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

"In reality women and their interests counted little. Rather, they had become the battlefield and the booty of the harsh and sometimes bloody struggle"

(Hoodfar 1997:258-9)

"This debate cannot even begin if it is limited to or confined to issues related to women's position in society but has to examine wider issues related to social justice"

(Faqir 2001:78)

Whilst debate on so-called 'honour crimes' has become prominent within Western and Northern Europe in the last decade, there is poverty in much of the available literature. Broadly understanding is in two camps; cultural relativism and universal-feminism. There are few voices that recognise "the culturalist position invokes culture as a way of understanding the perpetrators and potential perpetrators" while "the 'universalist' view denies the role of culture... *both perspectives ignore... internal conflicts*" (Hellgren and Hobson 2007:396 emphasis mine). This dichotomous dominant discourse is so restrictive that alternative voices are silenced, reducing possible avenues for combatting 'honour-related violence' (HRV) against women[1]. This paper unpacks each approach from Euro-American journals and Western European newspapers, focussing on cases from Britain, Holland, Sweden and Germany as well as broader Eurocentric lenses. This body of literature forms the dominant discourse. Half seek to exteriorise and Other murders through a orientalist denigration of culture. These culturalists deem violence 'honour-related' when it occurs in, or perpetrators and victims are perceived to descend from, the "patriarchal belt": stretching "from North Africa across the Middle East... to South and East Asia" and thought to be "characterised by kin-based patrilineal extended families, [and] male domination" (Ofenhauer 2005:10). A second body of authors realised the dangers of coupling violence and 'culture'. These – universalists – re-characterised 'honour' crimes as part of a global schema of patriarchal violence, denying other factors.

1 Overwhelmingly victims are female and perpetrators male, although female relatives may facilitate or encourage the murder: "in general heterosexual men face no or less severe consequences" (Siddiqui 2005:264).

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 foregrounding it.[2]

'Honour' is a hugely contentious term: not only is vocabulary of the criminal used, but some argue that it condones actions. Whilst only theoretical gains may be made by merely renaming the crime, it nevertheless remains important to be aware of criticism, as much of it is well founded. Problems exist when reproducing the term, even in quotation marks.

International organisations played their part. Over a decade ago, the U.N. General Assembly discussed "crimes committed in the name of honour", and Amnesty International produced a fact sheet on "honour crimes" where "women's bodies are considered... repositories of family honour" (Abu-Lughod 201:17,19). Rather than suggesting violence had not been discussed in this way before, this highlights how ontology entered the international sphere, partly from "the 'West'... representing itself as the 'international community'" (Hossain and Welch 2005:14). Use of the term from this position "emerged... to become a popular international cause for feminists and progressive men" (Abu-Lughod 2012:1). However, complex understanding was absent from many that took up the *cause célèbre*. We must "publicise and work against violence against women... without being complicit in other serious forms and institutions of harm" (Abu-Lughod 201:53).

The Dangers of Reducing HBV to 'Culture'

2 Whilst this paper argues for a places for such voices, it remains aware of the epistemological problems of presenting and analysing demotic experience, see O'Hanlon 1988 *Recovering The Subject*, or Spivak 1988 *Can The Subaltern Speak?*.

The culturalist approach looks for perceived motives, based on “a paradigmatic example... the killing of a woman by her father or brother for engaging in, or being suspected of engaging in, sexual practices before or outside marriage” (Abu-Odeh cited in Hossain and Welch 2005:5). Cultural explanations – such as British activist and journalist Joan Smith's – are dangerous: that “when such families move... to countries such as Germany and the U.K.... they bring their traditional codes of behaviour with them” (Smith 2008:10). This is emblematic of the culturalist approach within Europe: Egyptian-Dutch feminist Nahed Salim argued “the largest segment of Muslim youth in the Netherlands receives a traditional education from their illiterate, ignorant parents that combines the worst of Islam... with the traditions from the oppressed and underdeveloped regions of the world” (cited in Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009:225). There are two fatal efects. Firstly 'tradition' is accepted, reified and made inescapable. Secondly forceful orientalist prejudices permeate, imbuing Others with values antithetical – and beneath – those of the authors. In this ethnocentric outlook, “the honour crime seems to function as a comforting phantasm that empowers the West and those who identify with it” (Abu-Lughod 201:36).

Although Gideon Kressel's approach is now outdated, this Tylorian understanding of culture as bounded and homogenous underpins culturalist approaches. Whilst not based in Europe, its publication in *Current Anthropology* in 1981 when 'honour killing' was yet to be a known term, as well as Kressel's Eurocentric lens, makes its inclusion as a voice in the culturalist approach important. Following research with the Bedouin, Kressel announced: “intrafamily homicide for family honour, like honour itself, is culturally shaped... follows normative orders and reflects the patterns of cultures as wholes” (Kressel 1981:144). This is enormously oppressive: as cultures become solidified and melded with notions of honour, actors are re-orientalised. Rigid culturalism (such as Kressel's) pay no attention to how the reality may be “wide-ranging, dynamic, multi-stranded” (Baxter cited in Abu-Lughod 201:22).

One example is his interpretation of the murder of Salwa, a 13-year-old Bedouin girl from rural Israel. Her brother saw her holding hands with a boy and she was found drowned

after running away and going to the police. Kressel's analysis rested on his characterisation of influential feudal sheikhs and secretive families, but particularly “the precepts of Islam”, suggesting that as Salwa was still a virgin, the 'appropriate cultural reaction' would be to “cut the tendon of her right foot” (Kressel 1981:148). In this, Kressel relies on a fallacy that murders can be understood “because of the peculiarities of Arab Muslim culture” - a culture that Kressel himself had reified (Kressel 1981:151). This piece did not evade criticism at the time and comments after the article, from five anthropologists, found many faults with his writing style and data. However, none of the responses criticised the idea that 'honour' is a culturally-derived motivation for certain murders. One, Joseph Ginat, even said such murders “cannot be compared” as “sororicide/filiacide for reasons of family honour” is “special” (Kressel 1981:153). Explanations of this kind are evident in the British press 30 years on, for example coverage of Banaz Mahmod, killed in 2007 in Surrey on the behest of her father and uncle. *The Express* and *The Mail* unquestioningly stated “Banaz had shamed the family honour by falling in love with the wrong man”, leaving her violently abusive husband “would have brought dishonour on the Mahmod family... [who] apparently preferred their child to suffer abuse rather than be shamed” and her father “lost status in the community because he was seen to have failed to control his women” (Buchanan 2007:1, Barton 2007:1). Evidently, neither these journalists nor Kressel condone murder, but the problem lies in their uncritical linking of honour, culture and violence; 'their' problem due to 'their' culture. Social evolutionism is additionally hindering; not only do those such as Joan Smith interpret 'honour' as 'traditional' but “an early form of social organisation, incompatible with modern notions of individual freedom and universal human rights” (Smith 2008:16-7). Other comparisons have been made, that “honour killings... of women for deviation from sexual norms imposed by society” is “comparable to the emphasis on the chastity of wives in Victorian morality” (Faqir 2001:69). This relegates contemporary inequalities to a primordial past, expunging it from the 'modernised' global north, and inscribing it onto Othered actors. This neo-orientalism, in the words of Homa Hoodfar, is the “mechanism by which Western dominant culture re-creates and perpetuates beliefs about their superiority” (Hoodfar 1997:250).

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 ... afair with a married man”, and Tulay Goren's fate was “doomed” because of her “Romeo and Juliet romance” (Daily Express 2007:1, 2009:1). *The Mail* quoted a father who had killed his three daughters apparently for having boyfriends as saying “may the devil... (defecate) on their graves... Is this what a daughter should be? Would (a daughter) be such a whore?” (Hartley-Parkinson and Duell 201:1). Clearly such words are repellent, but the text is bold and larger than the rest of the article, describing Mr Shafir as Muslim, subtly but dangerously bolstering a link between culture, sexual control and male honour. This gives little space to the notion that similar criticisms apply to the author's society as well. It also reproduces simplistic binary gendering, pitting violent male aggressors against women that kowtow or are killed. As Abu-Lughod elaborated, “to reduce morality to male coercion relies on far too simple a conception of either power, or social and psychic life” (Abu-Lughod 201:21). Furthermore, the constant sexualised framing of HRV becomes an “erotic charge”, full of “fantasy and seduction... for Western audiences”, reminiscent of Said's stereotype that “the Orient still seems to suggest... sexual promise (and threat)” (Abu-Lughod 201:29, Said 1979:188). The double bind of orientalist takes on culture and sexual norms proves a toxic mix.

In ethnocentric culturalism, “the young women are constructed as either romantic heroine, struggling for the benefits of the 'West' against her cruel and inhuman father and family or victim[3], succumbing to her backward and traditional 'Eastern' culture” (Meetoo and Mirza

3 Use of the term victim does not connote women are passive or lack agency, but are the persons to whom the crime is directed

2007:195). Many Europeans feminists have taken up a similar fight for themselves through organisations like *Ni Poutes Ni Soumises* (Neither Whores nor Submissives). The same is not aforded to women imbricated in honour-related violence, for example how *The Express* described Shafilea Ahmed was killed because “she had enjoyed wearing Western fashions and was opposed to an arranged marriage”, reproducing the simplistic idea that such women are 'caught between two cultures' (Daily Express 2012:1).

In analysis of Dutch and German honour killing news coverage, sociologists Korteweg and Yurdakul illuminated efects that culturalism has. They discuss how in Western Europe, it produces 'bright' boundaries creating “a sense of 'they are not like us because...'” (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009:218-9). This, they argue, is epitomised in HBV debates: the acts are portrayed as extreme examples of diference. Despite looking at German and Dutch papers of varied politics, all ethnicised and traditionalised honour killing: “ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender” were seen as deciding – and diferentiating - factors (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009:221). Other authors found this also to be the case in Sweden: honour killings were “pressure points”, “crucial sites for defining what is Swedish” (Hellgren and Hobson 2008:385-6). Culturalist approaches become “windows of opportunities for xenophobic actors and political parties” (Hellgren and Hobson 2008:387). Gupta suggested this might be made possible because although “all domestic murders of women take place within a “cultural” context... culture is a prism through which we view only the actions of minorities” (Gupta 2003:1).

The case of Fadime Ṣahindal is one of the most notorious 'honour' killings in Europe. Fadime was a Kurdish-Swedish woman, who left home when her father disapproved of her Swedish boyfriend. She became a public activist, speaking at events and even the Swedish parliament about HBV. At 26, following several years of campaigning, during her masters, her father shot her in the family home. Following her death, Swedish anthropologist Kurkiala argued that there were two national reactions, one that the father was crazy, and another that there was a “universal patriarchal structure that oppresses women worldwide” (see below) (Kurkiala 2003:6). Kurkiala demurred, arguing that honour killings can be understood as “culturally motivated and sanctioned” (Kurkiala 2003:6). This

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. This proves dificult ground: Kurkiala's “frustration at the unwillingness of so many opinion makers to take the testimonies of these women seriously” is well founded – these women must be listened to (Kurkiala 2003:7). The silencing of women following Fadime's murder was acknowledged by Hellgren and Hobson: “mostly immigrant men were invited to speak for ethnic organisations” and “Swedish feminists were contacted to speak as experts on the gendered dimensions” (Hellgren and Hobson 2008:394). Kurkiala is right in arguing that entirely denying culture “disqualifies Fadime's own analysis of her situation” (Kurkiala 2003:7). However, problems arise when such words are taken out of women's mouths and co-opted, allowing for racist, xenophobic or Othering discourses to dominate over and above the voices of these women. Whilst “the public airing of [HV] can be empowering” at the same time this can “pave the way for intolerance toward immigrant groups and ethnic minorities” (Hellgren and Hobson 2007:400). Although cultural factors do exist, they are not totalised or non-fluctuating: Remziye, a young Turkish-Kurdish woman running from family threats to Austria told a journalist “when there's money all our customs go out the window. When there's money, no-one wants to kill the girl” (Onal 2008:45).

Cultural relativism has “contributed to making it intellectually and politically contentious to talk intelligently about diferences that... tangibly afect people's lives” (Kurkiala 2003:7). However, we must not have a “diagnosis of gender violence that attributes it to timeless cultures” (Abu-Lughod 201:50-1). Very real struggles that women go through must be recognised: to make these operate under erasure would be foolish and just as restrictive, as will become clear in the following section.

“We sometimes hear such practices are a matter of culture... they are not”

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon (U.N. 2010:1)

The Problems With Universal-Feminist Interpretations

Antithetical to culturalism is the universal feminist viewpoint. It argues crimes should be seen as one part of global patriarchal domination because "the emphasis on honour killing can lead to a failure to appreciate the extent to which domestic violence is a problem against *all* women" (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009:235). Responding to the short-fallings of culturalist explanations, universalists "rejected using cultural relativism... believ[ing] that such violence cannot be excused or justified on cultural grounds" (Fluer-Lobban 1995:33-4). This negates factors beyond gendered inequality seeing crimes as universalised violations of women's rights. The helping or hindering efect of decoupling gendered violence from culture must be considered.

Shahrzad Mojab, of Toronto's gender studies faculty embodies this approach, arguing "particularists are damaging the cause of women's emancipation... in the guise of respect for other cultures, they... inescapably endorse the suppression of women's demands" (Mojab 1998:19-20). So it would follow, by naming violence 'honour-based', it cannot be confronted due being culturally signposted. Although the universalist approach acknowledges honour killings are real "in *effect*, in that women are brutally murdered", they argue 'honour' is created by a culturalist rubric (Meetoo and Mirza 2007:195). Marking diference distresses universalists, where, for example "the imagined Muslim woman is so unique that she cannot share anything – demands, rights, politics, ideals – with Western women" (Mojab 1998:20). Instead, they argue for transnational equality and undiferentiated support. Whilst international solidarity between feminists can be powerful, universalists may be obscuring certain dificulties. Remziye, the Turkish-Kurdish girl who ran away from her family to Austria, told a journalist: "you might not want to kill someone who carries your blood, who's a part of your life, but because you're pressured by the elders and our customs... there's actually a lot of guilt in all this" (Onal 2008:46). There is a danger that a universal outlook may disregard personal interpretations such as Remziye's.

Mojab, among others, argues the "culture of patriarchal violence is... universal" and dividing cultures into "violent and violence-free is itself a patriarchal myth", compounding Chakravarti's fear that "violence becomes associated with the 'uniqueness of Asian

cultures'... irrational communities... archaic patriarchal practice" (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:60, Chakravarti cited in Hossain and Welch 3005:9). The solution for universal-feminists is "a human rights approach... which transcends the cultural context... highlights patterns of domestic violence across all cultures" (Meetoo and Mirza 2007:188). This approach provided Mojab with an alternative understanding of Fadime's murder from Kurkiala. Whilst Fadime herself talked about her oppression as a Kurdish-Swedish woman, Mojab cited others, such as a male Kurdish student "emphasising that Kurdish culture as such does not sanction and legitimate honour killings" (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:59). Rightly, Mojab and Hassanpour argue by reducing violence against women *only* to a cultural trait allows "this regime of male brutality to reproduce itself" (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:61). Similarly *Guardian* journalist Huma Qureshi – following the murders of Banaz Mahmod and Nosheem Azam – stated "terming... victimisation "honour crime" skews the focus, turning what is a heinous crime into a cultural judgement" (Qureshi 2012:1). Such a move is a reputable attempt "to avoid the neocolonialist or Orientalist trap" which renders others "backward, ignorant, illiterate, over-oppressed and passive", at the expense of women (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:64). However, approaching the subject with the notion that "patriarchies form a universal regime" and feminist movements are "international" requires a certain self-identification of women (Mojab and Hassanpour 2003:65-6). Migrant association *Türkische Bund Berlin-Brandenberg* embodied this shift, arguing combatting HRV in Germany "is not a matter of German or Turkish values. It is about universal human rights" (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009:233). Yet specific localised expressions of physical and symbolic violence against women prevail, and the intersection of these with global feminism may prove problematic.

While writing on veiling rather than HRV, Homa Hoodfar's warning remains apt: by "failing to adequately contextualise non-Western societies, many researchers simply assume that what is good for Western middle-class women should be good for all women" (Hoodfar 1997:249). Is it right to present particular conceptions of "feminism and women's rights as though [these] political ideas, life expectations and experiences were universally applicable"? (Hoodfar 1997:267). Some universalist-feminist activists are so concerned with patriarchy's global manifestation they become blind to issues on the ground. There is little thought of

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 HRV 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 coalitions" may undermine grassroots organisations with more nuanced and personal rights desires (Meetoo and Mirza 2007:196).

The term 'honour' is particularly problematic for this discourse: by naming killings under this guise, "the principle effect may be to demonise minority cultural groups rather than improve the condition of women within them" (Phillips and Saharso 2008:295). Some prefer the term 'femicide'; the "misogynous killing of women by men... a form of sexual violence" (Radford 1992:3 cited in Hossain and Welch 2005:7). It is right to denounce 'honour' as valid motivation for a crime, but to completely disregard the notion is problematic. Abu-Lughod's fieldwork with the Egyptian Awlad 'Ali Bedouin found that the women expressed themselves as "moral beings" with their "own initiative" about 'honour' (Abu-Lughod 2011:25). The young women she lived with complained of "unfair restrictions and suspicions to which they were subjected by brothers or cousins" (Abu-Lughod 2011:20). Although they resisted these impediments, they "defended themselves not by saying they had the right to do whatever they wanted but by asserting their own modesty and morality" (Abu-Lughod 2011:20). At the same time, not all will accept honour-derived meanings. Nazimiye, a German female Muslim activist described a gathering that she attended with women with experience of HRV, who all rejected 'honour' and shared the same desire - "violence against us women has to stop", built on belief in "universal" human rights of "freedom and the right to self-determination" (cited in Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009:226-7). At this point it is clear how problematic the dominant discourse is, rendering these two equally legitimate self-expressions mutually exclusive.

"In the 21st Century No Woman Should Be Treated Like An Unchained Slave – it's time to turn this world upside down"

(Mahmoud 2007:1)

Providing A Platform For More Nuanced Debates

The dangers of having only a culturalist or universalist explanation has been illustrated above. New approaches must have "a culturalist analysis without falling into a cultural reductionist trap" whilst at the same time understanding HV as part of the "continuum of patriarchal domination" (Akinpinar 2003:426-7). To illustrate, this paper uses a debate from *Jadaliyya*.

Jadaliyya – 'dialectic' in Arabic – is an Arabic-English Middle-East-focussed e-zine, set up by academics who felt "good knowledge was being hoarded in journals that are largely inaccessible to the general public" (Muller and Kholeif 2012:1). Emerging alongside the Arab Spring, and due to its online, fast-publishing nature, it proved a vital interface of debate. Contributors combine academic rigour, local knowledge and activism, publishing peer-reviewed articles – open for public comment – daily. One debate, appearing in English and Arabic, represents the benefits of providing a space to talk outside the culturalist/universalist dichotomy. On November 23 2012, anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod and her PHD student Maya Mikdashi wrote an open letter to the Palestinian activist hip-hop group *DAM* following the release of their single *If I Could Go Back In Time*. Funded by *UN Women*, the song was aimed to "confront domestic violence in a way that empowers... by reclaiming the gaze away from Western audiences" and "circulated as a statement in the ongoing debate on honour crimes" (Nesheiwat 2012:1, Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012a:1).

DAM rap about poverty, occupation and women's rights, conveying political messages through the "global music of dissenting youth" (Khader 2012:1). They organise workshops in Palestine and Britain and spoke at the *Sundance* festival: global voices in the fight against inequality. The song relays in reverse chronology the murder of a women by her

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 T amer 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 201:41-2). Some commenters immediately took umbrage. *Laurel* argued “Palestinian women *are* agentive... *do* resist... patriarchy and occupation but they also sufer, capitulate to patriarchal pressure and, like the girl's mother in the video, sell their daughters of. Sometimes, they (gasp!) might do both at diferent times... Human nature is complex and this is exactly the kind of thick description that the authors requested in the first place”

(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 services of our communities” (Nafar *et al* 2012:1). This was a testimonial to women whose families murdered them, a broader issue not confined to one aspect: “fighting the Occupation and fighting sexism and patriarchy is... one fight” (Nafar *et al* 2012:1). They were ired at the accusation that women were absent, pointing out the singer of the chorus, Amal Murkus, is a prominent Palestinian activist. In a separate interview, Nafar said they “are getting amazing responses from women... stopping us in the streets and saying 'it's about time'” (Nesheiwat 2012:1).

This commands we take on board economic and political inequalities that Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi argue for, but also listen to the “close and engaged” view of actors such as *DAM* (Nafar *et al* 2012:1). Combining the two makes it harder to “co-op and manipulate these messages” (Nafar *et al* 2012:1). Such debate does not seek to 'save' women from their 'culture', as the culturalist approach may do, and it does not obscure very real dificulties, which the universalist approach may do. For *DAM* this is also a question of rejecting paranoia; they feel that the attack on their work was fearful of negative portrayals of Palestine, of Arabs, or Muslims, whilst they “dispense with concerns over how we may be read” (Nafar *et al* 2012:1). *BethlehemBlogger* rebufed the fear that “hypocritical racists in Israel and overseas may seize on these murders as a way to try and prove that Palestinian society is uniquely bad and backward”, cynically questioning whether the song would still have been attacked if there was “a slow-motion shot of an Israeli tank or two to deflect the criticism” (BethlehemBlogger 2012:1). However, in a later addition to the debate, Khader, director of gender studies at Stetson University argued that *DAM*, and readers, “mistook their piece as an attempt to exonerate Arab patriarchal structures”, where instead the problem was treating “the horrible phenomenon... as a social rather than political problem” (Khader 2013:1).

DAM's was not the only response to the article; Palestinian anthropologists and activists Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif also spoke up. They recognised "the killing of women cannot be divorced from the realm of the political", providing an account of HK on the ground (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif 2012:1). They explain that some Palestinian feminists use the term "femicide" not merely as a rejection of condoning motivations, but also because the "Israeli system's use of [HK] becomes a tool to culturalise and dismiss the gravity of killing Palestinian women" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif 2012:1). Throughout their work, they discovered inequalities that the occupation had brought on women's lives. Abused women the authors worked with described "when they tried to asked for help from... Israeli police, oficers... took advantage of their vulnerability" which the authors saw as epitomising how "colonisers will make any efort to destroy and fragment the internal cohesion and social structure of the colonised" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif 2012:1). Furthermore, during research in Ramleh (2007-2010) there were "only four women police oficers who speak Arabic, the language that abused Palestinian women speak" and refuges were so socially stigmatised that women viewed them as "another prison", making it harder to escape (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Daher-Nashif 2012:1).

Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi replied, again highlighting their fears: HK had been de-politicised in the song, savage state influence hidden. They "worried about attributing social problems to Muslims or Arab culture alone, because even if this is a factor, it is not the only one", but recognised complex intersectionality make it hard "to position ourselves" (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012a:1). Their request to present HK as "dense and multifaceted... [as] economic, political, military and sexual" remains crucial (Abu-Lughod 2012:1).

This conversation caused a stir in *Jadaliyya*'s virtual community and many blogs, particularly from resident Palestinians/Israelis. One, *Areej*, argued "we can understand that every social problem has a political root, but, we need also to ask our self, what is wrong with us, what makes the dehumanisation process work easy... its our problem that we blame the occupation for everything" (Abu-Lughod and Mikdashi 2012:1). A

blogger, *Sameena*, brought into the debate via another blog response following a rejection from a Palestinian university for her attire, eloquently explained why these debates must be publicised. She argued that “Western media might not be interested in providing a just portrayal of the situation, but unless we were courageous enough to raise those issues, we'd always be the object of representation not only by Western Media, but by our own dominating nationalist discourse that gives very little voice to the oppression we face within” (Sameena 2012:1).

In the Britain, victims of honour crimes may not be under occupation, but other nuances exist which are obscured by cultural/universal explanations: post-war collapse of former areas of employment and inner-city entrapment may contribute to gendered violence (Abbas 201). For some women, “keeping the relationship together, despite the violence, is... important for practical reasons – financial support, shelter, even access to the ability to earn a living” (Faqir 2001:68). Furthermore, for migrant women in Britain, there is the 'Two Year Rule'. The rule states that for the first two years of marriage, the partner does not have legal status. Therefore, “the women have to prove that they have been victims of domestic violence” during this period (Meetoo and Mirza 2007:193). Proof requires evidence, police cautions, injunctions... actions and resources that make recourse to justice hard for the women involved. However, this train of thought must be approached with trepidation: structural explanations must not take over as the new restrictive discourse. It nevertheless remains important; instead of understanding them as legitimate *motives*, tackling them may remove barriers for women's emancipation from HBV, and awareness of them belies reductive interpretations.

This paper illustrated culturalist approaches to HBV, drawing on rigid neo-orientalist imagery of 'tradition' and sexual control, create 'bright' boundaries, undermining Othered actors whilst expunging any blame from “the West and those who identify with it” (Abu-Lughod 201:36). A characterisation of consensual and homogenous values was inscribed

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 HRV. 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-personal factors that can interact to suppress or support violence" (Gill and Rehman 2004:81). We must support survivors of gendered violence "to become independent and to determine their life course" talk *with* them, not *for* them (Gill and Rehman 2004:76).

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