2013.863680.
- 131) Rafiabadi, H. N. (Ed.). (2003). *World religion and Islam: A critical study*. Sarup and Sons.
- 132) Reichert, E. (2011). Women and the human rights framework. In T. M. Range (Ed.), *Handbook of international social work: Human rights, development, and the global profession*.
- 133) Rahbani, L. N. (2010). Women in Arab media: Present but not heard. Paper presented at the Stanford University - California for Media Conference, February 16, 2010, 1-28.
- 134) Ridgeway, C. L., & Smith-Lovin, L. (1999). Gender system and interaction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25, 191-216.
- 135) Rizvi, A. A. (2012). Misogyny in the Middle East: The real elephant in the room. Retrieved April 19, 2019, from Huffington Post website: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/ali-a-rizvi/islam-women_b_1466571.html
- 136) Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- 137) Ross, K., & Byerly, C. (Eds.). (2004). *Women and media: International perspectives*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications.
- 138) Rostami, E. P. (2005). Women in Afghanistan: Passive victims of the burqa or active social participants? *Development in Practice*, 13(2-3), 266-277.
- 139) Royce, T. D. (2007). Intersemiotic complementarity: A framework for multimodal discourse analysis. In T. D. Royce & W. L. Bowcher (Eds.), *New directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse* (pp. 63–110). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- 140) Ruud, H. H. T., & Gerberg, A. K. (2011). Women in the media: An analysis of news makers in print media in Kenya and Uganda. Nairobi.
- 141) Said, E. W. (1997). *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. New York: Pantheon.

- 142) Saifee, A. R., Baloach, A. G., Sultan, S., & Khalid, I. (2012). Status, identity, and privileges of women in Islam. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 30(1), 146-154.
- 143) Sakr, N. (2004). *Women and media in the Middle East: Power through self-expression*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- 144) Savir, A., & Jasion, J. (2004). *Tahririh in history: Perspectives on Qurratu'l-'Ayn from East and West*. Los Angeles, CA: Kalimat Press.
- 145) Sayeed, A. (2013). *Women and the transmission of religious knowledge in Islam*. Cambridge University Press.
- 146) Serafini, F. (2012). Expanding the four resources model: Reading visual and multi-modal texts. *Pedagogies*, 7(2), 150–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2012.656347>
- 147) Serafini, F., Kachorsky, D., & Goff, M. (2015). Representing reading: An analysis of professional development book covers. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education*, 11(1), 94–115.
- 148) Sebeok, T. A. (2001). *Signs: An introduction to semiotics* (2nd ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- 149) Schocker, J. B., & Woyshner, C. (2013). Representing African American women in U.S. history textbooks. *The Social Studies*, 104(1), 23-31.
- 150) Sharawi, H. (2017). *Women between submission and freedom: An interpretation of social and political misogyny*. Cham: Springer.
- 151) Sharif, F., & Kamali, M. (2017). Intersemiotic study of the linguistic and non-linguistic signifiers in cinematic posters. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 15(1), 238-253.
- 152) Siddiqi, M. Z. (1993). *Hadith literature: Its origin, development and special features*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society.
- 153) Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (1991). Race, class, gender, and disability in current textbooks. In M. W. Apple & L. K. Christian-Smith (Eds.), *The politics of the textbook*. New York: Routledge.
- 154) Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. Oxford University Press.
- 155) Stoian, C. (2015). *The discourse of tourism and national heritage: A contrastive study from a cultural perspective*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- 156) Tahririan, M. H., & Sadri, E. (2013). Analysis of images in Iranian high school EFL course books. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16(2), 138–160.
- 157) Tidhar, C. E., & Lemish, D. (1993). *Women in the Intifada: A television news*

- perspective. In G. Tuchman, A. K. Daniels, & J. Benet (Eds.), *Framing the Intifada: People and media* (pp. 142-159). New York: Oxford University Press.
- 158) Tuchman, G. (1978). Introduction: The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media. In G. Tuchman, A. K. Daniels, & J. Benet (Eds.), *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 159) United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). (2006). *Promoting gender equality in new aid modalities and partnerships*. New York: UNIFEM.
- 160) Unsworth, L. (2008). Multiliteracies and metalanguage: Describing image/text relations as a resource for negotiating multimodal texts. In D. L. D. Corio, M. Knobel, & C. Lankshear (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 377-405). New Jersey: Erlbaum.
- 161) Unsworth, L., & Wheeler, J. (2002). Re-valuing the role of images in reviewing picture books. *Reading: Language and Literacy*, 36(2), 68–74.
- 162) Van Leeuwen, T. (2015). Multimodality. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 447-465.
- 163) Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 164) Van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Introducing social semiotics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- 165) Virani, S. N. (2007). *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A history of survival, a search for salvation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 166) Wadud, A. (1999). *Qur'an and woman: Rereading the sacred text from a woman's perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- 167) Waldmeir, J. (2018). *In-between identities: Signs of Islam in contemporary American writing*. Leiden: Boston.
- 168) Waugh, L., Catalano, T., Al Masaeed, K., Hong Do, T., & Renigar, P. (2015). Critical discourse analysis: Definition, approaches, relation to pragmatics, critique, and trends. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Pragmatics, Culture and Society*, 71–135. doi: 10.1007/978-3-31912616-6_4.
- 169) Weimann, G. (2000). Women and men in television advertisements in Israel. *Megamot*, 40(3), 466–485.
- 170) White House. (2011). *Fact sheet: Closing the gender pay gap*. Washington, DC: White House.
- 171) Williams, Jr., R. M. (1970). *American society: A sociological interpretation* (3rd ed.).

New York: Knopf.

- 172) Wong, M. (2019). *Multimodal communication: A social semiotic approach to text and image in print and digital media*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 173) Wood, J. (1999). *Communication, gender and culture* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth.
- 174) Wu, S. (2014). A multimodal analysis of image-text relations in picture books. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(7), 1415-1420. doi:10.4304/tpls.4.7.1415-1420.
- 175) Verschueren, P. (2012). *Picturing Afghanistan: The photography of foreign conflict*. New York: Hampton Press.

Appendix: Qur'anic Verse Index

Surah Name	Surah Number	Verse Number(s)
Al-Baqarah	2	102, 221, 228, 229, 233
An-Nisa	4	15, 19, 24, 25
Al-Ma'idah	5	38, 72
Al-Hijr	15	71
An-Nahl	16	57, 58
Maryam	19	6
Taha	20	117
Al-Anbiya	21	5, 6
An-Nur	24	31
Al-Ahzab	33	28, 35, 59
Ar-Rahman	55	4, 6
At-Talaq	65	1, 2
At-Tahrim	66	1, 3, 5

Appendices

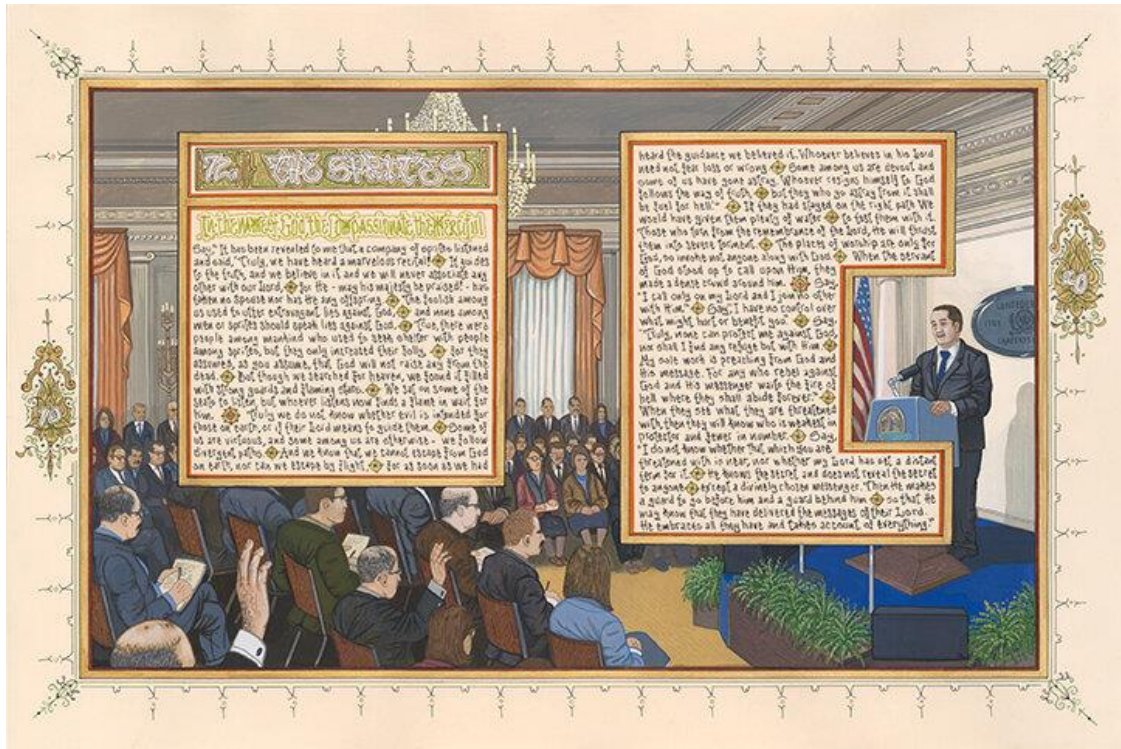
Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3



Appendix 4

