Rosa Marvell (2013)

Disrupting Dis/Honour: Thinking Through Cultural Homicide and Global Femicide in 'Honour Related Violence'

This paper argues we should provide a space for more complex dialectics to be heard. An alternative approach is illustrated through a debate from e-zine *Jadaliyya*, presenting “heightened awareness of... inequalities embedded in the interlocking systems of race and class... underpinned by religion, gender and location” (Gill and Rehman 2004:77). Whilst the specificities of this Palestinian case study should not provide a new paradigmatic model, it is the existence of more nuanced debates that are revealed through

The culturalist approach looks for perceived motives, based on “a paradigmatic example...

Particular understandings of sexualised behaviour are integral for culturalists, in which control of sexual conduct is thought utmost. Othered men are imagined to be self-declared possessors of women's virginity/virtuousness, in which “the woman is guarded externally by her behaviour and dress code and internally by keeping her hymen intact” (Ruggi 1998:13). Kressel's argument is emblematic of simplistic understandings so often relied on: “in Arab Muslim culture, the honour of the patrilineal group is bound up with the sex organs of its daughters” (Kressel 1981:142). Exteriorising and inscribing these sexual 'norms' is mirrored in British journalism. *The Express* argued 27-year-old Surjit Athwal – “vivacious, westernised, modern” - was killed as her family “did not approve of her ... affair with a married man”, andT ulay R-03 ( ) 247.0.12 384. 0 0.12 4(h) 0.1 (s) -5.4 ( )

he( ) -96.2 ((R) 10.2(o) 3.3 (m) -0.5 ve) 3.3 ad JTulit ma” Daily (p) -1.1 (ve) 3.3 (s) -5.4 (s) -5.4 ( ) -

at first sets alarm bells ringing, another voice in the cacophony that blames 'culture'. However , Kurkiala's assertion arose following conversations with young Kurdish women with personal experience.

cultures'... irrational communities... archaic patriarchal practice" (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:60, Chakravarti cited in Hossain and Welch 3005:9).The solution for universal-feminists

how, and from where, such 'universal' values emerge. They may be viewed as emanating from a specific post-Enlightenment European outlook, or the 'West' acting as the international community, which can spur a backlash, further endangering women. For example, Dr. Abdul Arabiyyat, the head of the *Islamic Action Front* in Jordan argued the HR debate "was instigated by Western countries trying to superimpose their values and norms on Jordanian society. Many... are united on this issue, perceiving it to be a symptom of 'Westoxication'" (Faqir 2001:76). Whilst troubling, it must be taken on board that some do hold this view: talk of 'universal' values for some may be intensely complicated. Additionally, universalising of rights by "transnational feminist

brother and father, based on a true story of a woman from *DAM*'s home town. She comes back to life in a forest, back into a car, unpacking a suitcase, hiding plane tickets. Rewinding further, male relatives recite the fatiha – the ceremony before marriage – her nose is punched, she screams no, her mother tells her she's marrying her cousin. It ends with her birth, "Congratulations, it's a girl. The beginning", and the words *al-huriyya untha*: 'freedom for my sisters' (Khader 2012:1). *DAM*'s Tamer Nafar said they made the song because "it keeps happening to girls we know... we write for the victim... I don't care how others use it, its not for them" (Nesheiwat 2012:1). Ownership was key for *DAM;* for Nafar, "as an artist, my role is to talk about it, do workshops, and do it with women... I want to believe I have the power to change it" (Nesheiwat 2012:1).

However, Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi felt the song "operates in a total political, legal and historical vacuum", part of "an international anti-politics machine that blames only tradition" at odds with *DAM*'s normally "thrilling political voice... sharp, angry, born of experience" (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012:1). Perceiving *DAM*'s representation as ignoring economics, politics and military occupation they felt it was simplistic and "racialised and ethnicised Arabs as one of liberalism's "others"" (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012:1). The authors were left with "the caricature of angry men, patriarchal culture and innocent female victims" (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012:1). Additionally, they argue the song suggested women merely need 'saving', voyeuristically displaying honour victims. Thickness was desired: Palestinian women who "struggle with family, join political unions... negotiate harassment" instead of stereotypes (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012:1). For Abu-Lughod, this built on previous research: the case of a 16-year-old girl from Ramallah, where Palestinian police, aware of threats to her life, "were held by Israeli soldiers for hours at an Israeli military checkpoint... [and] were not able to reach her house in time to try and save her life due to movement restrictions" (Abu-Lughod 2011:41-2). Some commenters immediately took umbrage. *Laurel* argued "Palestinian women *are* agentive... *do*

(Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012:1).

DAM responded a month later , and the attack on their integrity enflamed them. Riled at being thought of as politically and intellectually naïve, they emphasised they do not “act for America or Israel” and instead “document the struggles of our generation in the

and reified culture blamed. However, Kurkiala pointed towards how we must reflect upon culture to understand inequalities without being culturally relativist.

Secondly, the universalist repost to culturalism was unpacked, where a shift to a global feminist lens potentially obscures women's personal, specific experience. The same with 'honour': whilst we must disregard its legitimacy as justification, women may use personal conceptualisations to negotiate their daily lives. Whilst the universalist approach expressed a valid fear of a “neo-colonialist or orientalist trap”, replacing any cultural notions with 'universal' values proved problematic; they may be seen as inflammatory rather than neutral (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:64).

The *DAM* debate provided an alternative: a single platform for multivarious contesting opinions to come together in the fight against HR. This clearly showed how the debate is much more complex and contested, belying a simplistic analysis. *DAM*, fans and authors disregarded fears of interpretation for public debate. Bloggers and commenters shared their experiences, revealing a schema of inequality more complex than solely culture or gender. Rather than searching for new paradigmatic examples, these kind of debates must be given centre stage. We must be mindful “of the tangled web of social, cultural, structural, situational and inter-

[www .jadaliyya.com/pages/index/8578/tradition-and-the-anti-politics-machine_dam- seduce accessed on 10th April 2013 4.26pm]

! 2012a *Honouring Solidarity During Contentious Debates... A Letter to DAM from Lila Abu-Lughod and Maya Mikdashi*

Do"an, Recep 2011 *Is Honour Killing a "Muslim Phenomenon"?: Textual Interpretations and Cultural Representations* Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs 31(3) 423

Faqir, Fadia 2001 *Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan* Thurd World Quarterly 22(1)

Fluer-Lobban, Carolyn 1995 *Cultural Relativism and Universal Rights* The Chronicle of Higher Education June 9

Gill, Aisha and Gulshun Rehman 2004 *Empowerment Through Activism: Responding to Domestic Violence in the South Asian Community in London* Gender and Development 12(1)

Hartley

Germany Ethnic and Racial Studies 32(2)

Kressel, Gideon 1981 *Sororicide/Filiacide: Homicide for Family Honour* Current Anthropology 22(2)

Kurkiala, Mikael 2003 *Interpreting Honour Killings: The Story of Fadime Sahindal (1975-2002) in the Swedish Press* AnthropologyT oday 19(1)

Mahmoud, Houzan 2007 *What Honour In Killing?* New Statesman Online 21 December 2007 [http://www .newstatesman.com/international-politics/2007/12/women-rights- iraqi-honour accessed on 9 May 2013 1.03pm]

Meetoo, V eena and Heidi Safia Mirza 2007 *'There is Nothing 'Honourable' About Honour Killings': Gender , Violence and the Limits of Multiculturalism* Women's Studies International Forum 30(3) 187-200

Mojab, Shahrzad 1998 *"Muslim" Women and "Western" Feminists: The Debate on*

O'Hanlon, Rosalind 1988 *Recovering The Subject:* Subaltern Studies *and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia* Modern Asian Studies 22(1)

Phillips, Anne and Sawitri Saharso 2008

Official United Nations Online 4 March 2010 [http://www .un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33971#.UYt3nYKUE7A accessed 9 May 2013 1.41am]