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in the Middle East**

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POWER, ARAB MEDIA MOGULDUM
&
GENDER RIGHTS AS ENTERTAINMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract

Discourse is a giant field of research and gender related rights are still a disputed area of thinking. Thus, when Arab transnational satellite televisions produce dialogues, images, stories and narratives about the disputed “universal” gender rights in the Middle East, the big questions remain how and why. According to De Beauvoir (1949), one becomes woman and to Butler (1990) one is not born a gender at all but is “done” and “undone” to become one via discourse. Islamic feminism speaks of a cultural/religious specificity in defending women rights and even gender diversity based on new Quranic interpretations. The gender, “*Al-Naw’u*”, remains synonym to sex “*Al Jins*” as gender and queer theories never developed in Arabic in tandem with the European institutions or the theories of the 19th century— especially those ideas emerging from studies of the mental asylum. This research tries to understand gender related “rights” and “wrongs” as manifest in the discursive institutions owned by media mogul Prince Al Waleed Ben Talal Al Saud. The trouble of such a study is lexical, ideological and institutional at the same time. Since we lack a critique of the discourses and narratives addressed in the pan-Arab satellite channels, in general it is difficult to understand their significance and influence in everyday life practices. What language is used to speak of gender rights or wrongs? Which ideology is favoured in this practice of legitimisation and/or policing? Using case studies, CDA of social and religious talk shows, narrative analysis of Arabic cinemas, this research adapted triangulation to show the complexity of conversing and narrating gender related content at the micro and macro levels within an institution of power. Using semi-structured interviews from fieldwork in Egypt (2009) and Lebanon (2011), archive research and online ethnography, the research exposes the power structure under which gender discourses evolve. It emerges that gender content is abundant on the Pan Arab satellite space, “manufactured” on talk shows and plotted tactfully in the cinematic “creative-act”. The result is a complex discourse of gender content that scratches the surface calling for interpretation. So how and why do gender rights and wrongs find place on Prince Al Waleed’s Media Empire?

Key words: media moguls, talk shows, gender discourses, cinema images and imagination, the creative-act, women rights, LGBTQ, power, tactics and strategies,

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To my

Father & mother Mohammed El Mkaouar & Nouzha Abara
Siblings Khouloud El Mkaouar & Yassine El Mkaouar
Family Dounia Abara, Adam and William Davy
Dearest friends Nehro Shawo, Rehab Akhaddam & Najwa Belkziz
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Note on the Classification of Sources:

Referencing follows the Harvard style. Two methods have been adopted:

- 1- Primary sources like interviews from fieldwork, TV interviews of celebrities/key personalities, newspaper and magazine articles, archive material, speeches and conferences, NGO reports are cited in full in the endnotes only.
- 2- Secondary sources like books, book chapters, and journal articles are referenced in the bibliography used interchangeably with footnotes to reference famous work in a broad sense without direct quotes or specific analysis.

Transliteration

For the transliteration of Arabic words I used the **ALA-LC** (1991), from the American Library Association and the Library of Congress.

<u>Letter in Arabic</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Romanization ALA-LC</u>
ء	Hamzah	ʾ
ا	Alif	Ā
ب	bāʾ	b
ت	tāʾ	t
ث	thāʾ	th
ج	jīm	j
ح	ḥāʾ	ḥ
خ	khā	kh
د	dāl	d
ذ	dhāl	dh
ر	rāʾ	r
ز	zayn/zāy	z
س	sīn	s
ش	shin	sh
ص	ṣād	ṣ
ض	ḍād	ḍ
ط	ṭāʾ	ṭ
ظ	ẓāʾ	ẓ
ع	ʿayn	ʿ
غ	Ghayn	gh
ف	fāʾ	f
ق	qāf	q
ك	kāf	k
ل	lām	l
م	mīm	m
ن	nūn	n
ه	hāʾ	h
و	wāw	w; ū
ي	yāʾ	y; ī
آ	alif maddah	ā, ʾā
ة	tāʾ marbūṭah	h; t
ى	alif maqṣūrah	á
ال	alif lām	al-

Vowels and Diphthongs:

أ	A	آ	ā	أى	ī
و	U	أى	á	و	A
ي	I	و	ū	أى	A

Declaration:

I certify that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Emerging Terms

Chameleon Strategies: This term emerged from chapter 5 after watching the way social talk show guests who are not within the binary male/female handled the conversation about their gender identities. Chameleon strategies are those discursive tactics an individual uses, regardless of their level of power, to reach desired ends or avoid punishment. By finding a way to fit within the general discourse even if by lying, deceiving or creating imaginary stories the chameleon can stand within the crowd without being noticed as a “different” self.

The Power-Halo: This term emerged from chapter 5. In Arab social talk show settings that address taboos with religious implications there is a tendency to invite people from a variety of official positions that represent the metapowers such as the juridical, medical, psychological and religious professions in order to police the discourse of the show and remain on the safe side. The need to back up the topics of such shows by a representation of all the legitimate powers from society just to open the talk is both a self-censoring/regulating tactic and a safety valve. Yet, such safety valve is not necessarily successful as the boundaries of what to open for talk and what is not talk material are never clear. Thus talk shows hardly avoid punishment if they upset the structure and the discourse is hardly policed since it finds different mythological significations that mark a certain shift or change.

Islamic Capital: This term emerged from chapter two. It seems that Al Waleed as an Arab Media Mogul uses religious capital but not any religious capital an Islamic one. To be legitimate as a public power and gain a public support, admiration and love leaders in the Middle East seek a religious capital regardless of how religious they are. This specific capital reaches a hand to the other Bourdieusian capitals. In the cultural one, leaders adopt vocabularies such as “God willing” (*Bi ‘idni Allah*), “in the name of God”, “thank God... In economy leaders interested in political positions engage in publicized alms giving, acknowledging God for fortune... In politics most of them claim some sort of linkage to the Prophet of Islam’s bloodline. Everything is labelled religiously and benchmarked with an Islamic label to maximise legitimacy and distinction thus power.

The classical Arabic words developed on talk shows to speak about homosexuality:

Taḥwīl/Taḥawwul Jinsī: Sex reassignment differentiated from gender reassignment

Taṣḥīḥ Jinsī: Correcting sexuality from a defect (introduced to be accepted)

Muḥawwil: A surgeon who accepts to take surgeries of *Taḥwīl* (transgressor)

Muṣaḥḥih: A surgeon who takes *Taṣḥīḥ* Surgeries only (moral law abiding citizen)

Researching Gender in Pan-Arab Entertainment Programs: Rationale & Approach

I- Rationale:

The popular Pan Arab and Lebanese monologist Bassem Fghali¹ who perfectly imitates celebrities in the Middle East would be called a “Drag Queen” a “Cross Dresser” or any other gendered label in the West. In the Middle East, the assumption is that he would be labelled using insult jargon. Instead, Bassem enjoyed a successful career as a cultural and political satirist who won the Murex D’or. He is welcomed in daytime television; especially, on Prince Al Waleed’s channel LBC Sat. No one had ever seen him dressed up as a man but his audience enjoys his humour and hardly questions his masculinity; those who attack him never influenced his fame or popularity. It is this way of being that Joseph Masaad (2007) defends when he refuses the export of the Western gender categorizations to the Middle East. Bassem’s creative way of making-do to borrow De-Certeau’s (1984) term is a practice that exists at different levels in the everyday life of the heterogeneous Middle East. In the Middle East gender rights are still an area of dispute even in a binary sense. Woman category is so politicized using laws, cultural norms and religion that being one is already predefined via language powerfully. The different women of the heterogeneous countries of the Middle East can only find their own ways of making-do to fit, deceit, or revolt against this established image consciously and unconsciously. Since media is the power and space where being a gender is at constant display intentionally and unintentionally this research looks at the way gender content is displayed across a pan Arab Media Empire to understand the mechanism of influencing a gender “rights” or “wrong” culture. Gender as an entertainment content is not only revealing of the pleasant and unpleasant about being a woman or LGBTQ in popular culture but exposes the meshes of power that politicize such being and police its disputed categories giving it specific meanings.

During the last two decades the Saudi Prince and media mogul, Al Waleed Ben Talal, presented himself as an agent of change in favour of women rights in the Middle East in every interview on channels such as CNN, Fox and CNBC. At the same time he was swiftly acquiring one of the two main Pan Arab Media Empires in the region. Thus studying the way and reason

¹ See Appendix #1

such support manifests through his glittery portfolio of free to air TV channels is a pressing and interesting exercise. His Media Empire is the perfect platform to understand the different faces of power across media institutions in the Middle East. It provides the perfect space to look at media agents and the gender discourses and narratives they create in support of a modernity project vowed by the Prince as apolitical elite. Hypothetically, such a project should be limited by different social and political powers, the entertaining space, time, and the human-capital employed directly and indirectly to produce an entertainment content fulfilling to the growing appetite of the large/heterogenous Arab audience while enticing cultural change towards women rights. It should also be limited by essentialism within the Arabic speaking states and the different Arabic dialects and classical Arabic that knows gender to be binary. However, a quick structured observation proved that abundant content regarding women and – surprisingly – LGBTQ rights flow across the different entertainment platforms in the Prince’s media realm. This interdisciplinary research, aims to study the way and reason gender rights or wrongs related content find place on primetime entertainment programs in Prince Al Waleed’s Media Empire. It focuses on the discourses developed in talk show institutions and explores the cinematic “creative act” that produces gendered narratives. The focus on different entertainment genres and formats help to compare the gender discourses that evolve in different structured spaces in the same Media Empire but as produced by different individuals/companies/Arab countries. Indeed, Prince Al Waleed is a media mogul, par excellence, and one who presents himself as a shrewd businessman, Prince and philanthropist committed to bring change to the Middle East. To understand his distinctive profile within a media and communication power network is an open door to fathom the complex power structures that govern media agency and change towards modernity in the Middle East.

II- Conceptual Framework: The power of Media Moguldom, Talk Shows, Cinema & gender discourse in the Middle East

1- Power & Media Moguldom in the Middle East:

Twenty four years ago, Palmer and Tunstall (1991) defined the **media mogul** as “a person who owns and operates major media companies, who takes entrepreneurial risks, and who conducts these media businesses in a personal or eccentric style” (1991, p. 116). Recently, Freedman (2014) argued that “media power is best understood as a relational property” (p. 31). He suggests a focus on “ownership patterns, resource allocations, governance arrangements and

policy and regulatory regimes in conjunction with an analysis of the means by which these embodiments of media power work to naturalise their own status and legitimize their own interpretations” (2014, p. 15). Lukes suggested that what matters is the capacity to act not the actions themselves (1959, p. 4). As for social actors he writes that they “do not have unitary or dual, but multiple and conflicting interests, which are interests of different kinds, and their identities are not confined to their imputed class positions and destinies”. Lukes, developed his concept the ‘third face’ of power to explain how domination does not only occur via coercive means but via unconscious mechanisms as well. In other words, ‘naturalization’ and ‘misrecognition’ make compliance an internalised disposition (2005, p. 145). Plamer and Tunstall explained how media moguls tend to operate within a network of elites; that is what moguls do, they team up. (1991)

Following these specificities to analyse the power of Prince Al Waleed within his Media Empire raises the need for a toolbox that can look at strategies and tactics of a Media Mogul as he operates in the cultural field of media within a network of powerful elites. Bourdieu’s cultural fields are “a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 93). For the Prince to operate in such a non-static field he would need a number of dispositions and an accumulation of capital from all Bourdieu’s capitals if not more to be distinctive and thus all powerful. Operating in a network of power elites implies that among his peers the Prince is not necessarily powerful at all times. Addressing a large Middle East means that the power of the fourth estate here is regional and thus demanding. To look at the Prince’s actions and strategies at different power levels De Certeau’s “creative resistance” made an interesting distinction between ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’ in an everyday life context. Strategy is the tool of the powerful while tactic is the creative subversion of the rational and ordinary individual (De Certeau, 1984, p. 34). Perhaps it is worth looking at these strategies and tactics as the tool of one individual used and combined when needed; not necessarily the tools of the powerful and the subordinate separately.

Al Waleed’s power stems from his diverse media realm that gathers different forms of media platforms as diverse as shares in Twitter, Fox and CNN. The focus of this research is on his first Arab entertainment channels Rotana Movies, Rotana Zaman/Classic, LBC Sat and religious Al Resalah TV. These four channels were acquired strategically and broadcast some of the most

popular entertainment programs in the Middle East benefiting from a high Pan Arab viewership. “Rotana Cinema, launched at the start of 2005, distinguished itself not only by being free-to-air but by showing recent movies. Older ones were concentrated in another channel; Rotana Zaman” (Sakr, 2007, p. 131 see also 2013, p. 2285). With the acquisition of two thirds of the Egyptian cinema heritage starting from works produced as early as the 1930s Rotana fuelled its cinematic library boosting Rotana Classic (the channel specialized in old movies) and Rotana Cinema (the channel specialized in movies after the 1980s) (See Sakr, 2007, p. 131-132). After, securing a significant audience the Prince took a bold step and funded the first Saudi movie directed by a Saudi woman and played by the first Saudi actress.

In 2003, as soon as LBC Sat ventured with Al Hayat news channel – owned by the Prince’s Rival cousin – the Prince acquired all ART’s shares of LBC Sat to become the major owner (Sakr, 2007, p. 176). LBC Sat is defined by Kraidy “as the longest running privately owned Arab television channel, LBC reflects the rise of American style broadcasting over the older, European-inspired, system” (Kraidy, 2007, p.142) . In March 2006, Prince Al Waleed launched the religious channel Al Resalah after giving up ART’s Iqra’ three years earlier. “viewers immediately recognized it as a cross between Iqra’ and Al Waleed’s bouquet of Rotana music and film channels, prompting one to sum it up as Iqra’ TV with a Rotana flavour” (2007, p. 145-155). The Prince’s Media Empire grew significantly during this research depending on the political situation Chapter four and appendix 11 highlight all his media acquisitions.

2- Talk Shows and discourses of subversion:

The power of entertainment talk shows is that they are conversations, dialogues or even monologues of the leisure time generally structured in the studio space to excite and engage. If television is part of popular or ‘low’ culture as Livingston and Lunt (2001) would put it, it demarcates a space of shifts and power. Such space is perfectly described by Shields (1991) as having “a history of transformations between being margins, near-sacred *liminal zones* of Otherness, and carnivalesque leisure spaces of ritual inversion of the dominant, authorized cultures’ (p. 5-6). Freedman (2005) developed four paradigms which can be a useful tool for analyse talk shows as power spaces of discourse. They can give a nuanced, a rich platform and enough liberty to explore the different talk show spaces across Al Waleed’s Media Empire.

- **The consensus paradigm** is best suited for an earlier phase of media history as Freedman argues (2005, p. 18). It resonates with a ‘liberal functionalist’ perspective

on media, “described by James Curran as one where the media role is to assist the collective self-realization, co-ordination, democratic management, social integration and adaptation of society” (Curran, 2002, p.136).

- **The chaos paradigm** bypasses singular factors like class, hierarchy and wealth as a basis to sustain unequal social relations to look at the ideological diffusion and structural uncertainty as a new base. This reflects the dispersed and ‘fluid’ properties of power in a digital age (Freedman, 2005, p. 20).
- **The contradiction paradigm** however is a modification of the control paradigm. It focuses on the internal contradictions of a media system. “These contradictions are played out both at the level of institutions and ideas, material as well as symbolic practices” (Freedman, 2005, p. 26).

These theories are best appropriated as methodologies to theorize the power of the Arab Media Mogul in the Middle East while taking into consideration the power of his network of elites and field of cultural production. Agency for Bourdieu (2002) means that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives: usually termed ‘intentionality’ and ‘individuality’. “We exercise agency, for example, when we indicate our intention to vote one way or another, or make choices about what to eat from a restaurant menu”. For Bourdieu, the possibilities of agency must be understood and contextualized in terms of their relation to the objective structures of a culture (p. ix).

A culturally focused investigation of media power necessitates a detailed exploration of textual processes and discursive mechanisms (Freedman, 2014, p. 15). To understand the way gender rights become a subject of talk from a state of erasure we have to do in-depth critical discourse analysis identifying the discourse, the space and the agent. Mittell (2003) looks into “how the talk show genre operates as a site of cultural hierarchies and identity formation for television audiences.” His approach to genres holds that “generic categories comprise discourses of definition, interpretation, and evaluation.” (p. 36).

Bruun (2001), on the other hand, showed how the talk show space embodies a sense of simultaneity underscoring a tension between “uncertainty” and “sociability” which controls the decorum of the set. She stated that these two dimensions

“Mean that the unpredictable and the unplanned, become important in the talk show, and it means that form, rules of politeness, and the treatment of others’ “face”, become

extremely important in the talk show space. Both dimensions are essential elements in the genre.” (p. 251).

Tension and sociability are irreconcilable; consequently, a form of nervousness and anxiety exists in talk formats. “This tension exists between the tendency towards chaos, danger, unpleasantness, and loss of face found in the uncertainty factor, on the one hand, and the other hand, the tendency towards impeccability, politeness, and pleasure of sociability...” Unlike other TV genres “The talk show can be expected, theoretically, to be “closer” to the interactional and behavioural framework which is characteristic of informal face-to-face communication” (Bruun, 2001, p. 251). Uncertainty and sociability led Bruun to four modes deployed by the talk show genre while interacting with audiences; debate, research, therapy, and consultation. These modes help the show progress and give roles and meanings to the host, guests and audience.

Based on these characteristics and attributes, the medium seems to be flexible and powerful enough to carry a topic outside of heteronormativity or of feminist values. Whether this happens in the Prince Al Waleed’s or not is yet another question but one that checks the mogul’s authenticity and hegemony. What remains then is the question about the way these discourses are open for talk. This trilogy of questions evolve around the same terms power and strategies.

3- Arabic cinemas as liminal spaces for cultural conservation and/or change:

Arab cinema was one of the early cinemas in the world; way before Al Waleed’s time. While the industry depended on Saudi financing for continuity it suffered from its censorship in the meantime. By owning ART’s library of Egyptian cinema Al Waleed owned the Egyptian domination over the Arab cultural sphere at the Pan Arab scale. Viola Shafik was one of the few scholars who tried to understand the Arabic cinema based on the Western theories of cinema narratives. She read the genre from a Realist perspective.

“...In general, realism was confined to three directors, Salah Abu Seif, Taufik Salih, and Youssef Chahine, whose works, with the exception of Salih, had a strong commercial element. Only for a short while during the 1960s were they joined by a few mainstream directors, among them Henri Barakat, Kamal El-Cheikh, and Hussein Kamal.” (Shafik, 1998, p. 128)

Nitzan Ben Shaul (2007), maintained, “realist positions failed to provide a comprehensive account of the complex conventions of editing, film metaphors or narrative that construct even the most realists of films”. He adds, “Formalist positions failed to account for the complex documentary import of film images and sounds” (2007, p. 4). The postmodern break from these

positions came with Baudrillard's *simulacra*. Indeed, Baudrillard used the postmodern concept of the simulacrum to stress that reality is a simulation itself, thus film cannot be "a reproduction of reality nor its formalist abstraction". (Ben-Shaul 2007, p. 8). Deleuze's philosophical oeuvre Cinema 1 (1986) and Cinema 2 (1989) remain only scantily accounted for, and are absent from many philosophy and film theoretical works"² (Colman 2011: 6). This is probably due the delicacy and technicality of his arguments that require direct experience with filmmaking to be fathomed. It is worth relooking at the Prince's cinematic acquisition using Deleuze's cinematic lens to understand the structures of movies as an 'act of art' and thus understand the way gender content find place within such structures without adding a political value to a subjective medium.

4- Implication of gender categorisation in the Middle East: Women and LGBTQ

Judith Butler took gender to a different dimension by stating that one is not born a gender but becomes one because of language. She said, "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (2008, 33). She coins the term **gender performativity** as a thesis to politicize 'possibilities of being' for those gender identities that are not within the binary system of man and woman categories.

"... if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an 'I' or a 'we' who stand before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of 'before.' Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an 'I' or a "we" who had not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being . . . the 'I' neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within the matrix of gender relations themselves" (1993, p. xvi).

The importance of this thesis is that it acknowledges that the process of being a gender is influenced by relational processes with self and others within complex power networks that the result cannot be controlled by the self, others or even the powers. Joseph Massad (2007) shares Butler's resistance to categorization but goes into a different direction to blame the "gay international" (Gender Rights NGOs) for enforcing gender categories that do not necessarily exist in the Middle East. Based on Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) he advances this argument to expose the continuity of the Western manipulation of Middle Eastern subjects.

²Some of the main authors in the English scholarship who focused on Deleuze's cinematography are Steven Shaviro (1993), D.N. Rodowick (1997), Barbara Kennedy (2000), Patricia Pisters (2003), Ronald Bogue (2003), Anna Powell (2005; 2007) and David Martin-Jones (2006).

The advent of colonialism and western capital to the Arab world has transformed most aspects of daily living; however, it has failed to impose a European heterosexual regime on all Arab men, although its efforts were successful in the upper classes and among the increasingly westernised middle classes. It is among members of these richer segments of society that the Gay International has found native informants. Although members of these classes who engage in same-sex relations have more recently adopted a western identity (as part of the package of the adoption of everything western by the classes to which they belong), they remain a minuscule minority among those men who engage in same-sex relations and who do not identify as “gay” nor express a need for gay politics. (2007, 172-3)

Brian Whitaker, contested the idea that the gay international is interested in the Arab gay because of a ‘missionary’, and ‘orientalist impulse’. He asserted that there are many reasons to steer gay rights activists’ sympathy towards their Arab counterparts. He states “punishments for same-sex acts, for instance, tend to be heavier there, on paper if not always in practice, and the only countries in the world where the death penalty for sodomy still applies justify it on the basis of Islamic law” as an example (2009). Al Shawaf as well contested that Massad argument gives a pre-emptive right to Arab governments and heterosexuals to be violent against the gays in order to defend their culture from imperialism. Massad clearly wedded the gay identity to imperialism which according to Al Shawaf will only result to two evils: “either accept the current shame-ridden and legally murky situation, or openly embrace a homosexual identity and suffer mindless violence and explicit legal restrictions as a result” (2008, p. 106).

If LGBTQ identities are subject to an ontological crisis women rights are still the object of disagreement between Islamist, liberal feminism and the postcolonial thoughts. De Beauvoir called women the Other. A woman, De Beauvoir explained, is “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (1997 [1953], p.16). The work of Oumaima Abu Bakr (2011) called for “continuous attempts to un-interpret gender biased readings done by male jurists and to offer alternative new perspectives toward justice and equality within Islam itself” as the true essence of Islamic feminism (p. 17). The work of Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, dwelled with this idea of difference and otherness as an advantage based on hermeneutic readings of the Qur’an as an “egalitarian and anti-patriarchal” text (2009, p. 5). While gender inequality remains a reality in the Middle East Spivak advanced that the community of women can only come after the recognition of difference between women, and after the raising of some key questions about who is talking to whom, and why, all points

which she returns to in her contribution to *Feminists Theorise the Political* based on her work, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) (Spivak, 1992, p. 527).

III- Research Questions:

1- Main research question:

- I- How and why women and gay rights related content find place in Al-Waleed's Media Empire?

2- Main sub-questions:

- II- Can entertainment programs bring effect and change cultural beliefs about gender?
- III- Does Al-Waleed's Media Empire address such rights using international human rights discourses or specific discourses?
- IV- If advancing human rights is the target how is this sought at the production level for a heterogeneous audience as that of the Middle East?
- V- How does such content compare throughout the different channels within the same Media Empire and across different TV formats?
- VI- What type of agency the stars and talk show personalities play in choosing their own line while discussing topics of rights and wrongs? Do they follow set-agendas or international values? Do they believe in what they present?
- VII- How are the shows structured to talk about this specific content? Do they follow special procedures or keep the standard/general format adapted for other topics? What language is used?
- VIII- How are movies addressing women and gay stories? What is the potential of such space to carry gender messages that can bring effect?

IV- Methodology: Triangulation

This research uses triangulation and mixed methods combining structured observation, critical discourse analysis, narrative analysis, elite semi-structured interviews as well as press and media archives' research to answer the research questions. Mixed methods are the best approach to offset weaknesses of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches and present more comprehensive answers to the research questions (Clark, Creswell 2010: 12). Besides, to achieve confirmation (Denzin, 1970) and completeness (Jick, 1983) triangulation is what social

scientists recommend to overcome problems of bias and validity. It is used here as “a vehicle of cross validation” as developed by Denzin and Jick (in Benz, Newman, 1998, 83). Hence, to achieve this, it is vital to consider strengths, weaknesses and biases for every single method used, then apply, blend and integrate them to counterbalance each other (Arksey and Knight, 1999, 22). Thanks to triangulation the research managed to diversify the level of analysis linking content to the institution that hosted it and the individuals who produced it.

First, structured observation was used to select the case studies or the ‘corpus’, over a period of one year where a ‘predefined scheme’ to count the frequency in which programs related to women and gay rights were listed around the channels was used (Gunter 2000 :48). To answer how women’s and LGBT rights find a place in Al Waleed’s Media Empire critical discourse analysis seems to be the best approach to comprehend the meanings of the iterations advanced on prime time talk shows . “Qualitative forms of textual or discourse analysis tend to look at far fewer texts but in more depth” rather than “generate large amounts of simple, numerical data from many more units” as in the quantitative form (Davis, 2008, 57). As for the movies that addressed gender related themes, narrative analysis seems to be more appropriate

“Narrative distinguishes itself from texts by a clearly marked beginning and ending. Narration itself involves the handling of characters and plot and of resulting patterns. In this type of analysis it is not so much the characteristics of the plain text as the characters themselves that are crucial as well as their acts, their difficulties, their choices and general developments (see Propp, 1975, 1928 in Gunter)... the message is taken to be a presented, edited version of sequence of events, of which elements are described and characterized as to their structure” (Gunter 2000, 90).

For triangulations, celebrities, production and marketing teams involved in the case studies were interviewed to confirm whether their beliefs match the content conveyed in the work they present and to answer the question concerned with the reason behind producing such content. Interviewing is one way to explore the world of beliefs and meanings more than actions (Arksey and Knight 1999, 15). In the same vein, Gray notes that semi-structured interviews are a non-standardized qualitative method of research, which is good when the research has a large exploratory target like examining feelings and attitudes (2004, 214-215).

The research explored feedback on Facebook and Youtube about the shows and their hosts, the selected movies and the stars featured in them. A combination of intrinsic and instrumental case studies (Stake 1995) was also observed to create typologies listing the variation in the type of feedback and frequencies. Kuachartz (1995) developed later on this methodology using a

quantification measure on case studies to develop typologies from the available data rather than set predefined categories. However, due to time constraints and the limited space this methodology was cut down to be published in the future although the research was guided by its findings. Finally, the research consulted Amnesty international, *Helem*, *Nasawiya* and Human Rights Watch about the media approach to gender rights in the Middle East and their role in hindering or helping change the status of women and LGBTQ rights in the Middle East.

V- Original contribution to knowledge and limitations

Although widely consumed, there is hardly any content analysis of popular entertainment programs in the Middle East. Most conclusions drawn from Arab media content is built on anecdotal rather than scientific evidence. The first contribution to knowledge is a reading of distinctive popular entertainment formats at the discursive and institutional levels. This research provides different readings and tools of analysis to understand the power of discourse in the talk show spaces and narrative constructions in Arabic cinema as a creative-act. It theorises such spaces within a Media Empire of Mogul Al Waleed Ben Talal and brings up the term Islamic Capital to distinguish moguldom in the Middle East from that of the rest of the world. At the content level it exposed the ontological impasse of LGBTQ genders as political identities in the Middle East and the implications of wearing their sexualities in the public sphere. It also exposed the permitted discourse of women rights in religious and social talk shows and highlighted the editorial impotence in pushing such discourse forward despite the commitment to the project of women empowerment.

This research has been limited by the time, space, and funds allocated for the PhD. It is extremely daunting to look through a large interdisciplinary literature and conduct more than one fieldwork during a PhD lifespan while watching an excessive content of talk shows and films across a Media Empire. Focusing on media discourse, gender rights and wrongs', searching for the powerful and weak tactics and understanding their relations in shaping the discourse then assessing if their intentions are met can be a nerve wrecking exercise. The theoretical mayhem, the personal experiences in the fieldwork, being a foreign student under the jurisdiction of complex, irrational, always changing visa regulations consumed time and increased difficulties at the expense of the research itself. To be able to finish and meet the regulatory deadlines I had to eliminate key methodological approaches such as providing an ethnographic analysis of social media networks reactions to the content analysed here which is key to understand audience

reactions and complete the triangulation process. Choosing different TV genres and all gender rights limited the research from expanding on key points raised here such as the role of agents or the tactics of sub-groups. The hope is that this inquiry opens room for new ones exploring this nexus of power networks and knowledge production in the Middle East.

Media Mogul Prince Al Waleed maximises power with both tactics and strategies according to the circumstances. Islamic Capital emerges as a distinctive capital in the Middle East necessary to maximise hegemony.

The discourse of LGBTQ rights found place in Talk Shows benefiting from Al Waleed's "war of position". It is not subservient to power or raised up against it but stumbles at points of resistance ending up bringing some sort of change.

Women rights are still governed by islamic feminism and postcolonial theorists at the intellectual level. Such division congeals at the discursive level in the Talk Show space.

Cinema as a creative act gives liminal spaces of possibilities thus Saudi cinema emerged from Rotana narrating women stories aesthetically re-opening the cinema rooms in the country.

Television has the power to bring different discourses of gender rights from erasure. Bound by the need to keep a cultural status-quo the discourse bares traces of its subjects' individual tactics, strategies and Chameleon strategies that leads to contradictory results .

Chart 1: Thesis Structure & Contribution to Knowledge

IV- Thesis structure and Chapters' Description:

1- Chapter two: Literature Review

The problem of this research is not a lack of literature but the positions taken so far in understanding gender rights and wrongs in the Middle East. This chapter is the foundation to pinpoint and hopefully bridge the divide between political economists and cultural studies theorists by going to the heart of the gender discourses and narratives produced on power institutions and different media genres directed to the large heterogeneous Middle East. Perhaps it is worth combining the work of the political economists with that of the critical theorists to truly understand the power and limits of a media realm in their audiences' everyday life. Women rights grew to be a subject of dispute between liberal and poststructuralist feminism and that of Islamist feminists. LGBTQ rights as well were the bread and butter of scholars who stretched different fields of studies from hermeneutics to semiotics to theorise gender outside of heterosexual binarism or refuse the whole process of such theorisation by mythological references. The debate took outstanding positions that invite for thinking and re-interpreting this process of *being* and *becoming* a gender in mediatised discourses and narratives to come close to what an average Middle Eastern human "becomes" in text and "is" in reality. Focusing on different media genres within one main media empire opens the window for cinema as a creative act and talk shows as structured power spaces to reveal might, boundaries, strategies and tactics that the genres open for both rights and wrongs of being a gender in the Middle East.

2- Chapter three: Methods and Methodology

This chapter highlights the importance of using triangulation as a methodology to best test the conclusions or look for a bigger picture. Using critical discourse analysis based on Fairclough (2010) and narrative analysis based on semiotics rather than realism to analyse the case studies selected from social and religious talk shows and Arabic cinema led to patterns that link the results from the semi structured interviews conducted in the fieldwork in Cairo (2009) and Beirut (2011) and the online archives. Using semi structured interviews and archive research as a triangulation method to double check if the intentions and targets of the media personalities involved at all levels of production of the selected corpus are in sync with the

discourse and narrative analysis brought the schools of political economy and cultural studies closer.

3- Chapter four: Power and Tactics in the Rotana Media Empire: the Mogul & the Barons

This chapter highlights the power of Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal as a media mogul by looking at his glittery portfolio while using Bourdieu's (1979, 1993, 1996) toolbox to understand his strategies of accumulating capital to maximise power and Michel De Certeau's tactic and strategies (1984) to highlight the Prince's tactics in his weakest positions. It traces the shift in his policies from year 2005 to date as marked by the death of Rafik Al Hariri in Lebanon and the start of King Abdullah's reign in Saudi Arabia highlighting the continuity of his grand strategies. Based on Gramsci (2011), Machesney (1995, 2001), Chomsky (1988) and Curran (2010) the chapter places the Arab media mogul within his hegemonic cultural field. **Islamic capital** emerged as a key term to understand hegemony in a Middle Eastern context. The chapter also exposes the Prince's construction of Princess Ameera Al Taweel as a Public Relations project to serve his political agenda. It exposed his problematic, often chaotic relations with the Barons or cultural intermediaries in his Media Empire before engaging in analysing the discourse and narratives they produce.

4- Chapter Five: LGBTQ content in Talk Show spaces

This chapter highlights the ontological debates regarding LGBTQ individuals as presented via discourse in the Middle East. Being erased for centuries and existing via value-laden or insult jargon in popular culture does not help opening a talk about Arab LGBTQ as identities. Once opened for study the "Arab gay" category steered a heated debate since it lacked the theoretical and institutional development of the West and even resisted such development. Having Arab gays narrate their stories for talk in the studio-structured space is even more complex. Not only the terms used are confusing but the power exercised is multidimensional. This chapter provides a detailed critical discourse analysis of two different talk genres; one is LBC Sat's prime time *Bold Red Line* by Malek Maktabi and the second is religious Al Resalah's *Bidun Ihraj*, by religious personality Khaled Al Othaybi. The emerging discourses are both contradictory and over produced aiming at exposing a wrong not a right for political purposes; however, the mere access to such a public sphere and the use of discourse marked a shift in the status-quo. The "Arab gay" category is disputed theoretically without a close consideration of

who forms such category. The debate is still stuck at whether such category exists naturally, should it exist politically, and if the West is not only exporting forcefully some of its values to the Middle East creating “fake” categorizations.

5- Chapter Six: Women rights related content in Talk shows Space

This chapter examines two case studies where a man and a woman host two different talk show genres. The episodes selected talked about women rights directly; the purpose is to understand the way such rights, already championed by the head of the channels, are addressed from secular and religious views. Wafaa Kilani hosted Feminist Nawal Al Saadawi to open her new show *Bidūn Raqābah* (without censorship). Tarek Al Suwaidan stood in front of the camera in the middle of a young male audience in his show *‘Alamatny Al hayat* (Life has taught me) on Al Resalah TV to define the rights of women in Islam, erasing misconceptions by practicing an Islamist feminist approach while reinterpreting the religious texts. The power of the hosts as a female charismatic presenter and a well-established male religious dignitary expose the way women rights discourse is addressed by different agents in the same Media Empire. In the case of Kilani, the interview of a prominent feminist turned into a carnivalesque mediocracy while Dr. Al Suwaidan talked about women rights and needs with authority in a studio filled with men with constant reference to the West. These media practices are at the other spectrum of the way theorists see gender rights in the region.

6- Chapter Seven: Gender in Arabic Cinema

This chapter shows how cinema as a genre provided a different space for Al Waleed to maximise audiences, introduce the first Saudi movies and open the cinema space in Saudi Arabia. It theorises Arab cinema away from the dichotomy of the real and ideal. Using Deleuze’s cine-system focusing on the “creative act” provides different readings of feminist and queer narratives in the Middle East. Gender rights content was abundant in Arabic cinema since its inception but homo-plots were used as a cinematic tool to depict irregularities rather than a gender identity. Al Waleed’s monopolization of the cinema industry in Egypt helped him win a large audience, produce Saudi movies and re-open the Saudi cinemas steering contradictory reactions in Saudi Arabia. It seems that such a powerful acquisition is in sync with the Prince’s grand strategies but gender content comes as a political tool rather than an end.

7- Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Closing this research it emerged that the complex structure of the Rotana Media Empire as a realm of a Saudi Prince and a tool for his grand strategies is definitely a space of change despite all the conflicting and limiting encounters between producers, hosts, cinema directors, TV managers and their audiences and guests. The different media genres, TV personalities, Cinema actors and directors are at the core of these conflicting positions that both represent and challenge being a gender in the Middle East. These continuous frictions are what pushes for change their absence is more problematic than their presence. Yet it is vital that we carry on trying to understand how they manifest to truly push for change.

Arab Media Moguldom & Gender Rights as Entertainment

Introduction:

Media Empires are institutes of power owned by few individuals around the globe who operate at transnational and transcultural levels team up and operate in networks of powerful elites to create effect. The effect they seek might differ but the communicative system followed seems to follow the same general trends. Media power is multisided and has a direct yet complex relation to the cultural politics of gender difference and gender identity. If we are to understand how and why gender rights content is produced on Prince Al Waleed's Media Empire we have to understand his status and actions within his networks of power. Theorising the Prince as a media mogul requires going beyond Palmer and Tunstall's (1991) work *Media Moguls* as it needs to look at a mogul who grew his entertainment empire at the speed of light but who is constantly refused the right to open a news channel by his own network of elites. His case puts the concept of media moguls' hegemony or propaganda in Gramsci's or Herman and Chomsky's sense into question within a Middle Eastern media realm. Curran's (2010) edition, *Media and Society*, identifies the hegemonic power of entertainment programs, but does that apply to the content generated for a Middle Eastern audience? To understand the way gender content is produced requires understanding the structure of the space where it evolves and the agency of the cultural intermediaries who prepare the text before turning into the discourse, narratives, genres and formats. It is also important to understand the implications of being gay in the Middle East and the politics of advancing women rights in the region. This chapter highlights a selective theoretical background that helps analyse the emerging gender rights or wrongs content that find place on talk shows and film case studies from Prince Al Waleed's empire. The purpose is to understand the role of entertainment programs, as owned by one main media mogul, in advancing gender rights or reproducing gender biases.

I- Distinction & Media Ownership: Tactics & Strategies as tools of a Media Mogul

1- Prince Al Waleed as a media Mogul: Power and Tactics

It is now twenty-four years since Palmer and Tunstall (1991), *Media Moguls*, tried to theorise the power of media moguls in the world. The emergence of Arab and mainly Saudi media moguls in the recent years invites for modern investigations of power and media ownership in the Middle East. We cannot understand the gendered discourses of rights and wrongs on a Pan Arab Media Empire without understanding the political economy and power structure behind it. How can we understand the work of Al Waleed as a billionaire, entrepreneur, Prince, media mogul, and philanthropist who operates at national, regional and global scales? Palmer and Tunstall (1991) define the **media mogul** as “a person who owns and operates major media companies, who takes entrepreneurial risks, and who conducts these media businesses in a personal or eccentric style” (1991, p. 116). Moguls are different from what they call a ‘**crown Prince**’; this is anyone who inherits a Media Empire initially set by a mogul.

In their definition, Palmer and Tunstall also identify the ‘**baron**’ by stating “the mogul may be supported by several barons, who normally manage divisions or companies within the mogul’s larger interests. In fact, the baron can be a chief executive, he may also take entrepreneurial risks, but he is not the ultimate owner or controller of the overall enterprises” (1991, p. 116). There seems to be a structured hierarchy of power within the Media Empire based on capital and decision making according to these titles. Studying the significance of gender content on the Prince’s Media Empire must consider the structure of power within his media channels from the directors or barons to the producers and presenters themselves. Media moguls tend to operate within a network of elites. They generally have close relations with politicians where both groups exchange services to advance their ends. Palmer and Tunstall (1991) say that this is what moguls do; they team up to maximise power.

In his book *the Contradictions of Media Power*, Freedman (2014) argued that “media power is best understood as a relational property – the ability, competition with others, to hegemonize the resources concentrated inside the media – but the popular shorthand for media power...often refers to those individuals who sit at the top of the largest communication corporations across the globe” (p. 31). Mills (1959) shelled the liberal accounts of the pluralist society in the United States when he argued that power was in fact centralised inside small

circles of elites. “By the power elites we refer to those political economic and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having at least national consequences (Mill, 1959, p. 18). Against his critics, Mill – foretelling Lukes’ (2005) ‘third face of Power’ – suggested that what matters is the capacity to act not the actions themselves. He said, “Their [media moguls] failure to act, their failure to make decisions, is itself an act that is often of greater consequence than the decisions they do make” (1959, p.4). Based on cases such as the Leveson Inquiry Freedman emphasises the need to move “beyond the ‘local’ and ‘textual’ and to turn our attention to the major social institutions and processes that circulate and embody media power in the world”. He suggests a focus on “ownership patterns, resource allocations, governance arrangements and policy and regulatory regimes in conjunction with an analysis of the means by which these embodiments of media power work to naturalise their own status and legitimize their own interpretations” (2014, p.15).

Sociologist Stephen Lukes (2005 [1975]) named three faces of power defining it as domination based on Gramsci’s conception of ‘hegemony’ and the concept of ‘manufacturing consent’ that ensure compliance of the working force in a capitalist system. Later on, he integrated the work of scholars such as Bourdieu and Foucault to offer a more nuanced and revised version of his definition; developing his concept the ‘third face’ of power furthermore to imply that domination does not only occur via coercive means but via unconscious mechanisms as well. In other words, ‘naturalization’ and ‘misrecognition’ make compliance an internalised disposition. As for social actors he writes that they “do not have unitary or dual, but multiple and conflicting interests, which are interests of different kinds, and their identities are not confined to their imputed class positions and destinies” (2005, p. 145). If we take these theories as methodology and combine them with Bourdieu’s toolbox we can perhaps understand the power of Prince Al Waleed before understanding the power of gender discourses and narratives around his diverse Media Empire.

Bourdieu provided an interesting toolbox that can help to understand the Prince as an agent in different fields of power. In his mammoth work *Distinction* (1979), *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *The Rules of Art* (1996) he developed his field theory where he advanced that society is composed of fields organized by doxa; whereby

“**A field** is a field of forces within which agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they take with respect to the field, these positions-takings being

aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field.” (2005, p. 30)

He also introduced the term **cultural fields** defining the term as “a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 93). The cultural field seems to be less static than Bourdieu’s main field which leaves room to understand movements of people and shift of media platforms and technologies as they evolve or change. “Bourdieu understands the concept of cultural field to refer to fluid and dynamic, rather than static, entities. Cultural fields are made up not simply of institutions and rules, but of the interactions between institutions, rules and practices” (Webb et al, 2002, p. 22). Conflict constitutes the cultural field and is constituted by it in the meantime; especially, “when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field, and how that capital is to be distributed” (Webb et al, 2002, p. 22). Resistance, agency and tactics become key yet complex players in the process of conservation and change.

Any structured field needs rules to operate. Bourdieu uses the term **doxa** to speak about these rules and the core values commonly known within a field to organise its fundamental principles. These rules regulate a field and are generally viewed as essentially “true and necessary.” For him, “the ‘doxic attitude’ means bodily and unconscious submission to conditions that are in fact quite arbitrary and contingent” (Webb et al, 2002, p. xi). As he wrote:

“Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games...are not ‘fair games’. Without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations” (2000, p. 214–15).

He then uses the term *illusio* to explain how agents in the fields carry on playing the game as long as they believe in the worthiness of its continuity. As quoted in Webb et al, he defines *Illusio* as

“the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing...that playing is worth the effort..., to participate, to admit that the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing; it is to recognise the game and to recognise its stakes. When you read, in Saint-Simon, about the quarrel of hats (who should bow first), if you were not born in a court society, if you do not possess the *habitus* of a person of the court, if the structures of the game are not also in your mind, the quarrel will seem ridiculous and futile to you” (1998d, p. 76–7) (2002, p. 26).

For Bourdieu an agent in the field has *habitus* which is a “structuring structure” that uses symbolic capitals to change society and is changed in the process as well. *Habitus* seems to be the total capital that an individual accumulates during his life span as influenced by social class. So when an individual accumulates capital from his socio-economic and cultural environment it is this specific capital that forms his *habitus*. While the person is then structured by this process of accumulation/*habitus*, it is exactly this *habitus* that they use to structure the world around them. Harker et al concisely explain what Bourdieu means by capital:

The definition of **capital** is very wide for Bourdieu and includes material things (which can have symbolic value), as well as ‘untouchable’ but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), along with cultural capital (defined as culturally valued taste and consumption patterns)... For Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended ‘to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation’ (1990, p. 1).

He names four sets of capital, Economic, cultural, sociological and symbolic. The economic capital can be understood as the individual’s command over cash and assets. The cultural capital is knowledge, experience, connections that a person meets through a life span and which differentiate one agent from the other. Bourdieu’s social capital is a class based concept whereby an agent has access to resources based on his group, kin, network, class, memberships, etc. He adds to these a symbolic capital which is the resources available to a person based on honour, prestige or recognition. These capitals form the agent’s *habitus* and are formed by it. The agent then acts in the field using his *Habitus* according to his *illusio* as guided by *doxa* and the power of the other agents who compete with his in the field (See Bourdieu, 2000). Chapter four attempts to use these concepts to better understand Al Waleed’s strategies and tactics in his Media Empire after a long consideration of the way he formed each channel and the way he run them. It is by understanding the mogul’s powers and tactics that the significance of gender rights discourse in his institutions of power can be fathomed.

Bourdieu’s work generated criticism at different levels. Sullivan (2002) argued that his use of different concepts to explain his theory lacks a thorough conceptual clarity. I suppose the complexity of Bourdieu’s theories left room for researchers to make use of his concepts according to their own needs. Thus lack of clarity can be read in a positive way here as Bourdieu’s concepts should give minimum structure to the analysis not determine its outcomes.

Sullivan goes further to dwell with the links he makes between the different concepts challenging his rationale.

The strength of the link that Bourdieu suggests between cultural capital, educational credentials and occupational positions may be questioned, as in fact, the correspondence between cultural capital and educational credentials as well as the correspondence between educational credentials and elite occupational positions is far from complete. It may be that one has to see the strength of Bourdieu's claim in the light of the French context, where there is a distinctive link between the *grandes écoles* and high positions in the professions and government administration (Sullivan, 2002, p. 146).

The link he makes between his concepts should indeed be examined trying different fields of power which can stretch the concepts themselves. Such approach is more useful than dismissing the entire Bourdieusian toolbox based on specific fields; education in the case above. Bourdieu, was also criticized for showing no consideration to gender (Kanter in Robinson & Garnier, 1986) despite his position that masculine domination is a form of "symbolic violence"³ (Bourdieu, 2001).

Bourdieu tried to position himself outside of the dichotomy of structure and agency but critics were not convinced that his conceptualization of *habitus* is not deterministic (see DiMaggio, 1979 and King, 2000). In *The Practice Everyday Life* (1984), Michel De Certeau departed from Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1979) and tried to avoid determinism in his analysis of the quotidian. De Certeau's "creative resistance" made an interesting distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' in an everyday life context. Borrowed from the military, "strategy" and "tactics" refer to the distinctive way dominant producers and dominated consumers interact. Strategy is the tool of the powerful while tactic is the creative subversion of the rational and ordinary individual (De Certeau, 1984, p. 34).

De Certeau says "in 'using' and 'consuming' culture, ordinary persons are engaged, at the most basic level in which life is lived, in a 'making', a poiesis, but a 'hidden one because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order'. 'To consume' (or use) culture is, therefore, also to engage in its production" (De Certeau in Spiegel, 2004, p. 217). In defining tactics as the tool of the weak De Certeau introduced the term "making-do" or the "perruque" as a "sly", "foxy" and "quick" mode of use during everyday life (1984, p. 29). Using Bourdieu's toolbox in

³ "Symbolic violence , to put it as tersely and simply as possible is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1991, p. 272)

conjuncture with De Certeau's strategies, tactics and making-do can form a solid ground to make the link between the Prince as a media mogul, the agents in his media realm and gender content as a discourse of power across the channels.

Al Waleed and his Empire attracted many political economists who enumerated his acquisitions and re-emphasised or questioned his status. Al-Rasheed calls Media Empires in the Middle East "states within states". She explains how an entrepreneur such as Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal

"Consolidates the new model of the Saudi businessman, and promotes the economic liberalization adopted by the state. Yet he can thwart state ideology and vision with satellite television promoting Western programs, pop culture, and female emancipation, in defiance of strict Wahabi preaching condemning such innovations" (2008, p. 19).

In her book *Kingdom Without Borders* Al Rasheed seems to take Al Waleed's power and statements as presented by himself via his carefully tailored public relations project to exemplify how Saudi Arabian politics/power transcend its borders. It is not clear however if the Prince is indeed able to "thwart state ideology" or if he is indeed "promoting Western programs, pop culture, and women emancipation" as iterated by Al Rasheed. In the same edition, Noha Mellor (2008) presents the Prince as an example of shift and contest to the traditional culture of Saudi Arabia that faced the challenge imposed by the new trends of globalization. She explains that he forms a 'power bloc' with 'global media tycoons' and those in 'high-profile industries' which made him embrace a "Western cultural authority rather than seeking consensus with other Saudi elite groups" (2008, p. 369). It is not clear if the Prince is indeed embracing "western cultural authority" or if he is not seeking consensus "with other elite groups". Chapter four explores this closely looking into the tactics and methods of a power that Prince Al Waleed uses to understand the extent of his power and fathom his apparent intention and explicit goals.

2- The emergence of Prince Al Waleed's Pan Arab Media Empire:

Prince Al Waleed emerged as a media mogul just recently but his Media Empire grew and metamorphosed significantly within a short period of time. Naomi Sakr's (2003, 2007, 2013) work includes detailed political economy accounts of how Prince Al Waleed gradually acquired and expanded his media portfolio monopolizing the cinema and music industries to enhance his flashy business empire and thus become the Middle East's media mogul par excellence. I highlight below some key points of these strategic acquisitions whereby the Prince operated from

within this Middle Eastern burgeoning media system to build his own empire for what seems to be a fixed end as shall be demonstrated in chapter four.

- **The Rotana⁴ group: A fast evolving and metamorphosing bouquet:**

The Rotana group is the jewel in the Prince's bouquet of free to air Pan Arab satellite channels. It expanded very quickly metamorphosing through time influenced by the Prince's changing agendas. According to Sakr, before he increased its ownership stake to 100% in 2003, Al Waleed had already bought shares in key U.S. media firms like Time Warner, News Corporation, and Disney in the 1990s. "Rotana Cinema, launched at the start of 2005, distinguished itself not only by being free-to-air but by showing recent movies. Older ones were concentrated in another channel; Rotana Zaman" (2007, p. 131 see also 2013, p. 2285). Prince Al Waleed's Pan Arab satellite channels were built in a way that ensured hegemony over the main entertainment genres. As shall be explored in chapter four, they expanded and metamorphosed over the period of this research significantly. Rotana group specialized in entertainment programming filling a big gap in the Arab free to air satellite space and becoming a leading group in music and filmmaking industries. As Sakr (2013) highlights:

"In 2010, after Rotana had grown from a music producer and record label into a full-scale transnational conglomerate, encompassing regional television channels, radio stations, film production, a film library, a magazine, and advertising sales operation, News Corporation's Rupert Murdoch returned Alwaleed's earlier compliment by taking a stake in Rotana. Together, the two companies established a Middle East base for the Fox Movies channel of News Corp.'s Hollywood studio 20th Century Fox, and in 2012, News Corp. increased its stake in Rotana to nearly 19%." (p. 2285)

Indeed, Al Waleed maximised his power by teaming up with Rupert Murdoch making the content that circulates in his empire overwhelmingly diverse yet strategically monopolized; only the other Saudi group, MBC, operates at the same scale. Rotana preceded MBC's to specialization. With the acquisition of two thirds of the Egyptian cinema heritage starting from works produced as early as the 1930s it fuelled its cinematic library boosting *Rotana Classic* (the channel specialized in old movies) and *Ratana Cinema* (the channel specialized in movies after the 1980s) (See Sakr, 2007, p. 131-132). Sakr adds:

"That level of control may have encouraged Rotana's own entry into movie-making in 2006, but it did not augur well for diversity of investment in film production. Meanwhile, obstacles to local exhibition, even of films that had won awards at local festivals,

⁴A name used for dates in Arabic; a fruit that symbolizes Saudi Arabia and forms part of the *Sunna* too as part of the Prophet's food, breaking the fast etc.

undermined the effect of the very limited state subsidies available. Investment in new films by independent producers remained limited even after the major expansion in television airtime devoted to film...” (2007, p. 132)

The Rotana group took the bold step to produce the first Saudi movies where the first Saudi female Actor and the first Saudi female director emerged as movie icons from conservative Saudi Arabia as shall be detailed in chapter six of this research. Perhaps the Prince did not focus on diversity as much as he targeted the content he strategically aims at and judges necessary for his own ends. Chapter Seven explores the story line favoured in the Prince’s Saudi cinematic projects; which are scheduled with popular Egyptian cinema productions during prime time slots for maximum market access.

- **LBC Sat: Entertainments from the Lebanese Militias to the Saudi Petro dollars**

LBC Sat is another important acquisition within Al Waleed’s Media Empire which at start diversified his portfolio making him a strong rival to the MBC group. LBC Sat, precedes MBC; its closest channel in terms of programming and audience reach and enjoyed a much more liberal approach to content before Al Waleed’s acquisition. By adding it to his bouquet Prince Al Waleed maximized the power of his media realm significantly. As quoted by Kraidy the press release marking this acquisition included mutual praise between Prince Al Waleed and LBC’s chairman Pierre Daher. “In today’s media landscape only groups able to offer a comprehensive package of targeted channels to advertising markets are expected to grow two to three fold over the next five years and we intend to be part of that growth” said Daher (Kraidy, 2010, p. 85). Described as “altruistic”, Al Waleed’s objectives from buying LBC Sat’s shares aimed at “contributing to social and cultural development and raising Arab media to the highest ‘international levels’” (Kraidy, 2010, p. 85). Al Waleed’s and Daher’s union appeared to be commercial at start. The shift in LBC Sat’s programming and the inclusion of Saudi staff and Saudi content that changed the identity of the channel and made it lose a large audience put this union into question. It seems that the target from buying the channel was not merely about commerce. More than that, the enthusiasm expressed at the beginning of this venture is currently changed into a legal case between Daher and Al Waleed as shall be explored in chapter four.

Apart from competing with MBC, LBC Sat was significant for the Prince for other reasons as well:

“As the longest running privately owned Arab television channel, LBC reflects the rise of American style broadcasting over the older, European-inspired, system. This is evidenced

by the station's choice of a three-letter acronym name, its focus on entertainment programs, and its reliance on advertisements. Even as a partisan voice in the war, LBC from its early days was run as a business, for example broadcasting special Ramadan programs for Muslim audiences during the civil war" (Kraidy, 2007, p.142)

Indeed, the channel has a large audience base thanks to these specific features but most importantly different genres made the label LBC popular and controversial at the same time as soon as it reached the satellite space. While importing television content and adopting international media programs seemed a safe solution to fill the large airtime space available to Arab satellite televisions, the diffusion of Western-style professional media orientations and practices based on critical and pluralistic views of society was viewed by many as cultural imperialism (Ayish, 2002, p. 142). Subsequently, "the sudden and addictive impact of Western products such as video games, music CDs, computer software, films and television programs" renewed this all-time perception of the West as a threat to the Arab/Muslim identity. It enhanced the Arab World's self-protectiveness from the "imperialistic" West (Gher and Amin, 1999, p. 84).

Khaled Hroub explained how the Arab media is "accused of 'spoiling and corrupting' youth and spreading the culture of 'Arab pop' and 'vulgar songs' and similar forms of entertainment" (2006, p. 107). These programs are accused of spreading effeminacy among youth in the Middle East he added. He also warned that these youth are likely to be "Westernized" despite their guardians' wish to "Arabize" them. "If strictness and seriousness are the only assets of entertainment broadcasting in the Arab satellite channels, there will be an automatic repulsion of millions of Arab male and female teenagers who will be driven to reorient their TV dishes towards western entertainment broadcasts" (Hroub, 2006, p. 108). LBC Sat was the early free to air Pan Arab satellite channel that gained popularity with late entertainment shows such as *Ya lāil Ya 'āyn*⁵, *Btikhssar idha mā btil'āb*⁶, movies, Lebanese and Mexican⁷ series and international news. Its programming influenced a new generation of transnational

⁵*Ya lāil Ya 'āyn* is a phrase used to start and during a Mawwal which is the traditional genre of music that comes before a song when the singer has a distinctive voice. As it literally means Night and Eye it has a connotation of Sahar which is staying up to party or to mourn a loved one or/and long for them. Both meanings apply to staying up at night when songs are involved in the Middle East. This show was extremely popular as it invited singers and celebrities for a Sahar whereby they compete in groups, sing and karaoke, joke and entertain Lebanese style.

⁶*Btikhssar idha mā btil'āb* (You Lose if you Don't Play) was one of the early game shows that put media personality Tony Khalifa on the path to fame in no time to produce some of the most popular shows in the Middle East such as *Sa'ā Bi 'urbi El Ḥābib* (One hour next to the beloved); a talk show with selected celebrities.

⁷ Unlike the other channels LBC Sat did not censor the series and showed the intimate scenes which disappeared or was reduced significantly with Al Waleed's acquisition.

satellite television consumers. What the channel represented was what the Prince bought as shall be explored in Chapter Four.

The period of 2002-03, when Al Waleed started to develop his Rotana group and became interested in LBC-Sat, is the time when the Prince was interested in Lebanese politics and probably a political office. Sakr reported that:

“In March 2002, in recognition of the Prince’s humanitarian contributions to Lebanon, the president, Emile Lahoud, awarded him the country’s highest honour, the Order of the Cedars. At around this time, coinciding with an Arab League summit meeting in Beirut, Alwaleed began to be increasingly critical of Lebanon’s then Prime Minister, the late Rafiq Hariri, himself the holder of Saudi as well as Lebanese nationality.” (2007, p. 175)

By becoming Lebanese just like Rafik Al Hariri, who developed his fortune in Saudi Arabia and acquired Saudi citizenship by royal decree, and by being the grandson of the founder of modern Lebanon Riad Al Solh speculations circulated that the Prince was looking for a political office in Lebanon. Al Waleed himself did not shy away from expressing willingness to serve if his mother’s and grandfather’s homeland called upon his help. He supported the President of the time Emile Lahoud, showed concern for the Sunni faction that Hariri represented, and engaged in philanthropic work serving the Lebanese people regardless of sect and religion via the development projects of his Al Waleed Humanitarian Foundation in Lebanon.

In July 2003 the Prince announced at a press conference that, in Lebanon’s ‘unstable’ political situation, with strains between the president and prime minister, he supported Lahoud, and urged politicians to do the same to tackle the country’s mounting public debt. Referring indirectly to Hariri’s heavy investment in the Lebanese capital, Alwaleed said, ‘Lebanon is not only *Solidère* and Western Beirut.’” (Sakr, 2007, p. 175)

Al Waleed’s competition with Al Hariri seems to be similar to that with his cousins and uncles in Saudi Arabia. If in Lebanon he used the economy and political stability against Al Hariri in Saudi Arabia he added to that religious extremism and the urge for modernity for both development and to counter terrorism as shall be explored later in this chapter. In 2003 once the LBC group ventured with the Pan Arab daily *Al-Hayat*- owned by Prince Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdel-Aziz, deputy defence minister of Saudi Arabia and son of Saudi Arabia’s defence minister [and descendant of Saudi Al Sudari⁸ clan] Al Waleed bought out ART’s share in LBC-Sat (Sakr, 2007, p. 176). It seems, according to Jihad Al Khazen, a former editor-in-chief of *Al-Hayat*, that

⁸ Chapter four highlights the Prince’s power struggle with Al Sudari uncles and cousins within the Saudi political system.

Pierre Daher is the one who initiated the venture because LBC needed to emerge as a strong source of news not only entertainment (Sakr, 2007, p. 176-177). While this might be true, such a venture could never be reached if Al Waleed did not desire to reach the news arena that is strictly monopolized in the Middle East to date. He finally reached the news business sphere or in the process of accessing it in 2014 via his news channel Al Arab that was shut down the first day it went on air. Indeed the Prince's political statements and actions need to be studied closely, the scale of media power he acquired in a short period of time lacks assessment, and the large audience he reaches with frequent direct statements are hardly studied.

- **Al Resalah⁹ TV: The new Iqraa TV & the deployment of religious stardom:**

When this research started, Al Resalah TV was the newest acquisition of the Prince. In March 2006 Al Waleed launched the religious channel after he gave up ART's Iqra' three years earlier. According to Sakr:

“viewers immediately recognized it as a cross between Iqra' and Alwaleed's bouquet of Rotana music and film channels, prompting one to sum it up as Iqra' TV with a Rotana flavour.’ This assessment was no throwaway line. The man appointed to head Al-Resalah's Cairo bureau was none other than Ahmad Abu Haiba, the producer who helped Amr Khaled to fame.” (2007, p. 145-155)

As she quoted, during the launch of the channel Al Waleed stated that Al Resalah would project “Arab heritage through a modern medium” and “Islam as a religion of moderation” while Abu Haiba stated that the channel would be successful “only if it could promote ideas without losing money” (Sakr, 2007, p. 155). Like in LBC Sat, within few years these opening notes became political statements as they failed to live up to their promised achievements and alter stated targets for reasons that shall be explored in each of the chapters' findings. Little is, indeed, known about content in all religious channels. Al Resalah TV, after monopolizing every single religious celebrity, was hoping to attract advertising and pay for its own production but the political agendas behind these platforms and the general political situation where they operate make everything vulnerable to unpredictable change. Sakr stated that:

“Alwaleed told the channel's general manager, Tareq Al-Suwaidan, that its aim should be to ‘serve Islam and...change the ideas of the youth about terrorism.’ But its combination of general knowledge quizzes, conservative music videos and a programme aimed to inspire young entrepreneurs also made the channel a deliberate remix of education and entertainment formats already familiar from other sources. (Sakr, 2007, p. 155)

⁹Al Resalah in Arabic means “the message.”

Indeed, based on Al Waleed's statements, targets and all the promising assumptions about revolutionary trends in terms of new styles and content in religious programming, one cannot understand what makes these channels fail to live up to their promises. Only when a proper content study that considers the different formats of the shows, their content and the human capital powers involved in the production process of these religious programs can help understand this business of content making. To date we are not sure what kind of "education" is tailored on entertainment shows for such a large and diverse audience as that of the Arabic speaking countries.

II- Gender Discourse & Narratives in Arab Talk Shows & Cinema:

1- Talk shows: conversation for conversion

- **The paradigms of consensus, chaos, control and contradiction:**

If television is part of popular or 'low' culture as Livingston and Lunt (2001) would put it, it demarcates a space of shifts and power. Such space is perfectly described by Shields (1991) as having "a history of transformations between being margins, near-sacred *liminal zones* of Otherness, and carnivalesque leisure spaces of ritual inversion of the dominant, authorized cultures' (p. 5-6). A culturally focused investigation of media power necessitates a detailed exploration of textual processes and discursive mechanisms (Freedman, 2014, p. 15). Couldry suggests an investigation of naming, framing, ordering, spacing, and imagining (2000, p. 42). McCullagh, on the other hand, saw agenda-setting, imitating, sourcing and representing as the true engines of media power (2000, p. 42). There is a plethora of hegemonic terminologies traced back to Gramsci and his followers that can be useful for this research. However, in order to remain focused on the different formats and styles of discourses that repeat specific gender content, Freedman's (2005) four paradigms can present an interesting tool for analysing talk shows as power spaces. They can give a nuanced, a rich platform and enough liberty to explore the different talk show spaces across Al Waleed's Media Empire.

Based on Sparks's¹⁰ idea that paradigms are not a naturally occurring but purposeful ways to make sense of the world, Freedman offered a four paradigm to understand media power; consensus, chaos, control and contradiction (2005, p. 16). **The consensus paradigm** is best suited for an earlier phase of media history as Freedman argues (2005, p. 18). It resonates with a

¹⁰Sparks, C., 2007. *Globalization, development and the mass media*. London: Sage.

'liberal functionalist' perspective on media, "described by James Curran as one where the media role is to assist the collective self-realization, co-ordination, democratic management, social integration and adaptation of society" (Curran, 2002, p.136). Despite "the emergence of digital technologies and 'empowered' consumers, it is stubbornly resistant to change and remains the default language of policymakers wishing to nurture 'open' and 'competitive' media markets" (Freedman, 2005, p. 19).

The chaos paradigm bypasses singular factors like class, hierarchy and wealth as a basis to sustain unequal social relations to look at the ideological diffusion and structural uncertainty as a new base. This reflects the dispersed and 'fluid' properties of power in a digital age (Freedman, 2005, p. 20). According to McNair (2006),

"Power evaporates, dilutes, and drains away as environmental conditions change. Communication is the medium through which power resources are disseminated, and leaky channels of communication therefore mean less secure power centres." (p. 200)

In other words, in such new dispositions, traditional systems of gatekeeping and ideological control dissolve opening room for different types of content and perspectives in the media. Garfield (2009) calls this shift in power relations 'seismic':

"The first element of the Chaos Scenario...creates an inexorable death spiral, in which the fragmentation of audience and DVR ad skipping lead to an exodus of advertisers, leading in turn to an exodus of capital, leading to a decline in the quality of content, leading to further audience defection, leading to further advertiser defection and so on to oblivion." (p. 38)

McNair's new, fluid, social and ideological environment that benefited from the communicative profusion is benefiting from convergence in a way that has a significant political impact according to Henry Jenkins (2006). Jenkins explains how the process of convergence makes it much harder for elites to impose their authority (p. 278).

There are many approaches to the **control paradigm** but what is worth noting here is the propaganda model by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988):

"Through a combination of capitalist property relations and an orientation on profit; the existing of advertising as a key source of capital; the domination of elite sources; sustained attacks on any material that challenges these sources and elite agendas; and construction of an 'enemy' whether (Communism or Islamism) around which population (and media agendas) can unite, the mainstream media environment is structured in such a way as to dissent and steer public action towards the interests of the ruling elites." (Freedman, 2005, p. 23)

The **contradiction paradigm** however is a modification of the control paradigm. It focuses on the internal contradictions of a media system. “These contradictions are played out both at the level of institutions and ideas, material as well as symbolic practices” (Freedman, 2005, p. 26). The theoretical framework of these paradigms is a good starting methodology to understand talk shows as power structures hosted by what Bourdieu calls “cultural intermediaries” but at the same time link this discursive power to that of the power of the media mogul at the macro-level.

As Castells put it “power is the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor’s will, interests, and values” (Castells, 2009, p. 9). The work of Gramsci saw “civil society as the public sphere where trade unions and political parties gained concessions from the bourgeois state, and the sphere in which ideas and beliefs were shaped, where bourgeois ‘hegemony’ was reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions to ‘manufacture consent’ and legitimacy” (Heywood, 1994, p 100-101). Gramsci’s ideas conditioned the “war of attack” or revolutions against a hegemonic system by a necessary “war of position” which is the struggle that shapes ideas, culture and beliefs (1971). This idea of ‘counter-hegemonic’ activism challenging normativity and establishing legitimacies has had broad plea in social and political movements. It contributed to the idea that “knowledge” is a social construct serving to legitimate social structures (Heywood, 1994, p. 101). If knowledge is generated by language then the study of language as a discourse of power should expose power and its resistance tactics. The great claim about discourse is what Foucault (1980) advanced in his work *Power/Knowledge* based on all his books about institutional power.

“Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it... We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart.” (Foucault, 1998, p. 100-1)

Foucault (1976) characterized discourse as a “strategic battle field”, “a weapon of power, of control, of subjection, of qualification and of disqualification” (p. 123). He did not limit the discursive power to utter reproduction of existing social relations; instead he characterized it using the spirit of war where both loss and victory are possible yet nothing remains the same.

Discourse is the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others (even if it means returning them), words that the others understand and accept (and,

possibly, return from their side) – this fact is in itself force. Discourse is, with respect to the relation of forces, not merely a surface of inscription, but something that brings about effects. (Foucault 1976, 124)

It is not clear how such discursive power is played or imputed in the Arab talk show space when discussing gender related matters. It is not clear if such discourse takes an emancipatory approach or reproduced the regulatory forms of policing gender in the Middle East. Marc Lynch (2008) argues that the lack of serious content analysis in literature of Arab media leads “to impute content to stations based on assumption and anecdotal evidence”. He recommends statistical or more descriptive content analysis to fill the empirical void (2008, p. 21). Livingstone and Lunt (1994) explain that TV as a “social space has the potential for both the reproduction of existing beliefs, representations and practices and the transformation of traditional social forms through the construction of a public sphere which mediates between established power (via argument and accountability) and everyday experience (via storytelling)” (p. 172). For John Stewart Mill and Elihu Katz “conversation is a key step in the formation of public opinion in the space between press and parliament” (in Peters, 2007 p. 115). “Feminists and postcolonial theorists have long called for encounter and dialogue as contrasts to sexist and racist oppression” (Peters, 2007 p, 116). Thus if conversation is unquestionably this good its absence must be bad.

- **Arabic talk shows: creativity and format adaptation as a problem**

Cultural intermediaries are “these ‘need merchants’, sellers of symbolic goods and services who always sell themselves as models and as guarantors of the value of their products, who sell so well because they believe in what they sell ...” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 365). Undeniably, the launch of “commercial television” in the Arab world has not only widened viewers’ programming choices, but also enabled better access to new formats and styles which are rarely visible on government monopolised television (Ayish, 2002, p. 142). The emergence of various satellite channels have brought to the Arab household a wider range of program choices, but most importantly new public affairs genres that seem to shape television journalism practices on the Arab satellite television (Ayish 2002, Rugh 2004, Sakr 2001). Drawing on the public service and centralised broadcast systems dominant in former colonial nations, strong government control over television organisations virtually stripped broadcasters of their editorial

autonomy (Ayish, 2002, p. 138). Today, to live up to this promising offer of variety in terms of entertainment broadcasting, broadcasters have a large space to fill. On top of importing content and formats, they are compelled to produce a large media content fit with their specific needs; thus they are constantly in need of new talent and creativity. Such a need raises questions about ethical practices and copyrights of creativity within the Arab talk show space.

The latest trends of talk shows in the Middle East are either adapted formats or “inspired” *copies* from international shows; not to say plagiarism. The main literature that focused on studying adapted format in the Middle East was attracted to game shows or music reality TV, especially LBC Sat’s Star Academy, namely in the work of scholars such as Kraidy (2002, 2006, 2008, 2009) and Khalil (2004, 2006, 2008). Thus we know little about content adapted for Arab audiences outside of the music industry. Joe Khalil stated:

“By the 80s, a practice Albert Moran refers to as ‘copycat TV’ had become common, in which major successes were “Arabized” versions of predominantly European and American shows. In the 90s, it became common for the concept of a Western show, its rights and production bible, to be bought and locally reproduced for regional consumption.” (2013, p. 52)

Favouring “copycat” content might put the producer/presenter in a secondary position when it comes to creativity and achievement. It even makes competition fierce and auto-censorship high within the trail of attracting audiences and thus satisfying television owners. As Moran noted “the question whether there can be copyright in a format is controversial, and the controversy is not confined to a handful of countries. There are very few (if any) countries in which it can be categorically stated that the law can or cannot protect a format (2006, p. 127).

Arab Social talk show genres are cheaper to produce or even copy. Yet as Paddy Scannell notes:

“The studio is the institutional discursive space of radio and television. It is a public space in which and from which institutional authority is maintained and displayed (and in which) it can define the terms of social interaction in its own domain by pre-allocating social roles and statues, and by controlling the content, style and duration of its events.” (1991, p. 2)

In the Middle East, we are yet to understand this space where content seems “easy” to produce or even copy. Livingstone highlights the complexity of the content produced in a space of power. “Whatever the intention of broadcasters in making...programmes, these do not determine the

nature of the product. This must be revealed through textual analysis, and the programmes have many unintended consequences which only audience research can discover (1994, p. 2).

Mittell (2003) looks into “how the talk show genre operates as a site of cultural hierarchies and identity formation for television audiences.” His approach to genres holds that “generic categories comprise discourses of definition, interpretation, and evaluation.” (p. 36). Critical discourse analysis in this research aims at understanding the implication of this cycle of defining, reinterpreting and evaluating focusing on gender rights content to properly fathom the power of the studio space, the genre and the discourse developed for a large diverse audience. Mittell cites the work of Bourdieu to highlight that “taste is not a universal component of aesthetics but rather an active cultural practice that work to both reproduce and produce social systems and hierarchies” (2003, p. 37). The implication here is that when a discourse of women rights or LGBTQ wrongs and rights is opened for public talk during the audience’s leisure time the private and public intertwine. How can the Arab talk show genre connect the individual and the collective without upsetting the rules of public and private spheres in the Middle East?

Bruun (2001) showed how the talk show space embodies a sense of simultaneity underscoring a tension between “uncertainty” and “sociability” which controls the decorum of the set. She stated:

“The two dimensions – the uncertainty factor and sociability – mean that the unpredictable and the unplanned, become important in the talk show, and it means that form, rules of politeness, and the treatment of others’ “face”, become extremely important in the talk show space. Both dimensions are essential elements in the genre.” (p. 251).

Tension and sociability are irreconcilable; consequently, a form of nervousness and anxiety exists. “This tension exists between the tendency towards chaos, danger, unpleasantness, and loss of face found in the uncertainty factor, on the one hand, and the other hand, the tendency towards impeccability, politeness, and pleasure of sociability...” Unlike other TV genres “the talk show can be expected, theoretically, to be “closer” to the interactional and behavioural framework which is characteristic of informal face-to-face communication” (Bruun, 2001, p. 251). Uncertainty and sociability led Bruun to four modes deployed by the talk show genre while interacting with audiences; debate, research, therapy, and consultation. These modes help the show progress and give roles and meanings to the host, guests and audience.

Relying on fixed structures and methods to produce content that succeeds to break through the private space of the Arab audience can be problematic when the topic puts other groups or individuals at risk. “Baudrillard (1988) argues that dramatic changes in the technology of reproduction have led to the implosion of representation and reality. Increasingly, the former becomes dominant as “simulacra” are substituted for a reality that has no foundation in experience” (cited in Gamson et Al, 1992, p. 374). The evening prime time talk shows on Al Waleed seem to rely a lot on confrontational styles and represent realities that have been contested as unreal or distortive of the real as shall be exposed in the analysis chapters. Only content analysis can expose whether the genre and its format upset because it depicts an erased real or because it is really a distortion. Is the real, that everybody is aware of, unworthy of representation and discussion?

To understand the way gender content was placed in talk show spaces the work of Karin Wetschanow (1999) builds on Habermas’s view about citizenship as a dependent variable on “the capacities for consent and speech” to go on and explore women’s status in this regard. If women are equal citizens their capacity to give consent and speak must be equal too. However, based on German talk shows cases Wetschanow notes that the “feminine discourse” is somehow linked to a subordinated “gossip” style. It “is conceived neither as “male” nor as a “dominant” mode of dialogue”. She adds:

The devaluation of “female discourse” as trivial, trashy and chatty, the meaningfulness of women’s utterances in general has been denied for centuries – and still is: “consider also that even outside of marriage the legal opinion widely holds that [if] a woman says no she means yes. It means...‘women find their speech...persistently and systematically invalidated in the crucial matter of consent, a matter that is fundamental to democracy. (But) if women’s words about consent are consistently reinterpreted, how can they participate in the debate among citizens?’ (1999, p. 14)

In fact, even the trashy and subordinate is ought studying. For the specificity of this research there are two main points at stake here. First the content of this “feminine discourse” and second the TV personality who produces/hosts it. As for the content chapter six explores the kind of discourses Arab women generate when they converse about their own rights and duties. But with respect to the TV host who directs such talk there are two different aspects to consider; one is the female host as a power in generating talk about women and second is the male host who talks about women’s matters especially in the powerful religious talk show genres. The question becomes whether these talk shows that open women or gender content in general crossing the

private to the public politicise such content for human rights activism or end up depoliticising it in the communicative process. In both cases there are effects that needs to be contextualised within the specific genres of Arabic talk shows. Is censorship/self-censorship/banality and *ad absurdum* an immediate result of talk in an attempt to stay within the rules of mainstream powers? As Wetschanow notes,

Talk shows are “entertaining and informing”, and are “dialogue[s] happening in a society of changing values and moral orientations”. “Because talk shows are “mediated” what we hear is never “the personal” or “the private” but always remains the production and dramatized representation of it.”(1999, p. 15).

Thus what *raison* does a talk show follow; that of the producer, the owner, the talk show host, the socio-cultural and political economic powers...? Who creates meaning in what seems to be an extremely powerful discursive space but a regulated one?

- **Arab reason: the implication of space and time**

At a different level, Sabry (2007) stressed, “a meaningful articulation of the media’s role in the construction of a democratic Arab public sphere cannot take shape outside a ‘thick’ understanding of contemporary Arab culture and society.” For this, he tried “to build epistemological bridges to problematic inherent to contemporary Arab thought”. Based on Habermas’s work as “a continuous search for a rational society...to make connections between what can be said today about Arab media, culture and society, and contemporary Arab thought” he turned to the philosophical work by Mohammed Abed Jabri; *A Critique of Arab Reason* (Sabry in Sakr, 2007b, p. 155). Jabri’s use of the work by André Lalande “distinguishes between two kinds of reason. One is ‘*la raison constituante*’ (Arabic: *al-‘aql al-mukawin*), which refers to the mental activity that creates knowledge, constructs meanings and decides on rules and principles. The second is ‘*la raison constituée*’ (Arabic: *al-‘aql al-mukawan*), referring to reason that is already constituted and which encompasses a whole repertoire, including the arts and sciences” (p. 156). Sabry further quotes Lalande’s definition of this ‘*raison constituée*’ as

“the reason that exists, as it is, in a given moment...what it is in our civilization and epoch...we should also say in our profession’ [which] ‘presents us with two characteristics of great importance’. ‘On the one hand it assures the cohesion of a group, more or less large, that claims its ownership...on the other hand, it can also be posed as an absolute by all those who have not yet acquired’ what Lalande calls ‘l’esprit critique nécessaire.’” (p. 156)

What Sabry explained based on Jabri displaces time in a given space. “The relationship between the old and the new...is unconscious, as what we forget of culture does not simply vanish, but stays in the unconscious. In this case, reason as an epistemological tool produces and is constructed in ‘an unconscious way’ (p. 157). The delicacy of this position is that it tries to understand the contemporary modern thoughts in a relational position with the past. Indeed, as Gramsci advanced in his *Prison Notebooks* (2011) history has left in us infinity of traces and collective memories but there is no inventory to such histories that includes the other as an equal not a suppressed identity. Thus, when an Arabic show speaks about women and LGBTQ rights as a new content in the studio space whose history and whose rights are addressed? What language is used? And when did it develop?

2- Cinema & “the creative act”: The spectatorship of gender stories:

- **Arabic Cinemas: the problem of historical and realist readings of the genre**

Les Cinémas Arabes or Arabic cinemas boomed between 1951 and 1971 whereby 1,012 movies were produced and circulated for a popular consumption. “Apart from a dozen patriotic films, about thirty-two realist films were shot, i.e., one and a half films per year over the whole period” (Shafik, 1998, p. 128). Sharqawi (1970) established that the Egyptian cinema started with melodramatic narratives. The melodrama of Egyptian cinema was based on culturally specific narratives that used “exaggerated dialogue” and “surreal conflicts”. These are usually plots of impossible love or love rendered difficult by circumstances such as wealth, rape, plots by antagonists, diseases and handicaps, etc. (Sharqawi, 1970, p. 68). Shafik was the first scholar to contextualise the Arabic cinemas outside of the history box using Western film theory to look into “the production of meaning” of the genre. She, however, focused on realism and social class. These movies landed today in Rotana’s library and are played according to a specific schedule. Chapter seven details the scheduling approach but how can we read these Arabic movies as “real.”

Shafik emphasised that “Egyptian realism differs remarkably in its themes and narration from the other genres of the Egyptian film industry—farce, melodrama, or musical.

Starting with national independence in the 1950s and 1960s, filmmaking in the Arab countries increasingly avoided fictive entertainment and examined social reality instead. Situated against the background of nationalist and Marxist ideology, cinematic realism (*alwaqi’iya*) aimed to reflect the world and daily life of the indigenous population. (1998, p. 127)

She stated that Egyptian realism started in the early 1950s, before all other Arab countries except Lebanon.

“...In general, realism was confined to three directors, Salah Abu Seif, Taufik Salih, and Youssef Chahine, whose works, with the exception of Salih, had a strong commercial element. Only for a short while during the 1960s were they joined by a few mainstream directors, among them Henri Barakat, Kamal El-Cheikh, and Hussein Kamal.” (1998, p. 128)

Such classification adds a specific value value to certain cinematic productions in an attempt to theorise them. Banzin (1971) maintained that for a film to be realist it must utilise a quasi-documentary style, refuse the star system, occasionally employ amateur actors, and to shoot in original locations to give the viewer a sense of authenticity (p. 25-28). Film archivist Farid Al-Mazzaoui complained “we have always heard this refrain when art critics were talking about Egyptian films, or Arab films in general. They want us to produce more realist films” (quoted in Armes 1987). Twenty years later, Armes and Malkmus (1992) noted that the refrain remained alive. The term “realist” was never made clear to the filmmakers in the Middle East; especially not during the period that Shafik classifies as ‘realist’. Perhaps it is worth looking at the artistic side and the imaginative power of cinema in the Middle East to understand its impacts on the large audience across the Middle East and through different times. What what might seem the work of realism at a given time is certainly not what attracted generations across different regions and periods of time; a new approach might be more revealing of cinema’s power to create a culture of gender rights.

Nitzan Ben Shaul (2007), maintained, “realist positions failed to provide a comprehensive account of the complex conventions of editing, film metaphors or narrative that construct even the most realists of films.” He added, “Formalist positions failed to account for the complex documentary import of film images and sounds” (2007, p. 4). The postmodern break from these positions came with Baudrillard’s *simulacra*.

The concept of simulacrum implied that film was neither a reproduction of reality nor its artistic abstraction. For Baudrillard reality is not an origin for an image re-presenting it since ‘reality’ is always-already an image or a simulation. This engendered a conception of film as one among other fluid successions of images and sounds whose tagging as ‘documentary’, ‘fictional’ or ‘artistic’ referred to nothing else but different and equally valid modes of simulation. (2007, p. 5)

Realists trust that cine-camera reveals concealed dimensions of the photographed object. Formalists, on the other hand see the photogenic as “an aesthetic quality derived solely from film’s stylistic transformations and abstractions of the recorded images”. While Baudrillard used the postmodern concept of the simulacrum to stress that reality is a simulation itself, thus film cannot be “a reproduction of reality nor its formalist abstraction”. (Ben-Shaul 2007, p. 8)

- **Cinema as a “creative act”:** appropriating narrative theories to a method for genre analysis

Since the work of early French philosophers, Marxists and psychoanalysts in cinema the shift moved to focus on movie content and narratives as an ‘act of art’ that uses unique techniques and systems to create meanings. Metz (1974, 1982) and Roland Barthes (1964) using Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) marked the shift towards content analysis in cinema. Metz noticed that film, mirror and dream are reflections of things perceived as tangible but lacking materiality. He applied Freud’s four ‘dream work’ psychic procedures (condensation, displacement, symbolization and secondary elaboration) to film articulation. Complementing the neo-Marxist Althusserian notion of ideology with Lacanian psychoanalysis, Metz and others argued that films offer viewers an illusion of empowerment by leading them to rehearse the joyful infantile ‘mirror stage’ suggested by Lacan. He noted the viewers’ identification with the point of view of a moving camera that creates a centred space converging into the viewer’s eye. Dayan argued that the shot–counter-shot editing strategy ‘sutures’ the spectator’s psyche to the film (Ben Shaul, 2007, p. 128).

Complex and skilful, “Deleuze’s philosophical oeuvre has become part of the philosophical canon, but within that discipline, his cinema books remain only scantily accounted for, and are absent from many philosophy and film theoretical works”¹¹ (Colman, 2011, p. 6). Distancing himself from the realism and phenomenology of Andre Bazin, he presents a rather interesting methodology of reading content in cinema without forgetting that it is a ‘creative act’. In his work *Cinema 1* ([1986] 2013) and *Cinema 2* ([1989] 2013), he provides tools of analysis that can be used in multiple ways. His approach to cinema uses the word “system” where “the image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows” (Deleuze, 2013, p. xii). His cine-system

¹¹Some of the main authors in the English scholarship who focused on Deleuze’s cinematography are Steven Shaviro (1993), D.N. Rodowick (1997), Barbara Kennedy (2000), Patricia Pisters (2003), Ronald Bogue (2003), Anna Powell (2005; 2007) and David Martin-Jones (2006).

consists of two movements; the time-movement¹², and space-movement. As for the space-movement Deleuze maintains in *Cinema 1 (C1)* “the **movement-image** produces its own world, its own universe in fact, a process of what philosopher Henri Bergson termed ‘meta-cinema’” (2013, p. 59). Matter is “a set of movement-images” (2013, p. 61). Deleuze proved that this ‘set’ is in fact an ‘infinite set’ wherein each set is extensive and forms what he termed a ‘Whole’ or ‘Open’ as it ‘relates back to time or even to spirit rather than to content and to space’ (C1, p. 59; C1. P. 16–17; see also chapter 2 *Movement*). This movement-image, as Deleuze names it, thus has its own generative process of ‘cinematographic consciousness’; it is a living thing (Colman, 2011, p 14).

For Deleuze cinema is a step forward in the development of philosophy (as a discipline of human thoughts). Cinema is the utter representation of how the mind, body, and time regularly communicate and react to form some sort of human experience. This time is not the time as understood by realists but what he called time-movement

Deleuze’s discussion of the **time-image** is oriented by philosophical focus on the perception of forms, the description of reality, and the undertaking to account for the methodology of filmmaking techniques and practices. (Colman, 2011, p. 14)

He focuses on frame, shot and cut, montage, perception and affect. His approach to the different types of cinematic images answers three main questions

1. How does a screen form produce content?
2. How do screen-based forms become autonomous?
3. How does cinema produce philosophical concepts? (Colman, 2011, p. 12)

Following Deleuze’s philosophy, based on the traditional narrative theorists¹³ this research relooks at the cinematic space as a different platform apt to plot gender content differently. It looks at how Al Waleed used this potential via his Rotana Classic and Rotana Film channels using and opening more spaces for women rights discourse and narratives.

¹²Influential for his entire philosophical oeuvre, Deleuze wrote monographs on philosophers especially concerned with issues of difference and time: Kant (Deleuze [1963] 1984), Spinoza (Deleuze [1968] 1990a; [1970] 1988a), Nietzsche (Deleuze [1962] 1983a), Bergson (Deleuze [1966] 1991), and books on Foucault (Deleuze [1986] 1988b) and Leibniz (Deleuze [1988] 1993), the latter two published in France directly after the two cinema books (Colman, 2011, p. 14)

¹³ Tzvetan Todorov (1969), Claude Levi Strauss (1949), Vladimir Propp (1948), Roland Barthes (1975), Victor Shlovsky (1990, 2008)

III- Gender rights discourses in the Middle East: *Being* and *Becoming* a gender

1- On being and becoming a gender:

The work of Derrida concluded that it is impossible to eliminate structural inequalities within the system as currently constituted and the attempt to do so will inevitably replicate rather than transform the system (1967a¹⁴, 1967b¹⁵, 1972¹⁶). Following a long line of modern philosophers and influencing many others he invited, to engage in a deconstruction looking at the relationship between text and meaning. He introduced the term ‘*différance*’ with an “a” for such deconstruction as follows:

“On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a spacing and temporalizing that puts off until “later” what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible. Sometimes the *different* and sometimes the *deferred* correspond [in French] to the verb “to differ.” This correlation, however, is not simply one between act and object, cause and effect, or primordial and derived.

In the one case “to differ” signifies non-identity; in the other case it signifies the order of the same. Yet there must be a common, although entirely *différente*, root within the sphere that relates the two movements of differing to one another. We provisionally give the name *différance* to this sameness which is not identical (Derrida, 2002, p. 129)

Derrida emphasises that *différance* is or can stand for “the juncture—rather than the summation—of what has been most decisively inscribed in the thought of what is conveniently called our ‘epoch’” (p. 130).

Based on this, Butler (2008) took gender to a different dimension by stating that one is not born a gender but becomes one because of language. She said, “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (2008, p. 33). She coined the term **gender performativity** as a thesis to politicise ‘possibilities of being’ for those gender identities that are not within the binary system of man and woman categories.

“...performativity seeks to counter a certain kind of positivism according to which we might begin with already delimited understandings of what gender, the state, and the economy are. Secondly, performativity works, when it works, to counter a certain metaphysical presumption about culturally constructed categories and to draw our attention to the diverse mechanisms of that construction. Thirdly, performativity starts to

¹⁴ Derrida, J. (2013 [1967a]). *Of grammatology*. New York: JHU Press.

¹⁵ Derrida, J. (1978 [1967b]). *Writing and difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁶ Derrida, J. (2004 [1972]). *Dissemination*. New York: A&C Black.

describe a set of processes that produce ontological effects, that is, that work to bring into being certain kinds of realities or, fourthly, that lead to certain kinds of socially binding consequences.” (2008, p. 147)

Influenced by the work of Lacan and Foucault, Butler tried to introduce a conception of performativity that sees gender as a concept outside language/text and that which is stylised by language too. In other words, what we understand about gender is limited language and the meaning is trapped inside it, it is differed and different in a Derridian sense.

Butler resisted categorisation in gender studies because it leads to discrimination due to shortages in language. In *Bodies that Matter* she says

“...if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of ‘before.’ Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an ‘I’ or a “we” who had not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being . . . the ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within the matrix of gender relations themselves” (1993, p. xvi).

In her book *Undoing Gender* she used Lacan’s (1959-1960) notion of “the real” and Foucault’s (1972-1977) “power Knowledge” to take a philosophical stance and act on it in her transgender activism. She emphasised the possibility of freedom without dismissing the reality of social norms and cultural constraints; after all the self is never outside of cultural influences it is just not determined by these influences. She wanted an activism without categorization (2004, p. 3-7). These positions seem delicate and almost inapplicable in an Arab context as popular culture based on religion believes that God gives attributes of femininity and masculinity.

2- Heteronormativity and the Ontology of the “Arab Gay”:

The work of Joseph Massad (2008) delicately stood in the same margin as Butler but with an attitude. Massad refused activism and categorisation all together. Influenced by Foucault’s *Queer theory* of the 1970s which asserts that there are no homosexuals, only homosexual acts he went further making use of Edward Said’s ideas to base his critique of the gender categorisation on Orientalism.¹⁷ He claimed that the category ‘Arab Gay’ was the creation of the ‘gay international’ (NGOs and international activists) and that women followed the international

¹⁷ Said, E., 1979. Orientalism. 1978. *New York: Vintage, 1994.*

NGOs that created gender categories where they did not exist. He also added that “the gay international’ has compelled straight or bisexual Arab men who used to practice their same-sex expressions into a gay or straight identity indifferently to seek a new constructed universal identity” (2007, 172). His controversial piece, *Desiring Arabs*, is a combination of intellectual history and literary criticism under the shadow of Edward Said (1979):

“The advent of colonialism and western capital to the Arab world has transformed most aspects of daily living; however, it has failed to impose a European heterosexual regime on all Arab men, although its efforts were successful in the upper classes and among the increasingly westernised middle classes. It is among members of these richer segments of society that the Gay International has found native informants. Although members of these classes who engage in same-sex relations have more recently adopted a western identity (as part of the package of the adoption of everything western by the classes to which they belong), they remain a minuscule minority among those men who engage in same-sex relations and who do not identify as “gay” nor express a need for gay politics.” (2007, 172-3)

Massad backed up his argument by reference to class, ideas of difference, orientalism and cultural specificity. His arguments created uproar among gender rights activists in the Middle East. The NGO *Helem*¹⁸ had a specific incident countering his arguments. In an interview with Ernesto Pagano (2009) Massad said:

“*Helem* is an organization founded by a tiny minority of individuals who want to assimilate into the Western gay movement. They are often provided by Gay Internationalists as a local example of gayness. Aside from the influence and active participation of non-Lebanese in the founding of the organization, *Helem* represents only its own members and can only speak for them. According to *Helem* spokesman Sharbil Mayda’, the organization only has 40 members, only 30 of whom identify as homosexual in a country of four million people, in a region of 300 million Arabs. It is hardly a major development as far as changes in sexual conceptions of identity.”¹⁹

Helem replied to Massad in the same platform via its founding member Ghassan Makarem refuting Massad’s position calling it slanderous and distortive of sexual minorities who spent years fighting for their rights to express themselves freely without being accused of inauthenticity. He said that Massad’s

¹⁸ In their official website *Helem* identifies itself as a leader of “a peaceful struggle for the liberation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgendered (LGBT), and other persons with non-conforming sexuality or gender identity in Lebanon from all sorts of violations of civil, political, economic, social, or cultural rights.”

¹⁹ Massad J., to Pagano, E.,. 2009. *The West and the Orientalism of sexuality*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/1530>. [Accessed 01 December 15].

“Privileged position as a university professor in the United States, at an institution that is formally Zionist and is funded by multinational corporations and government projects aimed (in part) to colonize our region. Massad cannot fathom the idea that persons from non-conformist sexualities have no need for “spokespersons” like him, or people like Irshad Manji. Both are equally ignorant of the realities of the issues of sexual liberation in the region.”²⁰

Massad replied again to Makarem and used the example of “the Queen Boat Affair” in Egypt to show how Arab gays, guided by the gay international, exhibited their homosexuality publicly and end up being punished for it. The “Queen Boat”²¹ episode led to unequivocal condemnation by Arab and Egyptian media and populations alike. Egyptian authorities, which did not have legislation against homosexuals in the past, engaged in serious human rights abuses, massively arresting and harshly prosecuting the inhabitants of the boat (2007, 184).

Whitaker (2009) as well, contested the idea that the gay international is interested in the Arab gay because of a ‘missionary’ and ‘orientalist impulse.’ He asserted that there are many reasons to steer gay rights activists’ sympathy towards their Arab counterparts. He stated “punishments for same-sex acts, for instance, tend to be heavier there, on paper if not always in practice, and the only countries in the world where the death penalty for sodomy still applies justify it on the basis of Islamic law” as an example (2009). Al Shawaf contested that Massad argument gives a pre-emptive right to Arab governments and heterosexuals to be violent against the gays in order to defend their culture from imperialism. Massad clearly wedded the gay identity to imperialism which according to Al Shawaf will only result to two evils: “either accept the current shame-ridden and legally murky situation, or openly embrace a homosexual identity and suffer mindless violence and explicit legal restrictions as a result” (2008, p. 106).

Such interactions between intellectuals and activists are but a small part of the dynamics of negotiating identities outside of the heteronormativity in the Middle East. Activists, intellectuals from all sides; orientalists, liberals even religious scholars are part of vivid on-going negotiations about the rights and wrongs of being a gender in the region. Such discourse is certainly influenced by history, the colonial legacy, literacy levels, economic conditions, the religiosity and the cultural diversity of the region but at the same time recreates a new modern

²⁰ Ghassan Makarem. 2009. *We are not agents of the West*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000001542>. [Accessed 01 December 15].

²¹ 52 men were tried under “debauchery” for suspicion of homosexual acts. See Hawley, C., 2001. *Anger Over Egypt Gay Trial*. BBC News [ONLINE] accessed 12 October 2015 available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1493041.stm

face for such legacies. The gender discourse on television then should bare traces of existing arguments and invite for new ones in the meantime.

In fact the fast growing nature of media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the MENA region or what Castell (1981) calls 'Network Society' and the exposure to Pan Arab and transnational television networks is rendering global discourses "glocal". The entire world is 'in transition' and any sort of development must therefore be rethought as a regional, transnational, global project (Pieterse, 2001, p. 45). As analysed by post-colonial theorists such as Appadurai (1989) and Homi K. Bhabha (1994) "transnationalization may reinforce cultural (and national) identities, but *transcultural* processes are also a central feature of reflexive global modernity, expressed as 'creolization' or 'cultural hybridity'". In the women and LGBTQ rights development context 'culture' manifests as a problematic concept (Hermer and Tufte, 2005, p. 16-17)

While the discourse of homosexuality is closely linked to the human rights project intellectually, and fall within the philosophy of being and becoming in the West it is subject to a different language in the Arabic popular culture. Homosexuality remains within the "unspeakable" category at the mass level. Arab homosexuals or "*Al Mithliyyin*"²² come to language via an insult jargon in the different Arabic dialects. Those who identify themselves as homosexuals suffer from apathy if not a war of attack in their quotidian. Foucault called homosexuality a social construct. A crucial feature of his analysis as described by Spargo is that:

"The individual is not viewed as an autonomous Cartesian subject ('I think therefore I am') who has an innate or essential identity that exists independently of language. What we commonly or casually think of as the 'self' is, instead regarded as a socially constructed fiction (albeit a serious one), as a product of language and of specific discourses linked to divisions of knowledge." (2000, p. 50)

In fact, Foucault and Spargo used this argument to analyse sexuality and challenge the notion that heterosexuality is an innate form of sexuality but only a constructed one; the same as homosexuality. Liuzzi quoted *the encyclopaedia of Bioethics* besides the church definition and Freud's opinion to define homosexuality:

"A homosexual person sustains a predominant, persistent and exclusive psychosexual attraction toward members of the same sex. A homosexual person is one who feels sexual desire and a sexual responsiveness to persons of the same sex and who sees or would like

²²From *Al-Mithliyya*: (literally sameness) a less value laden term developed by NGOs to call homosexuality although scholars like Joseph Massad (2006) refuses it as it remains a form of value laden categorisation.

to seek actual sexual fulfilment of this desire by sexual acts with a person of the same sex.” (2001, p. 15)

After living in Saudi Arabia, Koertge explained that “both men and women must prove their homosexuality is no passing fancy. To be purely homosexual, one must be pure in thought as well as deed” he added (1982, p. 52). Apparently he noticed sexual acts that did not conform to “pure” homosexuality. It is worth noting as well that the term sex in Arabic (*Gens*) was not defined using a sexual meaning in the Arabic dictionary *Lessan Al 'Arab* until the challenge of defining sexuality started to manifest in the West. Sex in Arabic was defined as the individual's gender (i.e. male or female). The Arab dictionary had to find equivalent terms in Arabic to the Western terms of sexuality before. In the same way, the Arabic language is today challenged to find adequate translations to speak about LGBT *matters*.

Indeed, homosexual in Arabic is translated as *Luṭi*, in reference to the people of Luṭ (Sodom); which is a constant reminder of how homosexuals in Luṭ's tribe were punished by God for their “transgression” and “lewdness”. Although a less heavy word ‘*mithly*’ was recently coined to refer to gays (males and females alike) by human rights NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, *luṭi* is the commonly known and most used term. Whitaker (2006) defines the term (*Al-Mithliya Al Jinssiya* literally: Sexual like-ness) as the closest meaning in Arabic for the term gay. The term *Mithly* is derived from *Al-Mithliya*, literally meaning the same as me, to refer to people who prefer people from their same sex. The Moroccan magazine, *Mithly*, newly launched against all critics, is the voice of gays in Morocco and hopes to change their label from *Shaz/Shad* (out of the norm) and *Zamel* (a Maghrebi way of saying faggot) to *Mithly*. Interestingly for those who study the Middle East as a homogenous region linguistically *Zamel* is a well-known family name in the Gulf specialised in the business of air conditioning. Thus when an advertising of these later passes on any Arab satellite channel including Al Waleed's the meaning evoked is unspeakable; thus Al Zamel airconditions is not advertised in North African anymore.

Other local terms vary depending on the different Arabic dialects. *Sakr* (the falcon) is used to call men who would play the active role in the homosexual relation but would never accept to be passive. It is used in Sudan and Gulf countries. *Boya* (a feminine way of saying the English term ‘boy’) is coined to call transsexuals or effeminates in some Gulf countries such as Kuwait and Bahrain. *Khoukhou* is a nickname for *Khawal* or *khawalat* in Egypt. Mennucci

defined the *Khawal* as “male transvestite dancers of the 19th century and pre-1952 days” (1998, p34). The nickname lowers the value of a man who is deemed incomplete because of his effeminacy. Another term commonly used in Egypt is *Shaz/Shad* (abnormal) and circulates all around the Middle East as it helps to understand anything out of the “natural” heterosexual relationship as something “deviant” or “pervert”.

Each of these terms is a whole world by its own. Each category overlaps with the others but stresses its distinct features when self-expressing its identity. In general, what is clearly manifest here is that the binary division of gender does not help the task of understanding the Arab society today. For the least, there is no global consensus of how gender should or should not be perceived. The mushrooming of these subcategories from the binary conformed male and female genders challenged both the legal realm and social norms. Lately, television forced the dialogue about this discrete unspeakable topic. So how do the West and Middle East reconcile in understanding and dealing with homosexuals? Do they see and treat them the same way? How is television bringing up the LGBT rights discourse in the Arab world?

Gays for men and lesbians for women are homosexuals who stress that they are not intersex or transsexuals. Several claims tried to prove that homosexuality is genetic, or of biological origins but in vain. The only biological case of homosexuality is intersexuality, yet intersexual individuals stress that they are not homosexuals. Unlike homosexuality, the term intersex is related to gender identity more than sexual desire. The intersex seems to be a clinical case that suffers from prejudices against homosexuals. The intersex is a person who shows “discordance between any level of genotypic and phenotypic expression of sexually dimorphic features” (Ettner, Eyler and Monstrey, 2007, p. 236). The term is used as a synonym of hermaphrodites. Indeed, as quoted from Mazur’s study (2005), intersexuality is a diversion from typical 46XX-female or 46XY-male presentations which makes it difficult to tell if the individual is a male or a female (Ibid).

Scientists discovered a variety of mosaic sex chromosomes including “XXX, XXY, XXXY, XYY, XYYY, XYYYY, and XO” (Currah, Juang, and Minter, 2006, p. 56). This causes two distinct clinical situations that are examples of the Aneuploidy which are extra or missing chromosomes cases that cause intersexuality. These are the Klinefelter syndrome (47 XXY or more) (males) or Turner syndrome (45 X, XXX, OX or more) (females) (Ettner, Eyler and Monstrey, 2007, p. 236-7). In fact, the diversion is not exclusive to chromosomes but it can be a

result of a number of disorders and circumstances including “gonadal sex disorders, internal organ anomalies, hormonal disorders, gender identity disorders, and surgical creation of an intersex condition” (Currah, Juang, and Minter, 2006, p. 57). What is important to retain here for the purpose of this research is that the intersex person is not within the binary gender features (i.e. male and female) because of a biological disorder not by choice which gives intersex subjects certain legal rights that other discontinuous gender identities hope to achieve.

Intersex people tend to stress that they are not transgender while transsexuals very often claim to be intersex in order to obtain some help. Transgender is a term used to describe individuals who are not within the binary definition of gender. As defined in Merriam Webster’s dictionary, they are individuals “who identify with or express a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person’s sex at birth (as a transsexual or transvestite).” The term has evolved widely since it was first coined. It is a very complicated social category, encompassing many subgroups that are not yet clearly defined. Virginia Prince, the first person to bring the term into usage, traces it back to Leslie Finberg as follows:

“There had to be some name for people like myself who Trans the gender barrier – meaning somebody who lives full time in the gender opposite to their anatomy.” (Currah, Juang, and Minter, 2006, p 3).

Though this might sound simple, there are different ways of transcending the gender barrier that are not yet clearly defined. The transsexuals²³, the transvestites²⁴, the cross dressers²⁵, the dragqueens²⁶, the bi-genderists²⁷, and so on, can all go under the transgender umbrella. As these

²³**The transsexual** is a person who strongly identifies with the opposite sex and may seek to live as a member of this sex especially by undergoing surgery and hormone therapy to obtain the necessary physical appearance (as by changing the external sex organs). There are two kinds of transsexuals: female to male (FTM) and male to female (MTF). See (Miracle, Miracle and Baumeister 2003)

²⁴**The transvestites** are individuals and especially males “who adopts the dress and often the behaviour typical of the opposite sex especially for purposes of emotional or sexual gratification” (Laws and O’Donohue 2008: 274)

²⁵**Cross-dressing** is the wearing of clothing and other accoutrement commonly associated with a gender within a particular society that is seen as different than the one usually presented by the dresser (Thornton (2010)

²⁶**A drag queen** is usually a man who dresses, and usually acts, like a caricature woman often for the purpose of entertaining or performing. There are many kinds of drag artists and they vary greatly, from professionals who have starred in movies to people who just try it once. Drag queens also vary by class and culture and can vary even within the same city. Although many

subcategories evolve and develop in language, they either want to be recognized as a special category standing by itself or stress their distinct characteristics from each other.

Last, Bisexuals hang between the lesbians and gays and the intersexual and transgender people. They are people who might show possessing biological or/and psychological characters of both sexes (hermaphroditic), and/or people who tend to direct sexual desire toward both sexes (Merriam Webster). Scholars found it hard to draw a line between bisexuals and between gays and lesbians. Rust (1995) asserts that there are as many definitions of women bisexuals as there are bisexual women. She adds that “the *definition of bisexuality* as a potential or essential quality is a broader *definition* that defines a much larger proportion of the population as *bisexual* than do definitions that depend upon actual experiences” (1995, p207). Klein confirms that bisexuality exists in each individual but with variable degrees. He points to the misleading use of prefix ‘bi’ to highlight the dual sexual act and desire as a use dictated by the limited dual definition of gender (1993, p13). Yoshino goes beyond to infer a conspiracy by the heterosexuals and homosexuals to erase the bisexual for three purposes “1- the stabilisation of exclusive sexual orientation categories, 2- the retention of sex as an important diacritical axis; and 3- the protection of monogamy” (2000, p353).

One key method to understand the cultural and legal attitudes against homosexuality is to examine the religious authority. The first source of authority in Islam is the Quran. The verses 80-81 of Surat al-A‘raf describes how the people of Prophet Lut (Lot in the Bible/Sodom) practiced lust with male partners instead of their “natural” mates; women:

“We also (sent) Lut: He said to his people: “Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practise your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds.” (Surat al-A‘raf, 80-82)

Hence in Islam, homosexuality is an unnatural act and a perverted deviation from the norm (*Shuzuz*). Further in Surat al-Qamar, verses 33-36 added that “*the people of Lut rejected (His)*

drag queens are presumed to be gay men or transgender people, there are drag artists of all genders and sexualities who do drag for various reasons. See (Schacht and Underwood 2004)

²⁷**A bigender** person changes his/her gender presentation based on the situation. At times they will identify themselves as males and sometimes as females. It is a less known word that includes cross dressers and drag queens and kings. Some argue that bi-gender should only refer to people whose gender presentations both match their gender identity; this makes the term more complicated, excluding some drag queens and kings who are fully men and are motivated by fun, fetishism, or politics rather than identity. (Jung and Coray 2001: 264)

warning. *We sent against them a violent Tornado with showers of stones, (which destroyed them), except Lut's household...*” If Islam made it unlawful for a man and woman to have sexual intercourse outside of marriage, it made it even more flagrantly immoral and sinful to have same sex relationships or intercourse. The solution that Brian Whitaker (2006) suggested for this in his *Unspeakable Love* is to let homosexuals seal the knot to be within Islamic terms thus outside of the ‘*Haram*’ (forbidden) zone. It is the logic of writers like Whitaker that gives more resonance to thinkers like Massad. Religious scholars in general focus on the homosexual act to explain the licence of the punishment (Malony, 2002, p. 139, and McCormick 1997, p. 121). It is not about being married it is about being “abnormal” and willingly based on a strong normative perspective.

The second authority in Islam is the *hadiths* of Prophet Mohammad (his reported sayings). For Muslim scholars, both the Quran and Hadith have to be taken together for a complete understanding of any matter. Interestingly, while there are records from literature of effeminacy being present during the life of the prophet of Islam; there are no records of punishments or at least severe punishments directly linked to the fact of being effeminate (Rowson, 1991). Guided by the book *Al Aghani*, Everett K. Rowson used literature and the Prophets’ *Hadiths* to conclude:

“There is considerable evidence for the existence of a form of publicly recognized and institutionalized effeminacy or transvestism among males in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabian society. Unlike other men, these effeminates or *Mukhannathun* were permitted to associate freely with women, on the assumption that they had no sexual interest in them, and often acted as marriage brokers, or, less legitimately, as go-betweens. They also played an important role in the development of Arabic music in Umayyad Mecca and, especially, Medina, where they were numbered among the most celebrated singers and instrumentalists.” (1991, p. 671)

As Rowson details, effeminates were rarely, if ever, punished. They were not even considered to be homosexuals though some of them practiced homosexual acts. At the time, the musical profession was on-going during a transitional period where it became male dominated by the effeminates as explains Owen Wright in Rowson (1991, p. 671). Hence, the *Mukhannathun* (effeminates) constituted a considerable part of the Muslim society, especially during the Umayyad’s period where they mastered music, poetry, dancing or served as go-betweens. Yet while Prophet Mohammad never punished them at the dawn of Islam, rules against homosexuals

varied after his death. During the Abbasid's reign for instance, their very existence and activities were considered disrespectful to the general norms, which offended the rulers and religious scholars. It is not clear if this variation in terms of punishment is indeed a tyranny by the Abbasids or if in the absence of the high religious authority of the Prophet, they were less hostile to same sex Eros when they involved young boys, effeminate and non-Muslims, which might be explained by the abundant presence of these three categories in early Islam. They explain the intolerance of homosexuality by the cultural norm of male-dominated societies to take pride based on their masculinity (Roscoe and Murray, 1997, p. 91).

It seems that Rowson (1991) does not realise the difference between an Islamic tolerance and an absence of Islamic decree regarding a matter that was in the hide from Islam's authorities. In all Muslim countries where Sharia (Islamic law) is enforced, homosexuality is strictly illegal directly or indirectly. Governments have brought in legislation that incriminates and outlaws homosexuality under the label 'perversion' (Hopwood, 2006, 177). Depending on their school of thought – *madhab* – Muslim states punish homosexual acts through harsh beating, flagellation, stoning to death or execution in extreme cases such as in Saudi Arabia or Iran. Sometimes they have to go through psychological therapy that would include electric shocks and hormone injections (Whitaker, 2006, 115).

The process of coming-out is heavily linked to the legacy of colonialism and ex-colonial influence/corruption of Arab/Islamic ethics. Aldrich (2006) details how famous male personalities and ordinary travellers from Europe enjoyed and rhapsodised about handsome men in North Africa and Palestine during the European Imperialist period. According to their letters, accounts and poems, Aldrich reports their sexual activities and emotional attachments to little boys and virile handsome men in the Middle East (2006, 23, Hopwood 2006). Hopwood and Aldrich both points to Muslim tolerance of cross-dressers and European homosexuals who, during the nineteenth century, commonly travelled to the Middle East and North Africa where they could live their sexuality in an "exotic" land without being judged. Aldrich details these encounters in his book, colonialism and homosexuality (2006), where the stories prove that the Arabs from Algeria, Egypt, and Palestine were engaging in homosexual acts as prostitutes because the Western men were perceived both queer and rich.

The tolerance discourse has changed in modern times where homosexuality has come to be perceived as a western 'import' that corrupted the Muslim society. More importantly, the

traditional role of the effeminate in the Muslim society was also abandoned after the normalisation of homosexuality in Europe (Haggerty, 2000, p. 417). Enters the new Arab gay who, unlike the traditional homosexual of Islamic society, is directly connected to his Western counterpart, and who celebrates his gayness and demands his equal rights to a society that, to distance itself from the decadence of the West, had to bring in legislations to harshly punish open homosexuals. In places like Egypt and Morocco, European men were accused of homosexual tourism that corrupted the innocent boys of the Muslim world, ultimately leading to a radical change in the Muslim/Arab attitude towards homosexuals (Hopwood, 2006, p. 176). The liberal sexuality of the West was and still is perceived by many Muslims as the reason behind the growing decadence of the West, and homosexuality, as the evil son of this sexual openness.

The new Arab/Muslim gay is also in part the result of the new segregation of women (Murray and Roscoe, 1997, p. 168). Indeed, traditions and radical interpretation of Quranic texts had put men and women in two separate spheres where interaction between the two sexes is almost non-existent. That is the case in virtually all Gulf countries where there is an assumption that a big community of homosexuals turn to same-sex sexual acts because of this lack of men-women interaction. Once married, men or women usually abandon the homosexual practice, as they become able to have normal and socially acceptable sexual acts. Thus, as Murray and Roscoe argue, the sex segregation in Muslim societies fosters homosexual behaviour if not homosexuality among both young men and women (1997, p. 310). It seems that analysing homosexuality hardly takes account of the gender identities themselves. Most literature takes a political position or attempts to generate definitions and specificities about homosexuality within the geographical space of the Middle East. If Arab gays are that different what is this difference that should be kept out of language? If they are a victim of the “gay international” why do they seek asylum in the West? How does a talk show open a conversation about them?

3- On the women rights debate in the Middle East: Islamic feminism & Activism

The discourse of women rights has a significant history in the Middle East. While it benefited from diligent activism and was influenced by the rise of a wave of Islamist feminists, women still face daily discriminations by the virtue of being “the Other.” The region – to a varying level- witnessed more women participation in the public life and the important legal changes in the last decade but even in countries that take pride in women emancipation women are still subordinate legally, economically, politically and culturally. Simone De Beauvoir has

been a great influence for feminism in the Middle East whereby the work of the early feminists Huda Sharawi, Nawal Saadawi and Fatima Mernisi adopted the concept of woman as “the Other” to raise Arab women issues of inequality.

‘...[T]he Other’ describes women’s status in patriarchal, androcentric cultures. While men are ‘the One’ (in other words, beings in and of themselves), women are ‘the Other’, beings defined only in relation to men (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 90)

A woman, de Beauvoir explained, is “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (1997 [1953], p.16). According to Tong (1998), scholars such as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva followed de Beauvoir in her focus on Otherness yet they opted to use it differently. “Woman is still the Other, but rather than interpreting this condition as something to be transcended, postmodern feminists proclaim its advantages” (Tong 1998, p. 195).

Islamic feminism, referring to the process of re-interpretation of the text as “un-interpretation, refers to new readings that see men and women as equals not as an absolute male and subordinate/Other female. Asma Barlas goes to call this un-Islamic as giving absoluteness to men put them in the arena of God. Oumaima Abu Bakr (2011) called for “continuous attempts to un-interpret gender biased readings done by male jurists and to offer alternative new perspectives toward justice and equality within Islam itself” as the true essence of Islamic feminism (p. 17). The work of Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, dwelled with this idea of difference and otherness as an advantage based on hermeneutic readings of the Qur’an as an “egalitarian and anti-patriarchal” text (2009, p. 5). De Beauvoir said

Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man. And she is simply what man decrees: thus she is called “the sex”, by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other (1988, p. 16).

Barlas, refuses to be called a feminist and distance herself from Islamic feminism who read any form of patriarchy or misogyny in Islam inherently. Unlike De Beauvoir’s conception of women Barlas sees in the text of the Quran an unprecedented equalization between the two genders whereby man cannot be superior or he will be committing the sin of claiming a holy status.

Barlas invites to question if the holy scripture is a patriarchal text with the aim to “challenge oppressive readings...and to offer a reading that confirms that Muslim women can struggle for equality from within the framework of the Qur’an’s teachings, contrary to what both conservative and progressive Muslims believe (2009, p. xi). In her chapter five she addresses the idea of gender in the Qur’an focusing on “sameness, difference, and equality” to support that the sacred text “does not sexualize moral agency” (2009, p. 140). She goes further to assert that the Qur’an “comes closest to articulating sexual relationships in the kind of ‘non-oppositional and non-hierarchical’ mode that many scholars believe can be liberating for both women and men” (2009, p. 202). She incites to read the Quran as a text delivered to a specific audience to understand it has being progressive not oppressive in issues such as marriage and wife beating (2009, p. 6)

Amina Wadud, pushed these arguments further by advancing that “the limits of linguistic epistemology, formed as a reflection of the human mind and in correspondence to human experience, is incorrect vis-à-vis astronomical science”. For her,

Allah’s knowledge could not be adequately or accurately expressed in the existing Arabic epistemology. This process of adjustment of truth, fact, or Allah’s knowledge to the contingencies of human language is a hint at the formidable task of revelation in the human language medium. Human language limits Allah’s Self-disclosure. If revelation through text must be in human language, in order for humans to even begin to understand it, then revelation cannot be divine or Ultimate. This is distinguished from the idea that revelation is from a divine source: rather, it indicates how the source availed itself of the limitation of human language to point toward the ultimate direction for human moral development, otherwise known as guidance (Wadud, 2006, p. 232)

Wadud not only marked a difference between God and revelation but added that the sacredness of the prophet is unjustified. Copying his style of clothing, marriages, Bedouin life etc is non-Islamic but rather political and traditional (Ibid). Based, on the ideas of these scholars Katerina Dalacoura (2007 argued that religions are “not inherently illiberal” so she invited for a dialogue to reinterpret the sacred texts in favour of human rights moralities not vice versa (Dalacoura 2007: 64, see also Mayer 2006). She refuted the myth of closing the door of sacred texts interpretation and highlights that there is a constant possibility of new readings (2007). Other scholars invited for a cultural appropriation of the universal human rights into the non-liberal cultures so that they are accepted first to consider a re-interpretation of existing beliefs and values in favour of a universal morality (An-naim 1990, 1992, Tibi 1994). An-Naim, for

example, proposes an approach that seeks to explore the possibilities of “cultural reinterpretation and reconstruction through internal cultural discourse and cross-cultural discourse dialogue, as a means to enhancing the universal legitimacy of human rights” (1992, 3).

With the exception of Saudi Arabia that directly refused to commit to gender equality without discrimination, most Arab states included a clause in their constitutions that commits to “no discrimination among citizens on the basis of sex” (Nazzir and Tompert, 2005, p. 5). Nonetheless, this commitment remains ink on paper for the situation of women is slowly altered since first assessed in November 1994 during the first United Nations’ regional meeting of Arab women organizations in Amman, Jordan. The deliberations of this meeting resulted in a document that summarised Arab women’s conditions along these lines:

“(1) *women* suffer a lack of employment *rights* and undue burdens caused by economic crisis and structural adjustment policies; (2) the absence of democracy and civil rights harms women especially; (3) there is inequality between men and women in authority and decision making; and (4) women suffer from violence, including ‘honour crimes’ ” (Chase and Hamzawy, 2008, p. 100)

Inequality is the source of Arab women’s hardship in the Middle East; especially at the economic. Sabagh notes that “for many Westerners, the issue of *Arab women’s rights* and the broader problematic of gender and power in the region can be neatly summed up in one word: ‘Islam’” (1996, 9). Barlas (2009) sees these inequalities in the mind of Muslims and others in the West who do not bother to understand the Qu’ran for what it is; egalitarian. Farid Esack (2006) goes further to contest the immediacy of religious text re-interpretation that emerged since 9/11 putting the Muslim world in probation. Before approaching “a ‘contemporary Islamic Synthesis’ we must ask ‘for what and in whose interest?’ there is nothing neutral about this quest” he says (2006, p. 119)

Contesting feminist approaches to “explaining resistance and finding resisters” as part of agency, Lila Abu Lughod questions if it is possible to talk about women resistance without “misattributing to them forms of consciousness of feminist politics that are not part of their experience” (1990, p. 47). In this respect, Saba Mahmood (2011) states that “the tension between the perspective and analytical aspects of the feminist project can be left productively open – that it should not be prematurely foreclosed for the sake of ‘political clarity’” (p. 39). She comes to this conclusion based on her fieldwork with women Islamist supporters in Egypt; noting that their life itself “has something to teach beyond what we can learn from the

circumscribed social scientific exercise” (Mahmood, 2011, p. 39). Studying women rights in the Middle East has been subject to this debate for decades.

In fact, despite all these feminist approaches to find a way within the religious text to prove that Islam is inherently pro women rights, states still find it hard to alter laws in favour of more women rights. For example, the Moroccan *Mudawana* (family code) of 2004, that came after 24 years of activism had to rely on the prophetic *hadith* “only an honourable person dignifies women and only a wicked one degrades them” to give more rights to women within the family. Such *hadith* according to Stilt and Gandhavadi (2011) is not in any of the major *Hadith* collections such as Al Bukhari and Muslim. It is derived from *the Book of Hadith Regarding the Virtues of Mothers of the Faithful* and was contested as weak or even false. Another example regards *zina* (adultery). Activists consider the Maliki School the strictest because it allows pregnancy to be a proof of *zina* for non-married women while the other schools do not (Stilt and Gandhavadi 2011). Morocco had to allow interpretations from other schools of thought when its own Maliki *madhab* is strict. Custody over women’s being and attempts to theorise their rights from different political positions and power statuses keeps the discourse of women rights in the Middle East at a slow pace and in constant risk of a backlash. For Spivak the community of women can only come after the recognition of difference between women, and after the raising of some key questions about who is talking to whom, and why, all points which she returns to in her contribution to *Feminists Theorise the Political* (Spivak, 1992, p. 527).

It is beyond the scope of this research to give justice to the big debate of gender identity in the Middle East from all angles. For the purpose here it was essential to highlight that both LGBTQ and women rights are trapped within the intellectual dichotomies of the West and East, right and wrong, essentialism and becoming, normativity and perversion. The target is to see how Arabic talk shows and cinemas in Al Waleed’s Media Empire stand within these dichotomies. Including such a serious topic in entertainment program must have

Triangulation for an interdisciplinary inquiry & Field work implications

Introduction

If theorising gender is problematic in the Middle East researching its production in entertainment media content in a Saudi owned Pan Arab Media Empire is not any less trouble. This research is trying to fathom both; the meaning of women and LGBTQ related content and the infrastructure that creates it. The purpose is to understand how the power relations inside a media realm based on linguistic and human capital maintain or create a culture of gender rights or wrongs via the production of different discourses and narratives in the Middle East. Attempting an interpretive and rational exploration of such a multidisciplinary inquiry requires a methodology that adapts different methods matching the elasticity and complexity of the question itself. All methods have strengths and weaknesses so this research started by using mixed methods taking into consideration critical realism that incorporates the interpretive researchers and goes beyond them using ‘good theory’. Then it moved to use triangulation as explained by Denzin (1978). Through focused case studies and using critical discourse analysis (CDA), narrative analysis (NA), field work in Cairo and Beirut, semi-structured elite interviews, and online archive research triangulation helped answer the research questions from different angles. The first level of analysis dwells with “cultural intermediaries” and key Pan Arab television structures within Prince Al Waleed’s Media Empire that carry gender related content. The second level explores the actual discourses and narratives produced within these structures. Focusing on talk shows and cinema formats emerged a result of structured observation; both are two entertainment formats that are hardly studied in the Middle East despite their importance to every Arabic television. They are the main television genres in Al Waleed’s media realm and have a significant role in manufacturing consent or shaping consciousness thanks to their specific structures. Combining mixed methods and triangulation and using inductive and deductive CDA approaches in this research proved more revealing of trends and patterns that urged for further exploration than if a single method was to be followed.

I- Methodology: Triangulation

1- Approach's rationale:

For critical realists a 'good theory' is "one that accounts for the full range of available evidence concisely and elegantly and offers a more comprehensive and convincing account than rival theories" (Deacon et al, 1999, p.13). Quantitative methods as framed by positivists are perceived as an "empirical social scientific approach to measurement" (Gunter, 2000, p.23). A mixed method seemed to be the best approach to offset weaknesses of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches and present inclusive answers to the research questions at start (Clark and Creswell, 2010, p.12). The first method used in this research is an ethnographic method called "fly on the wall" observation as described by (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009, p.612) to establish what to analyse in the large Media Empire of Prince Al Waleed. To design a structure for this research this quantitative method helped "gather information by looking and listening without direct participation or interference with the people or behaviours being observed" (2012, p.90). In this case, television daily grids and shows scheduled on the different channels of the Kingdom Holding were observed for a year without any engagement with the production team or management. The purpose was to confirm the existence of the gender related content first, fathom the way it is produced and then select key case studies for further investigation.

Based on this quantitative method the research took a qualitative route dismissing quantification and using triangulation to develop a qualitative answer to the research questions. The fact that gender rights related content is produced on Prince Al Waleed's channel constantly, in a reversing way across channels and at different discursive levels invited for critical discourse analysis (CDA) to better understand these trends. Qualitative methods assert that knowledge in the social sciences is provisional, uneven, complex, and contested (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.22). Since the work of Cambell and Fisk (1959) that developed the idea of "multiple operationism" triangulation emerged as an important methodology in the social sciences. It is the best strategy to increase confidence in results, strengthen the completeness of the study, address dissimilar but complementary questions, and increase interpretability (one set of data gives a handle to understanding another set). More than that, divergences are able to uncover new issues or processes that can lead to the development of new theories, or the revision of existing ones (Arksey and Knight, 1999, 22-23).

Veal (2006) too explains that in research triangulation is the use of more than one research method in one study to confirm findings or reach a nuanced understanding of the study. He warns, however, that only when the researcher uses triangulation to address the same question that true triangulation has occurred. Many researchers claim using this method simply because more than one data source and/or method have been used to address different questions (2006, p.107). Thus, the convergence or agreement between two methods is more convincing that the results are valid and that they are not just a methodological artefact (Bouchard, 1976, p.268). Webb et al. (1966) suggested that “once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced; the most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes” (p. 3).

Denzin labelled the most popular type of triangulation “between (or cross) methods” (1978, p.302). Such methodology is always dependent on **confirmation** (Denzin, 1970) and **completeness** (Jick, 1983). Social scientists recommend it to overcome problems of bias and validity and thus achieve –at least to a certain degree– confirmation and completeness (Benz and Newman, 1998, p.83). It is used here as “a vehicle of cross validation” as developed by Denzin (1970) and Jick (1979). Hence, to succeed in this, the best approach is to consider strengths and weaknesses of every single method used, then apply, blend and integrate them to counterbalance each other (Arksey and Knight, 1999, 22).

Triangulation, however, costs time, money and demands creativity (Benz, Newman, 1998, 85). Arksey and knight (1999) and Benz and Newman (1998) stress that it is not easy to undertake replication and comparative studies. Besides, researchers may not be technically competent in particular methods and might be tempted to make inconsistent data sets artificially compatible in order to produce a more coherent account (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.23). Yet, as no method is perfect, a careful and considered use of triangulation can help investigate this research the best way possible. This method is used here to help reduce and challenge subjectivity but does not claim objectivity. It rather opens the room for more research and inquiries in the field of gender rights culture and entertainment media content in the Middle East as researchers hardly engage in the demanding task of Arabic content studies.

II- Research questions:

3- Main research question:

- II- How and why women and gay rights related content find place in Al-Waleed's Media Empire?

4- Main sub-questions:

- IX- Does Al-Waleed's Media Empire address gay and women rights using international human rights discourses or is the topic addressed differently?
- X- Why would women and gay rights be entertainment content in Pan Arab television? Is it because they are considered a taboo topic that attracts viewers or is there a belief in the need to advance these specific rights in the region?
- XI- If advancing human rights is the target, how is this sought at the production level for a diverse audience as that of the Middle East?
- XII- How does such content compare throughout the different channels within the same Media Empire and across different TV formats?
- XIII- Are the stars and talk show personalities autonomous in choosing their own line while discussing these topics or do they follow agendas? Do they believe in what they present? Why are they interested in this specific content?
- XIV- How are the shows structured to talk about this specific content? Do they follow special procedures or keep the standard/general format adapted for other topics?
- XV- How are movies addressing women and gay stories?
- XVI- Is there any form of women or gay rights law changes in the region in the last five years? If any, were they influenced by the public discourse produced in Pan Arab channels about gay and women rights?

III- Methods: Case Studies, CDA, NA and Field Work

1- From a "Fly on the Wall" to Structured Observation: Selecting Case Studies

It is technically and practically impossible to study every single program in Al Waleed's large Media Empire. It will take more than one research and researcher to analyse all gender related content. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is so tricky and demanding that it cannot

focus on large numbers of case studies but rather explore few significant ones in details (Wodak and Meyer 2008). Accordingly, focused and well-selected case studies are the ideal methodology to engage in a thorough investigation (Feagin et al, 1991 in Tellis, 1997). Although qualitative methods do not emphasise the reliability of the sample as much as quantitative research, Barker however stresses the need to have good grounds in selecting what he called ‘corpus’ to mark it off from quantitative “sample” so as to reduce subjectivity and increase trustworthiness (2008, p.163-164). One of the weaknesses of CDA is that researchers might cherry pick their cases to convey their pre-existing arguments (Wodak and Meyer 2009). Case study research is not sampling research as asserted by all the major researchers in the field (Yin, Stake, Feagin et al, 1991). The corpus selected here was not random but guided by the “fly on the wall” observation of all media content generated in Prince Al Waleed Empire which led to structured observation of specific shows from different channels. Structured observation is a technique for data collection that is observational and helps to gather information in a structured or systematic way. “Data are collected according to carefully defined rules and prearranged procedures” to establish clear grounds for selecting specific shows and formats (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao, 2003, p. 1096). As I started this research without a background or opinion about being a gender; especially outside of the binary of men/women, selection was not based on pre-existing opinions but on the structured observation that revealed different ways of talking/narrating women, men and queer stories in one media realm.

1.1- Selection procedure:

Thanks to a ‘predefined scheme’ to count the frequency in which content related to women and gay rights was produced in specific shows that were listed around the channels repeatedly, the corpus selected included different talk show formats and a set of classical as well as modern movies (Gunter 2000 :48). First, I looked at one year of programs listings of LBC Sat, Rotana Aflam and Al Resalah TV from **January 01, 2009 to December 30, 2009**²⁸. I watched programs daily and as all the channels have reruns and most programs find a way to YouTube I managed to catch up with any show I missed. Like all methods, observation has its limitations (Johnson 1975 and Gunter 2000). In this research, it is very straightforward. First I needed to familiarise myself with the channels in general; although I watched them before I have never

²⁸Appendix 2 is an example of a one-week program grid from Al Resalah and LBC Sat showing how women and gay rights content was scattered around the channels.

watched with a research question in mind. Second, to carry on with the study, it was important to confirm that content about gays and women rights or even wrongs existed significantly in the Media Empire. Once that was established it was important to select a significant corpus that can theorise how such content is produced and why. Based on selected codes that guided the first observation it was easy to reduce the shows all across the Media Empire into potential case studies. The codes followed were:

I listed shows that had any words related to homosexuality including:

- *Huquq Al Mithleyeen*: (Homosexual rights)
- *Al Shudud Al Jensi*: (Abnormal sexuality)
- *Al Mithliya Al Jinssiya*: Homosexuality
- *Al Mithleyeen Al Jenseyeen*: Homosexuals
- *Al Tahawol Al Jensi*: Sex reassignment
- *Al Naw'u*: Gender
- *Addukura* and *Al Roujoula*: Masculinity
- *Al Unoutha*: Femininity
- *Al Shudud, Shaz, Shawaz* (Sexually abnormal people)
- *Qawm Lut* (People of Gomorrah and Sodom) and the words derived from it (*Lewat*: Sodomy, *Suhak*: Lesbianism)

I listed shows that had any Arabic word or expression that refer to women and what matters to them especially from a human rights perspective:

- *Haq* or *Huquq Al Mar' ā*: (Women rights)
- *Al Mar' ā*: Woman
- *U'mur Al Nissā'* : Women's matters
- *Hareem*: The hareem
- *Al Mar' ā Al Arabiya*: the Arab Woman
- *Al Mar' ā Al Muslima*: the Muslim woman
- *Taadoud Al Zawjat*: Polygamy
- *Huriyat Al Mar' ā*: Woman's freedoms and any related word
- *Wajibat Al Mar' ā*: Woman's duties
- *Al U'nf*: Violence against women and all the related words
- *Al Taharrush*: harassment

- *Al Zawaj* (Marriage)
- *Al Zena* (Adultery)
- *Al Hijāb* (The veil)
- *Al Irth* (Inheritance)

2- Findings from the observations:

2.1 From Quantification to Critical Discourse Analysis

Thanks to a year of monitoring I was surprised how every single show had something to say about women that was not necessarily linked the Universal Declaration of Human Rights yet shaped the cultural consciousness of *being* a woman in the Middle East thus influenced the effect of the UDHR in the region. I was even more surprised that homosexuality was the subject of talk shows across the Media Empire especially that there is no standard Arabic language to discuss such a topic in a public sphere without attracting serious criticism if not legal action.

Appendix 5 and 6 give the description of one-week media content on LBC Sat and Al Resalah TV. It highlights the shows that had direct gender rights content in yellow and highlights those that have indirect or little content in green. Shows that addressed homosexuality are typed in a bold purple. These grids were repetitive all year long; the interesting change that happened is that once one of the very few social primetime talk shows on LBC Sat was banned from satellite another talk show moved from Rotana Music to LBC Sat to replace it. Such a change is interesting because these two shows were the very first talk shows to open the topic of homosexuality in a direct conversational platform. More importantly the show from Rotana *Ḍedda Al-Tayār* (Against the Current) was a show that hosted celebrities and celebrity scandals; it was not clear why it hosted an episode about homosexuality right after LBC Sat's show *Āḥmar Bi al-Khaṭ Al 'Areeḍ* (Bold Red Line). It was not clear how celebrity shows' host Wafaa Kilani will replace social shows' host Malek Maktabi in addressing social issues in the Middle East.

Three talk shows touched on homosexuality around Al Waleed's Media Empire during close periods of time. The first was *Āḥmar Bi al-Khaṭ Al 'Areeḍ*- Bold Red Line (BRL) - on LBC Sat. It opened this topic for talk twice during two seasons and addressed it in a unique discursive style. On Al Resalah TV the word *Shudhudh* emerged in a number of shows as a mention of perversion or as a question (see appendix 5) but was not directly addressed as a topic until *Bidūn Iḥrāj* -Without Embarrassment- followed BRL in opening the topic adopting a

completely different style. The third show was that of Rotana Music. *Ḍedda Al-Tayār* opened the same topic despite the fact that it was a music show in a music channel and addressed it following the same style of BRL. As BRL and *Bidūn Iḥrāj* addressed the topic of homosexuality differently chapter five will do a critical discourse analysis of their content to understand this difference in approach across two different channels in one Media Empire.

Rotana's *Ḍedda Al-Tayār* will not be dismissed completely but approached with a focus on its host and her new Talk Show on LBC Sat. The host of the show Wafaa Kilani moved to LBC Sat to replace Malek Maktabi's BRL after a political crisis that will be described in chapter five. Instead of focusing on homosexuality content and for a more nuanced analysis within the small space of the PhD the focus on Kilani's new show will look for women rights content. BRL addressed a number of women rights issues as shown in appendix 6. Once replaced by Kilani's new talk show *Bidūn Raqaba* (Without Censorship) it seemed that a different format will be addressing similar gender topics that BRL addressed. Thus, to look into gender content produced following different formats *Bidūn Raqaba* was selected to do CDA for women rights content. Al Resalah TV holds that it "addresses a special message to women to guide them and develop them"²⁹ under the targets and visions section in its website. As shown in appendix 5 and 6 women rights related content is present in every single show with varying degrees and following different styles; from conversations, to narrating stories to direct sermons.

As Al Resalah TV's success is based on celebrity religious figures thus the case selected for this study was based on three criteria. First, only primetime shows were considered. Al Resalah plays a lot of reruns but only four shows/celebrities benefit from a second rerun and they are all men who address women related content. Hence, the second criterion was to select one of these four shows. The third criterion was based on selecting a celebrity who is directly linked to Prince Al Waleed and Al Resalah TV as the other three celebrities are independent stars; not necessarily linked to the channel yet picked to appear on it. The show selected was Dr. Tariq Al Suwaidan's *Allamatni Al-Hayat* (Life Has Taught Me). Dr. Al Suwaidan directed Al Resalah TV with a distinctive vision until fired by Prince Al Waleed during this research via a public tweet post the Arab Spring as shall be explored in chapter four.

Monitoring was different for the Rotana bouquet channels because when the research started they were either music or movies channels. Rotana Khalijiyya and Rotana Masriyya

²⁹ <http://www.alresalah.net/#!/about.jsp>

emerged according to the general political situation in the Middle East and based on the Prince's shift of interest as explored in chapter two. As Al Waleed relied on cinema to launch his distinguished empire it was worth looking at the way gender content is produced in such a platform and how Rotana Aflam and Rotana Zaman schedule it. New movies are usually scheduled on Rotana Aflam and old ones on Rotana Zaman. Rotana finances many of the new emerging movies and introduced the first Saudi movies. Narrative analysis seemed to be the perfect method to explore a selected corpus of movies, including the Saudi ones to understand the power of such space in Al Waleed's Media Empire and its significance in the power structure that defines gender for a diverse Arabic speaking audience as a whole.

2.2- Sampling Bias:

In fact, both qualitative and quantitative methods seem to have agreed at not having definitive guidelines in choosing samples or case studies. The final decision is then “a compromise between the minimal theoretical empirical requirements of the study and other external considerations (such as time and resources available to the research” (Deacon et al, 1999, p. 43). Qualitative research as agreed by all scholars tends to study small samples compared to quantitative. Indeed, few talk shows or episodes of talk shows are chosen from each channel, only ten movies are chosen from the entire Arab cinema and the rest of the programs are excluded. Yet, as the two set of rights which are under investigation are both controversial and even taboo the corpus selected is varied enough to touch on key trends in addressing such topics and expose the power realm within which they progress. None of the cases is idiosyncratic and they are not expected to be a representation as much as they are expected to be an example of how women and gay rights are generally discussed in a Pan Arab public space such as satellite television. This research can only include cases that can generate enough material about the topic to encourage further studies exploring the dynamics of television discourse and law development reforms in the Arab world. The time allocated to the PhD and the resources available are already stretched to achieve the targets of the research.

3- **The selected corpus/case studies:**

All in all, two primetime/popular talk shows were selected from LBC Sat and two popular/primetime shows from Al Resalah TV. Ten movies that run on Rotana Aflam and Zaman or/and produced by the Rotana Group were selected as case studies.

- **Two primetime talk shows from LBC Sat excluding all other programs:**
 - *Āḥmar Bi al-Khaṭ Al ‘Areeḍ* (Red Bold Line) presented and produced by **Malik Maktabi** – episode on **Sex Reassignment:**
 - *Bidūn Raqaba*(Without Censorship) presented and produced by **Wafaa Kilani**- episode on women rights with feminist **Nawal Al-Saadawi**
- **Two primetime religious talk shows from Al Resalah TV:**
 - *Bidūn Iḥrāj* (Without Embarrassment): Homosexuality
 - *‘Allamatni Al-Ḥayat* (Life has Taught Me): Women
- **Movies From Rotana Aflam and Rotana Zaman/Classic:**
 - *‘Imārat Ya ‘aqobyān* (The *Ya ‘aqobyān* Building, 2006), written by Alae Al Asswani, directed by Marwan Hamed and starring Noor Al Sherif, Khaled Al Sawi, Adel Imam, Hind Sabri, Yousra, and others.
 - *Manāhi*, the first Saudi movie produced by Rotana in 2008, written by Mazen Taha and directed by Ayman Makram, starring Fayez El Malki, Abdel Imam Abdallah and Mona Wassef.
 - *Sukkar Bānāt* (Caramel, 2007), written by Nadine Labaki, Rodney El Haddad and Jihad Hajeeli, directed by Nadine Labaki, starring Nadine Labaki, Adel Karam, Yasmine Masri, Siham Haddad and Ismael Qantar.
 - *Ānā Hurrā* (I am Free, 1959), written by Ehssan Abdel Qoddous and script by Najeeb Mahfouz, directed by Salah Abu Youssef, and starring Loubna Abd El Aziz, Zouzou Nabeel, Shokri Sarhan, Hassan Youssef and Hussein Riyad.
 - *Uridu Hāllan* (I Need a Solution, 1975) written by Hassan Shah and directed by Saeed Marzou’, starring Faten Hamama, Amina Rizk and Roshdi Abaza.
 - *Du‘āā Al Kārāwān* (The Prayer of the Curlew, 1959), written by Taha Hussein and directed by Henry Barakat, starring Faten Hamama, Ahmad Mazhar, Zahrat al ‘ula, Amina Rizk and Edomond Tweema.
 - *Al-Ustadhah Fatimah* (The Lawyer Fatimah, 1952), written by Ali El Zorkani and directed by Fatin Abdel Wahab, starring Faten Hamama and Kamal Al-Shennawi.

IV- Tools of content analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis & Narrative Analysis

1- CDA as an approach for Talk Shows analysis:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 352). The father of discourse stated that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a...number of procedures” (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). Discourse is both that which constrains or enables writing, speaking and thinking; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on the other hand “seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power” (Janks, 1997, p. 329). The critical impetus of CDA is the legacy of the enlightenment (Horkheimer and Adorno 1969/1991). Hence, “it aims at revealing structures of power and unmasking ideologies” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 8). A ‘critique’ is the process of making the interconnectedness of visible things (Fairclough, 1995, p. 747). CDA does not focus on apparent ideologies at the surface of culture but rather occupies itself with “the more hidden and latent type of everyday beliefs, which often appears as disguised as conceptual metaphors and analogies...” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 8).

One of the most quoted definitions of CDA is Wodak’s and Fairclough’s (1997) note:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. The discursive event is shaped by them. That is discourse is **socially constitutive** as well **socially conditioned** –it constitutes situations, object of knowledge, and the social identities and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential it gives rise to important issues of **power**. Discursive practices may have major **ideological effects** – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (p. 258).

The CDA approach in this research is based on one main distinctive theoretical approach of CDA which tailored a specific methodology to proceed to a critical analysis grounded on triangulation. It is both inductive based on detailed case studies and deductive looking at general perspectives (See Wodak and Meyer, 2008. p.20-32). Accordingly the main methodological

approach used is the deductive **Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)**³⁰ as developed by Fairclough (2001). This approach is based on the logic that “an order of discourse is not a closed or rigid system, but rather an open system, which is put at risk by what happens in actual interactions” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 2). Fairclough explains how

The political concept of ‘hegemony’ can usefully be used in analyzing orders of discourse (Fairclough 1992, Laclau & Mouffe 1985) - a particular social structuring of semiotic difference may become hegemonic, become part of the legitimizing common sense which sustains relations of domination, but hegemony will always be contested to a greater or lesser extent, in hegemonic struggle. (Fairclough, 2001, p. 3)

In other words the DRA approach puts emphasis on interactions and power relations in the discursive space to detect linguistic manifestations of “elements of dominance, difference and resistance” (Wodak, Meyer, 2009, p.27). DRA focuses on a specific social problem which has a semiotic aspect; in this research this social problem is the discourse of gender rights in entertainment programs in the Middle East. To operationalise such an approach for analysis Fairclough’s (1989, 1995) model for CDA adapted three interrelated processes of analysis. One is *structural analysis* of the context. Second is a follow-up with an *interactional analysis* that focuses on linguistic features – i.e. agents, time, tense, modality and syntax. The third process is the *analysis of interdiscursivity* which focuses on power relations. These processes are tied and look at three interrelated dimensions of discourse:

- 1- The object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts);
- 2- The processes by which the object is produced and received (writing- speaking - designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects;
- 3- The socio-historical conditions that govern these processes.

According to Fairclough each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis:

- 1- Text analysis (description);
- 2- Processing analysis (interpretation);
- 3- Social analysis (explanation). (See: Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 20-32 and Janks, 1997 p.329)

2- Narrative analysis for Movies:

To analyse cinematic acts Narrative Analysis is better fit to theorise the way women and gay rights stories are narrated in movies as opposed to the way they are discussed in talk shows.

³⁰The main theoretical attractors in this deductive approach are Michael Foucault, Karl Marx and M. K. Hallday.

Looking at these two different formats reveals potential and missed opportunities of producing new gender meanings and challenging existing ones regarding *being* a gender in the Middle East.

“Narrative distinguishes itself from texts by a clearly marked beginning and ending. Narration itself involves the handling of characters and plot and of resulting patterns. In this type of analysis it is not so much the characteristics of the plain text as the characters themselves that are crucial as well as their acts, their difficulties, their choices and general developments (see Propp, 1975, 1928 in Gunter)... the message is taken to be a presented, edited version of sequence of events, of which elements are described and characterized as to their structure” (Gunter 2000, 90).

In movies the message is encoded in a whole story plot and through images movement; as explored in chapter two; which crosses the lines of the real and the imaginary making the platform a powerful space to place the discourse of women and gay rights; if the target is advancing these rights. Since Rotana produced the first Saudi movies based on a rich Egyptian cinema narrative analysis of the corpus can reveal interesting trends in answering the question how and even why gender rights content finds place on Prince Al Waleed’s Media Empire.

The research is guided by the following codes to do narrative analysis:

- Is homosexuality presented via a dialogue or just images?
- To which social class do women who face women rights breaches belong?
- What aspects of women rights are produced in the cinematic space?
- How are queer identities presented? Are they and identity at all?
- What social classes, religions, genders, age, are involved?
- How Prince Al Waleed uses this this platform to advance women rights?

V- [Fieldwork: Ethnography and Elite Semi-Structured interviews for triangulation](#)

1- **Field work in Egypt June 2009:**

The findings from television monitoring and case studies as well as the discourse and narrative analyses cannot be complete or confirmed unless the persons involved in producing and financing the cases expose their beliefs and purpose from what they produced. In other words, to explore the aims of each production, it is necessary to check if the team involved in producing it believes or objects what is exposed and whether they chose what they produced. Findings from the content analysis and interviews were checked against each other for validation and confirmation to complete the triangulation. In fact, the CDA approach adopted here is based on triangulation as well since it requires a study of agents on top of content and space.

As Arksey and Knight explain, interviewing is one way to explore the world of beliefs and meanings more than actions (1999, 15). In the same vein, Gray notes that semi-structured interviews are a non-standardized qualitative method of research which is good when the research has a large exploratory target like examining feelings and attitudes (2004, 214-215). Indeed, in this research, celebrities, production and marketing teams involved in the case studies are interviewed to confirm whether they have a conscious belief in the values they present or only the taboo as a token that raises viewership. Attempts to interview Prince Al Waleed failed because the Prince strategically gives interviews to international media firms to ensure a widespread publicity. These interviews are used as a substitute to a direct interview. Appendix 7 lists the interviewees that the research managed to reach.

2- Access & establishing contact:

Before heading to Egypt in June 2009, I assumed I was fully prepared for the fieldwork. First, aware that the targeted interviewees are famous people, elite semi-structured interviews seemed to be the adequate method to further understand 'how' and investigate 'why' women and gay rights are produced for the Pan Arab audience of the Middle East. This method's literature focuses on the problem of access in interviewing since access to elites is even harder in the chain of accessing strangers for a conversation. After three research projects, Ostrander (1993) named special strategies and techniques that worked well when studying elites. One of these addresses gaining access and establishing rapport. To access elites and establish trust and respect with them, she notes that both one's personal contacts and careful planning are equally important to get valid data. It might be necessary to start from the top and it is vital to do background research before the field as elites keep checking out the interviewer even after accepting to do the interview (p. 25).

In my case it was more appropriate to start from the bottom to understand the production process before going up to interview the Prince and his channel managers about policy, target, and produced material. Personal contacts were the only resort to access the interviewees. Yet, against what I assumed, this access was conditional. It was indeed easy to gain access via contacts yet once in the field in Egypt no careful planning or personal contact granted a smooth execution of the research plan. Chaos emerged as part of the process. Although appointments were arranged and confirmed in advance with twenty stars and movie writers and directors, only one person showed up on time and another after a three-hour delay claiming that Egypt has a

problem of parking. For a moment, I was about to cancel the trip as I was receiving apologies and sometimes was ignored completely for consecutive days. Although I used direct contacts close to the celebrities, they accepted initially then disappeared on the interview date using celebrity excuses:

- “I am filming out of town” (Khalid El Sawi, Egypt, June 2009)³¹. “Which town? I can travel to you” (The researcher). “A town! I am busy” (Khalid El Sawi).
- “I have many TV interviews. I just cancelled on the Egyptian TV and “*Hara’ti El Hawa*” (stood up a live show) on Al Mihwar TV. I have too much work (Ahmed Ezz)³²

As failing the first fieldwork of the research would cause serious financial and time problems regaining access became an emergency. Shock and despair put behind, a prompt contact with my friends from BBC Arabic and the Associated Press in London put me in touch with well-established journalists in Egypt to re-arrange appointments that had to happen instantly and without prior notice. In the Egyptian setting, unlike what theory advised, I could not leave time to the celebrities and elites to think about the interview and change their minds. It was not possible to re-arrange appointments with the same people who cancelled as they already gave excuses. They were still needed for the research so I substituted their semi-structured interviews with a compilation of archive interviews they gave to different channels and magazines, newspapers and online sources about the same works I intended to interview them about. A new list was needed urgently to hand to the contacts so that they arrange quick meetings.

In the third day in the field, none of the interviews was done and only four days were left before flying back to London. The contacts in Egypt were people I just met and who were doing me a favour, so I was dependent on total strangers. It was not possible to rush or stress them; which was very stressful as I had no clue if they would help at all; why should they? Alternatively, I considered starting to contact celebrities myself via e-mails and phone calls. Arksey and Knight suggest writing a letter of introduction listing all about the study, methodology, credentials of the interviewer, the reason behind the interview and behind choosing the interviewee, being flexible to adjust around their schedule wherever they like and listing some names of previous interviewees while observing the confidentiality agreement

³¹A phone conversation between the researcher and Khalid Al Sawi in Egypt on the 9th of June 2009 two days prior to the agreed interview date.

³²Ahmed Ezz’s excuse to the person who established a contact after he rejected all my calls in Egypt, 10th June 2009 the day of the scheduled interview.

(1999, p. 123). After contacting two people, I realized that it might be problematic to say too much about the research. It would make it easy for interviewees to make up their mind and to refuse to allocate time for the research. Then, even the contacts would not be helpful and it would have made their work harder. It was too risky view the status of the interviewees and the fact that I was researching a taboo content in their work that they were asked to further explain.

I opted for a standard introduction. I explained that I was a researcher from the Arab Media Centre, Westminster University in London who was awarded a Fulbright scholarship in the USA as well. I stressed that the AMD is one of the first leading centres to study Arab media in the world. I omitted my status as a doctoral candidate unless asked about it. I explained that I was doing the first research on Arab celebrities and their roles in society (omitting women and gay rights) and only celebrities with a *significant/important* role in society were selected. I added that this research would make the first literature about Arab celebrities which might be studied in universities worldwide. In other words, I had to give them a reason to talk to me; even if it is a feeble one. Thomas (1993) noted that unless you have some leverage with which to get their attention, chances are you will get it for only half the time you think you need. In Egypt, I had to have a leverage to secure an interview; be it a direct powerful contact that forced the celebrities to do them a favour or the feeble perk of helping academic research and being somehow linked to the sphere of thinkers.

Journalists get more time but they have a source of leverage sociologists do not have (Writer in Wall Street, p. 82). Indeed, as the interview is academic only celebrities who have a certain interest in intellectual matters accepted to allocate time to a PhD student. Many refused as soon as they knew I am not representing a TV channel or a magazine. One of the potential interviewees refused to answer my calls and when I called him from the mobile of a BBC journalist, whom he met once, he answered instantly. He welcomed being interviewed but when the BBC journalist explained to him that it is for a PhD research he gave us an appointment in Egypt and never showed up or answered the phone again.

By introducing myself this way, I was granted access to each person I contacted via phone after explaining that I got the phone number from common friends; I was totally ignored in e-mails. Probably, including an intellectual aspect to the interview and inflicting international academia as a gate to mark history compelled some to accept giving a bit of their time. Being cited in books is a prestige that some of them desired since it distinguished them from the normal

actor, director and screenwriter. Yet the most successful method was the use of a charismatic, famous journalist from Rotana who technically forced people to receive me.

After securing a couple of interviews in a very short notice, semi-structured interviews were very helpful to stay on the go. Bryman (2004) explains that “in a semi-structured interview the researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule”. Indeed, this method was flexible as it was possible to add questions during the interview. It left room to develop issues as they emerged and gave room to the interviewees to express their point of view and highlight what was important according to their understanding of the issue (2004, 321).

During the interview it was important to answer two main questions:

- 1- Are the stars and talk show personalities independent and autonomous in choosing their own line while discussing these topics or do they follow specific guidelines/agenda?
- 2- Why choose women rights and gay rights as entertainment content? Is it because it is a taboo topic that attracts viewers or is there a belief in the need to advance these rights? How?

As the conversation evolved questions came up according to the interviewee and interview situation. It was important to lead the discussion to get answers and get to women and gay rights without being explicit or asking directly. The interviewee would be aware of the political context of the research and might formulate answers accordingly. Elites are usually good communicators and can converse easily in a way that might dazzle the researcher even if the conversation drags away from the purpose of the research. Social class matters as upper class elites have higher education and jobs in which language use and symbolism are central so they are more skilled with words than people with less education and manual jobs. (Alvesson 2011: 29, 30, 31). Ostrander suggests that the researcher should not act like a guest and claim space in the interview setting where etiquette and organized structure of the interview can keep control over the conversation and derives maximum output from the interviewee (1993, 26). Although it was hard to do that it was not impossible with good preparation. After the monitoring and discourse analysis/narrative analysis of the interviewees’ work, it was easy to engage them into a discussion about the content and take their position as they see it or frame it.

During the interviews as Arksey and Knight suggest, it was important to foster a climate of trust. I started in a friendly, polite manner using ‘ice breakers’ like giving credit to the interviewee’s aesthetic work then asked easy to answer questions. It was important to indicate the significance of the study and how it would benefit the interviewee as well as the time and format it would take. It was also necessary to ask for permission to audiotape not just assume it was acceptable. It was useful to refer to other interviewees in positive terms and confirm confidentiality and anonymity when requested. It was important to show commitment to research ethics and sign an informed consent form. Furthermore, it was important to listen and observe a well-mannered attitude as well as read body language (1999, 102-103). The target was to answer those two questions but the discussion went depending on the person interviewed.

3- The Interviewee as a Problem:

The romantic view of interviewee as described by Alvesson is

“Grounded on an image of potentially honest, unselfish, subject, eager or at least willing to share his or her experiences and knowledge for the benefit of the interviewer and the research project. The interviewee then supposedly acts in the interests of science. The view of the interviewee as an informant illustrates this assumption. However, interviewees may have other interests than assisting science by simply providing information. They may be *politically aware or politically motivated actors*. Many people will have a political interest in how socially significant issues are represented. This does not necessarily mean that they will cheat or lie...In addition, some respondents (who are not politically motivated) may very well tell the (partial) truth as they know it but in favourable ways to them and may not disclose truth dis-favourable either to them or their groups. (2011, 29)

Indeed, when it became apparent to some interviewees that I am interested in Rotana as the host of their work they changed and agreed to answer with a precondition not to quote their comments. One of them said “I will help you with your research but do not quote me. I will just guide you” (Interview with Author, Egypt, June 2009). They all were very eloquent and the issue was how much relevant information I could derive from them. Ostrander insists that while “compromise in terms of timing of the release of publications may sometimes be necessary, the researcher should not compromise the integrity of the work by allowing elites to have a voice in deciding what is published or where”. She stresses that aiming to establish rapport should not stand in front of asking challenging questions at the same time she warns from the fact that elites have the position and are in power to protect themselves if they feel threatened (1993, 26). It

was necessary to be careful so as not to be reputed as the “Moroccan/female” researcher who researches about gays and women in Rotana; that would have made access to interviewees even harder. “The interviewee is thus a difficult part of interview work. There are no easy tricks to resolving this” (Alvesson 2011: 32).

4- The interview situation as a ‘problem’:

As Alvesson describes, when

Two strangers are supposed to get an understandable and valid summary of some key aspects of a targeted set of practices and or experiences of these... The social situation is not just a meeting between two or several people, but also takes place in a societal, cultural, and political context. Various macro forces- including the assumptions and norms of our ‘interview society’ and the idea that one should be genuinely personal and reveal one’s self while not hiding behind roles and conventions (Sennett, 1977)- operate behind the interview as a micro situation (Photo) (Alvesson 2011: 34)

I tried to observe a good conduct and careful approaches yet other issues immersed. First, some of the interviewees had offices where I could visit but some suggested meeting in a coffee shop. As I had to accommodate to their situation in Egypt, and while most of them were between one to three hours late; I was sitting alone inviting for sexual harassment in their chosen prestigious coffee shops. The coffee shop was problematic for two main reasons. First, it was overcrowded and too noisy so audio-taping was not enough and sometime not possible. Thus I had to take notes which made the setting look awkward. It proved to be slow and selective and they had to wait until I write to resume talking which gave them time to reconsider their thoughts. As a journalist, I tried to minimize bias while note taking by writing key words of every claim and rewriting the notes straightaway before forgetting the conversation (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 105). I also audio taped just in case I can hear something with the music and noise around.

Second, being in a coffee shop gave an informal setting to the meeting and to my surprise, occasionally; some interviewees were triggered by the fact that I was ‘Moroccan’ as I understood that there is conception about Moroccan females or a reputation that they are “westernized” because of French colonialism. Coming from London somehow enhanced such stereotype. Many people repeatedly explained how the best thing that can happen to a man is *marry* a Moroccan or be in a relationship with her. Three had the gut to initiate that almost every Egyptian has or dream to have a *second* wife from Morocco. Some would diverge from the interview and start talking about their friends or family members who married a Moroccan and

lived happily compared to those married to an Egyptian. One of them said directly that he was forced to see me by my contact/his friend and he thought that since I am a woman doing a PhD “*Rabbina Yestur*” (May God Help). He said “I thought you were some ugly, complicated woman, with thick glasses and a mean attitude so I thought I will just give you quick answers and get rid of you but “*Hamdulillah*” (Thank God) I am really happy to meet you”. I received few marriage proposals that were initiated in a humorous way and late invitations for dinners and/or to introduce Cairo to me. Regarding marriage proposals I laughed at the joke and closed the room turning to a serious point. Sometimes, hoping that would make them feel guilty, I explained that if my fiancée (whom I made up) hears about this he would stop me from pursuing knowledge. I realised later on that the situation made me seek a fake male guardian to do basic research. I certainly would not give this excuse now thanks to this ethnographic experience. Coming back to this point at later years of the project made me realise that I used to react to sexual harassment in a cultural way by appreciating being harassed and creating a male guardian to scare “the offender”. As for the late invitations I just ignored the texts or late calls then apologised in the morning by claiming I was sleeping. They usually would renew the invitation so I postponed accepting or refusing by asking them to check how busy I was in the evening, and then I just ignored the calls and claimed again that I was sleeping. This kept me going for a couple of days. One of the people who gave me access to the Rotana offices and whose invites were postponed was shocked the last time I saw him when I told him that my flight was in the same afternoon. He then suggested that I postpone the trip for him to get me access to every person I need in Rotana as well as all the people I need to contact in Lebanon. It was a tempting offer but I chose to fly and gladly declined this service.

Coffey (1999) explains how single female researchers can display a certain character inviting for unwanted marriage proposals and sexual advances in certain cultures (80). Claiming to be married seems to be an approach that many female researchers adopted (Dua 1979, Rassmussen 1977) so “being attached may reduce, though, not eliminate sexual attention during fieldwork” (Coffey, 1999: 81). I personally could not lie about this issue as most of the time my contacts would already say that I was single so I could not ask them to lie on my behalf. Many would not even care if I was married or not and they might be married themselves; so that would not have stopped them from making the comments or the proposals they make at ease. More than that, I worked in the field of media so chances are that I will meet these interviewees again.

It would be awkward to tell them that I divorced or lied; therefore, claiming being engaged seemed less harmful and gave presence to the male guardian to my status for those who respected that; yet I will never use this again. In fact, being engaged left hope of a break up more than marriage among those who felt irresistible, which was helpful to keep accessing more interviewees. It was a buffer strategy that I used according to the situation back in 2009 but an exhausting, nerve wrecking one. Coming back to it in later stages revealed that the fieldwork in Egypt and my gender identity gave me the best ethnographic experience that helped me see this research differently. Methodological theory should prepare females differently to engage in field work in the Middle East; even when these female are Middle Eastern.

At last I came up with the idea to seek a company to the interviews of an established female journalist who was helping with the contacts and knew them or knew their networks. It was a desperate attempt to avoid the stress and embarrassment that was exhausting after too many days of disappointment along time pressure. It was effective at start and gave a formal aspect to the discussions especially when she mentioned the name of the newspaper where she worked and the common people she knew. Nevertheless, when I met one of the American managers in Rotana, he felt threatened by the presence of an Egyptian journalist and refused to be audio-taped explaining that people visited him before, claiming to be doing research but they were Egyptian journalists who published a negative article about Rotana. He was very careful answering each question. Obviously this strategy was not perfect. In fact, I only needed the company of the Egyptian journalist in certain settings but it was difficult to ask her not to come to the interviews where I felt secure as she arranged most of them via her friends and she liked joining me in order to establish or renew contacts too.

Audio-taping is the best approach to record qualitative interviews. It leaves the interviewers at ease compared to note taking and helps focusing on the interview. It also captures all what is being said and helps self-assessment afterwards. It demonstrates to the interviewees that their answers are taken seriously. Moreover, audio-taping the interview is likely to “increase nervousness or dissuade frankness” occasionally (Arksey and Knight, 1999, 105). When I was asked not to audio-tape I thought I’ll just try to minimize bias while note taking by writing key words of every claim and rewriting the notes straight away before forgetting the conversation as stated earlier (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 105). However, the interviewee who was alerted by the presence of the Egyptian journalist started challenging my

speed of writing and listening. He would speak very quickly till I lose track of the notes and as soon as I stopped writing he would start saying important things then stop and diverge when I start writing again. His eyes run between my notes and go back to an investigative eye contact. In this situation, and as writing was a problem I listened carefully showing interest and confirming that I was learning which created empathy and made the interviewee slow down and give me time to write (Kezar 2003: 402). As soon as I left his office I wrote a summary in the car using the help of the Egyptian journalist who was with me. I was fortunate that he was the last interviewee in the Cairo Rotana building that day, as he was the most challenging one information-wise.

5- The second fieldwork in Beirut:

In summer 2011, the second field trip was planned based on the experience in Cairo but to my surprise Lebanon had a whole different setting and attitudes as well as lessons to teach. I say to my surprise because without intending it to be ethnographic the trip to Egypt then Cairo made me question the way television gives us the confidence of knowing the place and the people but travel shows a difference that challenges most preconceptions. This started to be alarming raising the question about the reason we take media content as representative of a culture; it is certainly not that representative after all. So it became more evident that understanding what is presented on screen and compare it to everyday life to differentiate between produced cultures and the quotidian ones is an urging necessity in the Middle East. To my surprise as well I became sharper in the interview settings in Beirut. My two interviewees were respectful but few people who handed to me their contacts tried to initiate an informal contact so I cunningly pointed to the fact that such statements are discourteous and out of place without offending them; although they do not speak to me today but keep me a friend on Facebook.

In Beirut the trip was a triangulation of Egypt's trip. I needed to speak to Pierre Al Daher Head of LBC Sat, and Malek Maktabi presenter/producer of Bold Red Line since many developments occurred during the CDA of the case studies. It became important to speak to both for **confirmation** and **completeness** of the findings. I got in touch with *Helem* the NGO that defends gay rights in Lebanon and talked to Muna Abu Sulaiman who was one of the first Saudi Female presenters and headed Prince Al Waleed's Foundation until replaced by his wife, at the time, Ameera Al Taweel. I tried to speak to Hala Sarhan - a close friend of Al Waleed and head

of Rotana Studios who was banished from Egypt, then returned after the revolution of 2011 and dismissed again tactfully from the Rotana group - but she declined given her circumstances.

Conclusion:

To answer how and why gender rights messages find place on Prince Al Waleed's Media Empire this research focused on talk shows and cinema as two key genres that helped establish the Prince's media realm. Using CDA the research could explore both content and structures as spaces of manifest power relations that shape the discourse of gender rights and wrongs. Similarly, the research used narrative analysis as another tool to explore cinema products as genres owned by Al Waleed's company and the cinematic art as a structure available to the Prince if he indeed wishes to develop the way gender rights are conceived culturally. The use of triangulation by resorting to further interviews with cultural intermediaries involved in the production of the selected content in the Prince's Media Empire in Egypt, Beirut and London and by consulting archive research and talking to human rights NGOs proved essential to make sense of the meanings that emerged from the CDA and NA. The Media Empire, however, was evolving rapidly and shows were shut down and others moved between channels for political reasons or following the Prince's orders as shall be explored in the next chapter. It was hard to keep up with every single shift but witnessing this happening is in itself a contribution to knowledge and a challenge to conventional methodologies deemed to work for projects that deal with discourse, moving objects and subjects. Taking time to digest all the quick movements including the Middle Eastern political mayhem guided the final analysis and helped make the findings a documentation of a specific period while highlighting the soft power of a media mogul in challenging/maintaining a culture of gender rights consciously or/and unconsciously within his constructed realm. The following chapters will expose the findings from the triangulation adapted here hoping to open the field of Arabic media and gender discourse for further exploration in the Middle East.

Prince Al Waleed as an Arab Media Mogul: Islamic Capital & Networks of Elites

Charlie Rose: But you are talking about the full empowerment of women?

Al Waleed: Exactly! I am talking about equality, women should be equal to men, and I believe that Iran, unfortunately, is ahead of Saudi Arabia. Yes! (Al Waleed's interview with Charlie Rose, 2012, Bloomberg)

Princess Ameera: You are not talking only about the government and policies you are talking about a mind-set, a culture, a religion and a very conservative culture. Driving? Yes! It is symbolic but there are very important issues...that concern us women; like civil rights, more fields in education, more fields in the labour force and more political participation. (Ameera's interview with Charlie Rose, 2012, Bloomberg)

The statements above are just an example of many messages constructed by Prince Al Waleed and repeated by his wife - at the time - Princess Ameera Al Taweel addressing women rights issues in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East as well. Such messages were addressed to different audiences and placed in different communicative mediums at different times. This chapter looks into Saudi Prince, businessman and media tycoon Al Waleed Bin Talal Al Saud as a media mogul. The purpose is to assess the type of agency he plays in the cultural field of media in the Middle East to advance gender rights. He spoke explicitly about women rights but never about LGBTQ rights; yet he took a Universalist approach to human rights in general. Scholars and journalists remain up-to-date summarising the Prince's overwhelming portfolio the way he presents it to the public. What is lacking at is a proper analysis of the meaning of such holdings, the constructed speech he delivers in different transnational media platforms and his strategic actions within his diverse Media Empire to advance women rights as promised. The Bourdieusian resilient theories proved versatile in organising the data that emerged from this empirical study. Accommodated and used in conjunction with Michel De Certeau's "tactics" and "making-do" and theories of media power and hegemony, Bourdieu's anthropological and sociological concepts help rereading the political economy that analyses the Prince's strategic holdings and statements within an Arab everyday life context. It places him back to his origins

and follows his strategies including the construction of Princess Ameera Al Taweel as a PR project in support of women's rights.

At the same time this chapter moves to understand the role of the barons³³ in the Rotana group and thus sheds the light on complex daily power relations. Emerging materials from primary and secondary data derived from online archive research of the Prince's interviews, his activities, his wife's statements and from field research in Egypt (June 2009) and (Lebanon 2011) suggest that Prince Al Waleed is in a constant quest to maximise his power at all levels for what seems to be a fixed target. The Prince challenges but at the same time uses a well-established traditional system using a modern/traditional discourse relevant to the Middle East. He is using a complex and fluid strategy to challenge the issue of human rights in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East but as a means to an end; not in the universal sense of human rights values as advanced. His strategies imitate economies of scale both vertical and horizontal to maximise the power and efficiency of his constructed discourse. Such a strategy can only be understood in a relational, conjunctural structure focusing on power mechanisms within the Saudi royal family, power relations with Arab and Western elites, a reach out to traditional structures within Saudi Arabia and the Arab world and the challenging use of modernity as a homogenous lifestyle with Islam. To give a reading about the reason erased gender rights or wrongs find place on his Media Empire before understanding the language used to produce them we need to understand Prince Al Waleed as a media mogul but with an Islamic Capital specific to media ownership and hegemony in the Middle East.

I- Prince Al Waleed as a Media Mogul: Maximisation of Power & the Islamic Capital

1- A Bourdieusian reading of the Prince Mogul: tactics and capital accumulation

As explained in chapter two, Bourdieu (1986) understands society as a magnet of different fields organised by *doxa*³⁴. An agent acts in the field based on his *habitus*³⁵ which is structured by society and structures this society at the same time. As explained in the work of Sakr (2013) before owning his own Media Empire, Prince Al Waleed had expanded his activity in the sector

³³ Pierre Al Daher: Chairman of LBC Sat, Tarik Al Suwaidan: Head of Al ResalahTV, Hala Sarhan: Head of Rotana Studios, Turki Shabana: Head of Rotana Kahlijyya, Salem Al Hindi: Chairman of Rotana Music, Jamal Khashoggi: Head of the new news channel *Al Arab*

³⁴ Set of rules, "Common belief" or "popular opinion" see chapter two.

³⁵ A structuring structure; his class, upbringing as a Saudi Prince and grandson of Prime Minister Al Solh, schools etc.

of banking to be a shareholder in Salah Kamel's ART group and an owner of stakes in rivals Fox and CNN as well thanks to glittery investment takeovers and elite networks. Yet, if we understand him as an *agent* with his own special *habitus* we must understand him as an actor in more than one *field* aiming at a greater power according to his own *illusio*.³⁶ It is the way he presents himself in each *field* via his work and through his iterations in international media platforms that help us follow his strategies and tactics and thus understand the significance of women rights as a discourse of power within his empire.

Although the Prince is outspoken about his goals and the women rights project his office manager Muna Al Turki was a good gatekeeper during the fieldwork of this research. She stood against any access to him repeatedly, even when close contacts were used, and argued that an "academic" research about the Prince's support of women's rights is not his priority, nor worthy of his time. Al Waleed's iterations regarding women rights and change seem to be well rehearsed, repetitive and constantly seeking presence in Western media. This research benefited from this but a direct conversation with him would have been more informative. Based on how he structured his own appearances this section uses archive interviews and documentaries where he exposed wealth, elite networks, life style, religiosity and political ideas strategically to every media platform he chose. Al Waleed does not hold a political office and does not stand a chance to rule in Saudi Arabia view the long line of pragmatic Princes ahead of him, yet he constantly acts as a king/crown Prince and exposes himself surrounded by his holdings branded under name the Kingdom Holdings.

³⁶*Illusio*, according to Bourdieu, is when the agent believes that the game is worth playing.



Figure 1. Al Waleed in a Bedouin *Majlis* with all his holdings exposed behind

The Prince presents himself as a successful story in the world of business where his fortune is the result of his ‘shrewdness’ not luck or kinship. On the French channel M6, the Prince told Bernard De La Villardiere on his show *Zone Interdite*:

“I managed to advance my interests at all levels; first financially, economically and at the business level; and at the moment the social/humanitarian and even political arenas. So when a man is fighting at all these levels he cannot be slow. He has to be on top of things. I think what I am doing at the moment is what the majority wants for Saudi Arabia or would like to have in their own countries in the Middle East” (Al Waleed to De La Villardiere, 2005, M6).

The Prince’s first strategy can be summarised in the way he used his *habitus* to maximise power via stretching his economic muscle and reaching out to the world’s elites gaining immediate power inside and outside Saudi Arabia. To be powerful in Saudi Arabia the Prince needed a strong global presence. Figure one is an illustration of how he used the Prince’s social field and its capitals (his *habitus*) to move to other fields that he highlights, stressing his “distinctive” character and thus reproducing his initial status as a Prince but with “distinction” this time. In other words, the Prince is not only presented as a business investor but a “shrewd investor”. The “shrewd investor” field is highly important as it is at the base of building the name “Prince Al

Waleed” publically while maximising his symbolic capital. Being a distinctive Prince is a power game against the numerous Princes in his family. To stand out he needs a distinction; else he is just one of so many Princes. Such a re-emphasis on the quality of Prince-hood with distinction highlights the Prince’s quest for a spectacular hegemony. One that goes in sync with Bourdieu’s agent who is determined to deploy all tactics and strategies to reach his ends.

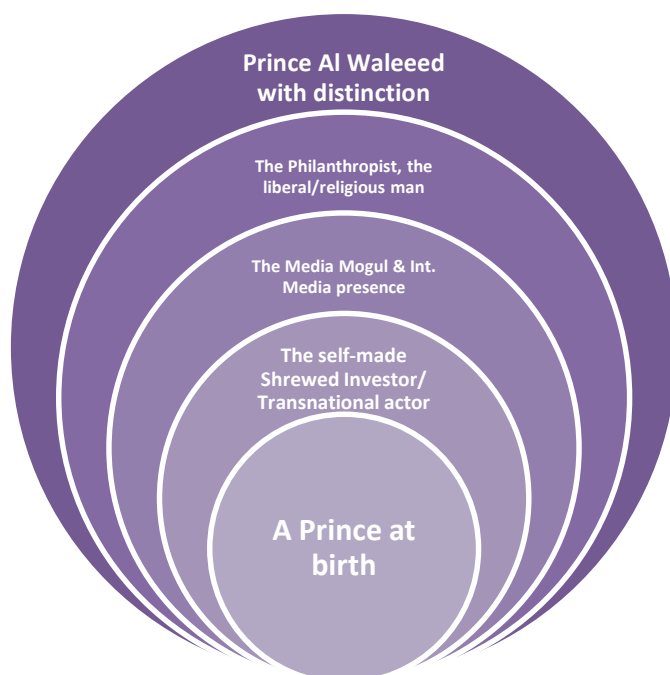


Chart 1: Al Waleed's formula in accumulating capital for distinction

The story³⁷ that after he *borrowed* \$30 000 from his father and sealed a *smart* deal in real estate to mark the first mile in his way to *extreme wealth* is overstressed distinguishing him from the privileges of Saudi Princes.³⁸ From real estate comes another *smart* investment in American Citi Bank which seems to have put him in the top five of the world’s *richest men* and kept him in different top ranks in the list of the richest for the last twelve years. Yet, as already noted by Sakr (2013), being the grandson of the founder of Saudi Arabia and the grandson of the founder of modern Lebanon Riad Al Solh cannot be left out of the credit for his fortune. Without his

³⁷As initiated by Forbes magazine, quoted by the Prince in different media platforms, noted in his biography by Riz Khan and quoted by many scholars.

³⁸ Saudi Princes are often stereotyped in the Middle East as indolent, lacking skill while enjoying extreme petro-wealth. Hardly any of them (apart from the Crown Prince, his potential successor and those holding key positions) is well known publically as they have a shy diplomatic presence although they are numerous enough to call the country after their family name.

habitus, none of this could have been possible. This kinship is not stressed however when the Prince talks about his businesses it is rather the image of *shrewdness, skilfulness, sense of responsibility, and independence* of himself as an individual actor that are stressed just to re-stress the initial field of “Prince-hood” but with “distinction”. None of the advisors or top rank managers he hires is put forward; all the success and original ideas bear the name Prince Al Waleed. He was even filmed in Riz Khan’s documentary recruiting the smallest employees in his big business empire, following every detail including the daily programs on his channels and the food menus for his guests and intervening to make them right to his standards.

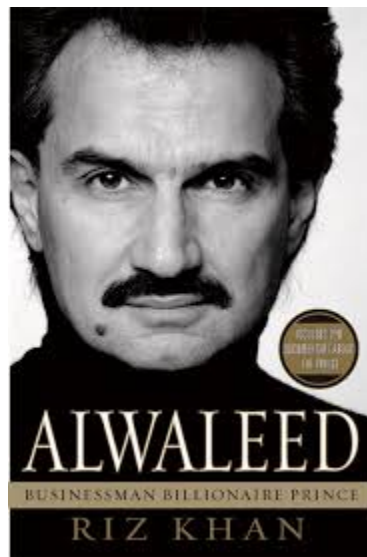


Figure 2. Prince Al Waleed’s Biography book on display all around his offices

His biographer Riz Khan, who produced both a biography and a documentary about The Prince’s life in 2005, said defending him against the critics that called the Citibank deal a hit of luck that “Citibank might have been a big hit for the Prince, but it came through considered research, not random bet” (2005, p. 73)³⁹. Khan narrated how the Prince realised that he needed “a more dramatic strategy” for a higher and appropriate return such as the one that turned him into a billionaire. The Prince is then quoted telling him the following:

“Toward the end of the 1980s, we were still pretty well entrenched in Saudi Arabia, we were diversified, we began really assembling quite a bit of money and equity at that time, and we began looking internationally. There were four big banks and they were all hammered badly. At the time, I had a lot of experience and expertise from my

³⁹Khan goes on explaining how Al Waleed directed “his financial experts to start studying the international markets as far back as 1987, while he was still preoccupied with turning around the operations at USCB. In 1989, he felt he had assessed the global market fairly thoroughly, and he started buying shares of a handful of banks overseas – Chase Manhattan, Citicorp, Manufacturers Hanover, and Chemical Bank” (p. 75).

knowledge in USCB, so I was really ahead of the curve. I began evaluating these banks and I thought, my God, the price is so low, ridiculously low, so I bought in all four banks. But then seven months later, I said, wait a minute, I should really concentrate on one bank only. So after evaluating all four, I decided that I would sell all my stakes in the others and I put everything in Citicorp.” (2005, p. 75)

The distinction of being shrewd seems to be of such high importance that it is overstressed in every media appearance of the Prince up to date. As Mills (1959) and Palmer and Tunstall (1991) explained the circle of power elites support and complete each other so if this distinctive quality is important for the Prince his elite network will certainly support it. In the same documentary by Khan, Rupert Murdoch, Chairman of News Corporation, said that Al Waleed is

“Very Shrewd, very analytical, yet at the same time prepared to gamble and go against the prevailing thoughts about markets. So he is very original in his thinking.” (Murdoch to Khan, 2005)

During the buyout of Citigroup John Reed, Former chairman of Citigroup, noted:

“Were we on our knees? Yes! Were we substantively on our knees in the sense that if you had brought an accountant in would he have said that? No. But the market felt that; Al Waleed did.” (Reed to Khan, 2005)

Paul Collins: Former Vice chairman of Citigroup added:

“He [Al Waleed] had really done his homework. He understood what we were. He understood what our weaknesses were, what our strengths were, what the opportunities were so there was no need for a long explanation from my part, of a long explanation on where we were going.” (Collins to Khan, 2005)

All these highly important and influential individuals and more were lined up in the documentary one after the other to stress how a “shrewd investor” the Prince is. This distinction is marketed along with *originality* and *uniqueness* of the shrewd Prince.

Al Waleed is keen on exhibiting his network of elites among state leaders, international media anchors and international big business owners on every interview and on his group of TV channels. He would say, “I just met with my *friend* Bashar or Prince Charles” in an interview frequently. His press releases show both his network of global connections and his involvement worldwide. On the M6 documentary where he first showed the world his lifestyle, he made sure to expose a meeting with key political figures; although as mentioned above, unlike other Saudi Princes who are in line to rule, he does not hold any official political position. *Zone Interdite* was allowed to film the Prince’s meeting in his Kingdom Holding in Riyadh with the former

secretary of state Madeleine Albright and other key political figures. In this meeting, Albright said:

“When we are ministers we dance in choreography. I learnt that the businessman *can* do every single thing a government cannot do within that choreography” (Albright, 2005, M6)

We were allowed to hear Al Waleed and Albright discussing general issues including the Middle East peace process before making the meeting private. What was interesting though is that someone from the American delegation approached the Prince to say discreetly in his ear while we are made to hear “I work for the mayor of New York, we really need your support to host the 2012 Olympic Games.” The infamous story of former Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani rejecting the 10 million dollars donation presented by the Prince for the victims of 9/11 occupied a whole section in the opening of the Prince’s biography. Giuliani had said “the city would not accept a \$10 million donation for disaster relief from Saudi Prince Al Waleed bin Talal after the Prince suggested U.S. policies in the Middle East contributed to the September 11 attacks.”⁴⁰ Khan hinted that the mayor sacrificed \$10m for the sake of his Jewish electorate.



Prince Alwaleed with Mr. Rupert Murdoch & Mr. James Murdoch, in the presence of Mr. Fahad Alsukait, Mr. Jamal Khashoggi & Ms. Heba Fatani at NewsCorp’s headquarters in New York

Figure 3.

⁴⁰ “Giuliani rejects \$10 million from Saudi Prince” available at http://articles.cnn.com/2001-1011/us/rec.giuliani.Prince_1_saudi-Prince-AlWaleed-bin-israeli-withdrawal-criminal-attack?_s=PM:US

At the time of the M6 documentary for *Zone Interdite*, the mayor of New York was Michael Bloomberg, the founder of the American multinational mass media corporation Bloomberg L.P. and a close friend of Prince Al Waleed. The Prince has a significant presence in Bloomberg TV. He also teamed up with them for his long awaited news channel, *Al Arab*. The name *Al Arab* is from the same root as *Al Arabiyya*, the rival news channel owned by the MBC group. It is not clear if choosing this name is a lack of imagination and creativity or a hint at continuity. Names such as *Al Arab*, *Al Arabiyya*, and *Al Ghad Al Arabi*, *Al Arabi* seem to be the trend for all news channels in the Middle East; all building on the idea of Arabism. By teaming up with Bloomberg the Prince hints that his news channel will benefit from the high professionalism of the Western news yet with an Arabic focus based on the name of the channel.⁴¹ In 2012, he told CNN his planned channel was an attempt to fill “an opening for a more pragmatic and logical channel that really takes the centre’s point of view”.

The Prince was not allowed to approach the news arena⁴² and would have been fought over it by his kin supported by all kind of powers.⁴³ However, *Al Arab* is a result of his tactical agility as described by De Certeau (1984) whereby he used the unpredictable situation of the Arab Spring and the Saudi/Iranian conflict to place a news channel in Bahrain; the area of cold war between KSA and Iran. Jamal Khashoggi⁴⁴, the channel’s announced director, stated in a gathering at SOAS organised by the Saudi Journalists’ club in London that “Arab Nationalism” is over. “We need to be more specialised and focused to support each other. We, Gulf States, have so much in common and have the wealth to progress; this idea of Arabism is bypassed now” (Khashoggi, London, 09-03-2012). This seems to be Khashoggi’s identity politics, however, rather than Al Waleed’s vision for the channel. Al Waleed maximises power not reduce it; even when trying to appeal to the Gulf countries he does so as a powerful international player not a regional one.

⁴¹ “CNN talks exclusively to HH Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Abdulaziz Al Saud” available at <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/23/cnn-talks-exclusively-to-hh-Prince-alwaleed-bin-talal-abdulaziz-alsaud/>

⁴² The news arena is highly monopolized in the Middle East that not anyone can open a news channel; not even Al Waleed. Plus being in a network of elites might be empowering but it is also regulating.

⁴³ Recently this was the case Al Waleed’s news television f *Al Arab* whereby after the death of King Abdullah who let Al Waleed open a news channel in Bahrain the new rule in Saudi Arabia by Al Sudari Clan shut down that channel during its first day.

⁴⁴ Khashoggi agreed to be interviewed for this research twice then changed his mind each time. As all I needed from him is a conversation about the new news channel’s targets I joined a Saudi gathering he attended to talk to the Saudi Club in London about the channel’s plan and the role of Al Waleed in serving the Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries

The channel, indeed, is not called “the Gulf” but *Al Arab*. I asked Khashoggi from within the crowd of Saudis: “Why did the Prince choose Bahrain as the location of his channel’s headquarter? Is it because of “the Shi’a threat”? Is it to counter Iran?” Khashoggi replied: “Yes, the Prince serves the interests of our country and our *Khaliji* (Gulf) brothers. Bahrain needs us. We *Khalijis* have to support each other to secure our countries and progress thanks to our wealth” (Ibid). I then asked if the channel would be employing people from the Gulf only then Khashoggi replied that it would employ high-qualified Arabs from the Middle East and international crews as well. He said that he is fascinated with new media and that he is experimenting with Twitter as he would want the channel to use new media properly. This comes along with the Prince’s interest in new media and his acquisition of shares in twitter.

Khashoggi⁴⁵ represents one of the Barons who support the Prince as palmer and Tunstall (1991) identified. Although he operates at a different power level in the hierarchy of the Media Empire, the director is not value free. He brings his own political and power interests into the cultural field of media in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East too. He supports the Prince’s interests as identified indeed but he advances his own agenda in the meantime influencing and influenced by the powerful space that Al Waleed creates. Listening to him talking to the Saudi students in London, it was obvious that a man of small power found harbour within the power of a Media Mogul. As for the channel, the launch of *Al Arab* was delayed for years since the spark of the Arab revolutions and one cannot but wonder that if Al Waleed did not offer his services to counter Iran during this critical period of regime change in the Middle East via a news channel, would he ever be allowed to access the news arena? A proper study of this channel, which is in the process of recruiting at the time of this research, will reveal interesting trends in this process of hegemony, Saudi politics, Arab media power strategies and news content production.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Khashoggi started his career as a regional manager for Tihama Bookstores (1983-1984). He soon became a reporter for important Arab newspapers including Al Sharq Al Awssat. He reported from war zones, interviewed Bin Laden and was suspected as a secret service agent for both KSA and the USA. After becoming Editor in Chief of Al Watan in 2003 Khashoggi was fired in less than two months by the Saudi ministry of information after criticizing the influence of the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia. He lived in Exile in London serving as an advisor to Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to the United States, Prince Turki Al Faical. If this says anything it says that the opposing powers within Saudi Arabia use each other’s outcasts. Khashoggi went back to his position at Al Watan in 2007 to be forced to resign again after criticism of the Salafists. (Blandford, 2003). Khashoggi’s position against the religious authorities in Saudi Arabia seems to be the common ground with Prince Al Waleed and the reason he put him at the top of his news channel.

⁴⁶ Since this research was examined King Abdullah died and a new king from Al Sudari clan took over. The channel was shut down during its first day of broadcast by Al Waleed’s network of elites after airing an interview of

Al Waleed's attempt to venture into news maximizes his hegemonic power in the cultural field. Sakr (2013) reported quoting Flanagan (2011) "Bloomberg representatives stressed that editorial independence and freedom of speech were prerequisites for their association with *Al Arab*" (p. 2295). She then matched that to Al Waleed's own assertion in his interview with the German newspaper *Handelsblatt* in May 2012 where he declared that he is for freedom of opinion and the press. He told the paper that if one invests in Twitter he cannot but believe in freedom of information. He even added that: "freedom and equality should be introduced quickly by all countries that had "not yet seen the influence of the Arab spring" (Sakr, 2013, p. 2295). Sakr used these statements to highlight their contradiction to previous statements regarding the freedom of speech when CNBC's Maria Bartiromo asked the Prince about his view regarding the "Day of Rage" protest that was planned in Saudi Arabia and the Prince reduced it to a non-event (Ibid). Indeed, Al Waleed constantly tries to reinforce his liberal discourse that is respectful of freedoms and individual rights, but contradicts himself in later statements if the interest is different. It is from this contradiction that this research tries to explore. The Prince is supportive of the monarchy and publically shows his willingness to reign; he even stresses it as a legitimate right by virtue of being the grandson of the king Saud. Hence for Al Waleed, any protest against the Monarchy is a non-event.

However, in tandem with what Sakr (2013) advanced, he lately contradicted himself in action as well; not only statements. Using a tweet, he dismissed religious media personality, the director of his Al Resalah channel, Dr. Tarik Al Suwaidan after this later appeared to be a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. Al Suwaidan explained that his adherence to the brotherhood is not a secret and well known to the Prince himself.⁴⁷ This case will be detailed in the section on Al Waleed's channels but here, it is important to note that Al Suwaidan, who is known for his moderate take on Islam as shall be analysed in Chapter Six, strongly voiced his criticism of the military coup that deposed, democratically elected, president Mursi and his Muslim Brotherhood government. Ironically, and as a fundamental religious country in the region, Saudi Arabia's opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood's extremism would mean more conservatism in KSA. How can "'*Ummi Eddunya*" (mother of the world) Egypt be an authority

Shi'a opposition leader from Al Wafaq Party Khalil Al Marzouk. Al Arab declared that the broadcast stopped for "technical and administrative reasons"

⁴⁷ BBC, "Saudi Prince sacks TV chief for Muslim Brotherhood ties" available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-23747381>

of Islam thanks to a revolution? As a result, Al Suwaidan was banned from entering Saudi Arabia altogether to perform his *Omra* (lesser pilgrimage). Thus he tweeted:

“I have been banned from entering Saudi Arabia solely for my views and my position against the coup in Egypt, and I say that my love for Saudi Arabia and its people is unshaken and that ideas can [never] be banned.” (Translation from Arabic of Suwaidan tweet: @TareqAlSuwaidan, 29 sep. 2013)⁴⁸

He then added: “Averroes said that ideas have wings to fly with. I say: I wish he had seen twitter to see how right he was” (Ibid). This is to show how Bloomberg and Al Waleed might issue statements of high values, justice and democracy for public attention but rather act without such high morality. In the case of Bloomberg, firing a head of a channel with a tweet contradicts their stressed statement on a code of ethics that respects freedom of speech especially that Al Suwaidan kept his views to his personal Facebook page and twitter and did not use the channel to vehicle any of them. As for the Prince, despite all his claims of observing justice *as a Muslim by practice*, he did not even investigate the matter decently but instead tweeted an elitist letter of dismissal making use of the situation to score points with his Saudi network of elite rulers. The Prince used a democratic medium for an undemocratic end while his Baron Suwaidan opposed a non-democratic move by the Egyptian military against a democratically elected president.

2- The Year 2005: shifts in strategies, contradictions & power manoeuvres:

The repeated discourses the Prince uses to highlight his achievements explain a whole process of making-do within a complex system of power whereby strategies and tactics need to be understood as opposites not subordinates; just as examined via De Certeau (1984) in Chapter Two. To understand Al Waleed as a Prince, we have to first understand him as an heir to one of the most complicated royal thrones in the world. Thanks to this complexity, the Saudi dynasty has survived up until today. Al Waleed, himself, operates from within this system defending it when necessary and challenging it strategically. The works of Robert Lacey (2006), Madawi Al Rasheed (2002, 2009) and John Bradley (2006) give an interesting reading into the Saudi throne and sometimes highlight the Prince’s status too. In fact, we have to understand that even if Al Waleed constitutionally stands in the line with a multitude of male heirs to succeed to the throne, he is technically excluded because of his mother’s and grandmother’s lineages. Ironically, while

⁴⁸ Reported in several newspapers and sites including Times Kuwait and global media watch; Available at: <http://www.globalmbwatch.com/2013/10/10/tariq-suwaidan-barred-saudi-arabia/> and http://www.timeskuwait.com/Times_Kuwaiti-preacher-barred-from-Makkah-pilgrimage

women's status is generally negligible at all levels of the political and economic life in Saudi Arabia, it is highly important at the social one. *Annassab* (the kinship) and *Al Qabila* (the tribe) play a big role in who rules.

The fact that Al Waleed's father is son of *Munayyir*, an Armenian mother, puts him in a less privileged status compared to his step brothers whose mothers come from prominent tribes in Saudi Arabia. Al Waleed himself does not have a Saudi mother. His mother Mona Al Sulh is the daughter of Riad Al Sulh, the founder and first Prime Minister of modern Lebanon. However, and regardless of her Lebanese elite status, she still lacks the tribal status of a Saudi woman who comes from a well-known and established tribe in the Saudi kingdom. This keeps Al Waleed away from the throne of his grandfather King Abdulaziz and away from any political office in Lebanon. Under Lebanese law, women cannot transmit citizenship to their children and no foreigner is allowed to serve in a political office in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the Saudi Prince acquired the Lebanese citizenship by decree from President Emile Lahoud after he backed this later against Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri.

Before 2005, Al Waleed focused on winning the support of the Sunni population in Lebanon hoping he can rise to Al Hariri's position as a Sunni leader, especially that this later has the Saudi citizenship too. Al Waleed, as expressed in a number of his interviews with the French channels, wanted to walk in the steps of his grandfather Riad Al Solh and gain enough popular support to serve as a Lebanese Prime Minister. He started investing heavily in Lebanon via his Al Waleed Ben Talal foundation established in 2003 in Beirut and run by his mother Mona Al Sulh.⁴⁹ The Prince never denied his will and readiness to rule in Lebanon if called forward.⁵⁰ However, and with the assassination of Rafik Al Hariri, Al Waleed knew too well that his chances to lead the Lebanese government died as well. And hence following the succession of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Prince shifted towards the Kingdom where he started to highlight his royal status and rights to the Saudi throne.

“Al Waleed: Being a member of the family, you are inevitably already part of a system; the political system, and I believe with what I am doing right now, influencing public policy by becoming outsider, being a private citizen, being a businessman, having this international position that could help Saudi Arabia, is very meaningful to me and very helpful, and I'm very happy with the position I have right now.

...

⁴⁹ The Prince invested in community development, education, healthcare, national television, and retail.

⁵⁰ Interview with Charlie Rose, 2005

Charlie Rose: you dodged the question about your political participation, let me tell you what I heard you say, I'm doing the things that I'm doing right now for the benefit of a lot of people, but I love my country and I am a member of the royal family, and I want not to say no to my participation in my government, if my government needs me, because my government right now is my family.

Al Waleed: no I am very honest and straight forward, the basic laws of Saudi Arabia they say that the lords who could rule in Saudi Arabia, who can become kings are, sons of Abdulaziz and his grandsons.

Charlie Rose: and you're his grandson.

Al Waleed: I am his grandson, so yes I am humble, but if the opportunity comes and I am called upon definitely I will be there to help my country in any capacity. It's happening now, I am helping my nation now in the capacity I have right now, but in the future when the opportunity comes and I am called upon to help my nation in any function or another capacity, yes sure I'll be there. (Al Waleed 2005, Charlie Rose)

Saudi Arabia lived a successful reign since 1932, and by successful I mean a reign of a regime that did not fall because of tribal conflicts as was the case before. We have to assume that Al Saud finally found a system that keeps them in power despite all the criticism inside and outside the Kingdom. This survival is what makes the ruling family go beyond being understood as a homogenous or a conflicting powerful body to become an intricate system of power brokering for its own interests.

Al Waleed, part of this system but at the same time outcast of it, did not appear publicly with constructed discourses related to Saudi Arabia until 2005. This year marked the death of King Fahd Al Saud, one of King Abdulaziz's sons from his favourite wife Al Sudari,⁵¹ and the succession of the current King Abdullah Al Saud, the only son of Al Shuraim. During this year, Prince Al Waleed started his well-rehearsed public discourse protected by his step uncle, reformist King Abdullah.⁵² Al Waleed and his father Talal Al Saud⁵³ have always been in conflict with their extremely powerful and religiously pragmatic step-brothers/uncles who always operate as a group. Al Sudari sons always controlled key ministries like Defence and Economy as well as strategic regions like Jeddah and Riyadh making sure that the reign remains within their line

⁵¹ Al Sudari sons are extremely powerful and pragmatic. They hold key positions in Saudi Arabia. The brothers have being crown Princes since the rule of their brother Fahd (1982-2005) and are keen to take power back to Al Sudairi clan.

⁵² King Abdullah is believed to be a reformist compared to the previous King Fahd.

⁵³ Prince Talal lived in exile

and rarely goes to their brothers and cousins. To keep power, Al Saud has been ruling by forming loyalties with strong tribes like Al Sheikh, a prominent clan that controls religious affairs in Saudi Arabia and who Al Waleed contests constantly. In this partnership, Al Sudari branch of Al Saud family vows to follow a conservative Wahhabi version of Islam in exchange of Al Sheikh's support in the consultative council (*Majlis El Shura*). This way, Al Sudari clan ensures that their sons will get enough votes in the council to serve as crown Prince and later on, as Kings of Saudi Arabia. (Al Rasheed 2002, Lacey 2006).

Bourdieu (1986) explained that personal history of an individual, his preferences as well as dispositions situated in his surrounding social reality form a structure that to a certain extent predetermines that individual's potential causes of action. Social class, education, upbringing as well as the individual past choices all form part of this structure and determine part the behaviour of an agent, in this case Al Waleed, in the field. In other words being a Prince in this case, although not a biological attribute yet a distinctive social field which the Prince acquired by birth, put him in a distinguished class. This class is not homogenous but strives in a constant power game. De Certeau (1984) explained Bourdieu's cycle of action and strategies in a way that fits the Prince's tactics. Al Waleed can be read as a social agent who "is an essential character, in fact, because he makes the circular movement of the theory possible: henceforth, from "structures," it passes to the *habitus*...from the latter, to "strategies," which are adjusted to "conjunctures," themselves reduced to the "structures" of which they are the results and particular states" (Steven Randal 1984, p. 58).

Prince Al Waleed found more room to manoeuvre during the last eight years of King Abdullah's reign. Thanks to the support of his liberal uncle, he could create a number of liberal discourses at all platforms while being critical of the religious powers that are highly supported by his step uncles; sons of Al Sudairi clan. He was mainly supportive of *al Bay'a* committee (the committee of allegiance), initiated by King Abdullah in 2006.⁵⁴ Previously, his father resigned from the same committee after realising that it was not a real democratic body but a façade faking political participation while keeping it centred on the Al Sudairi sons⁵⁵. When

⁵⁴ Prince Talal, father of Al Waleed, resigned from the *Baya'a* committee after Nayef's (Al Sudairi's son) nomination as crown Prince stressing that the committee is not respected as a democratic institution but used by his powerful brothers as they wish.

Prince Naif was appointed as a second deputy Prime Minister Prince Talal told the financial times:

“The Appointment of Prince Naif or any other individual is not the issue. We are protesting against the principle, not the person. This is more of an administrative, ministerial position, so we do not agree on the impression that he will automatically become Crown Prince because of the *Bay’a* system (Allegiance Council) established by King Abdullah, something that we all approved and abide by. The council nominates and elects the Crown Prince. Bypassing the allegiance system would mean we do not respect our own rules or uphold our system.” (Prince Talal, 2009, FT⁵⁶)

Al Waleed, like his father, took the opportunity of the “Arab spring” and sent an op-ed piece to the Wall Street Journal⁵⁷ where he stressed that Arab revolutions happened because of the lack of political participation and if monarchies that are surviving today do not allow for more political freedom, they risk to face the same fate of the fallen regimes. He wrote:

“...chief among those are the judicial institutions whose independence and integrity are vital to the safeguarding of rights. They are not only the custodians of the principle of the primacy of the rule of law, but also the final arbiters in ensuring that the process through which transactions and decisions are made, be they in the private sector or the public domain, is legitimate and in conformity with accepted rules. Democracy entails far more than elections and votes.” (Al Waleed, 2012, WSJ)

It would be naive to assume that Al Waleed faces his politically powerful uncles only. In fact, he faces what he does not want to challenge but only twist to his benefit. The religious power is overwhelming in the Middle East because it wins over any other discourse and captures the majority of Arab populations. The way Al Waleed tailors his speech is certainly shrewd but in the middle of seeking all these interests, his support of women’s rights and push for reforms in the region do not find a proper intellectual support, hence making it a flawed discourse.

By 2004 at the age of 49 Prince Al Waleed became the fourth richest man in the world after Bill Gates, Warren Buffet and Karl Albrecht until he was hit by the economic crisis and bad returns in 2009. He told De La Villardiere in the 145 minutes documentary about his life, “the incredible life of a Prince”, produced for *Zone Interdite* on the French channel M6 that he is very content with his global ranking:

“I will never let power blind me, never! I was asked a question one time by one journalist: Prince you are number three or four in the world, when will you be number

⁵⁶Available at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6fe89ec0-460e-11de-803f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3F3JSYGiE>

⁵⁷ WSJ is published in New York City by Dow Jones & Company, a division of News Corporation in which Prince Al Waleed has shares.

one? I answered: I have two possibilities; look ahead of me at the two or three people who lead in power and money and tell myself “I’ll get them” or look behind me and look at those seven billions of people and say “Oh thank God”...I decided to look behind me and for those ahead, I say “Good luck to them”. (Al Waleed 2005, min 44)

Today the Prince is still number 26 on Forbes’ list of the world’s richest men and although the seven billions are still behind him he disputed Forbes’ ranking promising to take a libel action in the high court of London⁵⁸. Al Waleed claimed that Forbes underestimated his assets by \$9.6bn while it is worth \$30bn. He told the Sunday telegraph:

“They are accusing me of market manipulation. I am not pursuing it because of my wealth, but because they are accusing Saudi Arabia of being manipulated because we have no casinos. This is unacceptable.”⁵⁹

In what the Guardian termed as a “stinging rebuke”, Al Waleed turned to Forbes’ rival Bloomberg Billionaires Index which estimated his wealth to \$28bn, ranking him the world’s 16th wealthiest person. He then deprived Forbes from accessing his finance portfolio. In Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, however, he remains number one in the Arabian business list of the richest Arabs.

From the Economic field as a shrewd, self-made billionaire Al Waleed reinitiated his political presence as an Al Saud Prince; stressing exceptionality in all fields. Competitive with the other power Elites in the region, since 2008, and during the economic crisis, he sought to build the world’s tallest building in Jeddah in support of the city, yet he could not start until 2014⁶⁰. The Kingdom Tower will be one kilometre tall where the architect Adrian Smith would outdo his masterpiece Burj Khalifa of the UAE. Talal Almaiman⁶¹, told the news: “we envision Kingdom Tower as an iconic new marker of Jeddah’s historic importance as the traditional gateway to the holy city of Mecca.”⁶² Prince Al Waleed exposed in all his biographical documentaries his concern and generosity for his people in Saudi Arabia; an action where he is

⁵⁸ Richard Green, a partner and head of regulation at the law firm Hill Dickinson, said the case would cement London's reputation as the libel capital of the world. “While I accept that Forbes magazine is published in England and Wales both in hard copy and on the internet, it is difficult to see why this is the most appropriate forum for the case other than its perceived pro-claimant reputation,” he added

⁵⁹ Reported in most newspapers including the Guardian <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/jun/06/saudi-Prince-libel-action-forbes-rich-list>

⁶⁰This was postponed again to a later date at the time of this thesis revisions in 2015.

⁶¹ The executive director development and domestic investments, chairman and CEO of Kingdom Real Estate Development Company (KRED), a board member of Kingdom Holding Company and Jeddah Economic Company (JEC)

⁶² Quoted in architect magazine <http://www.e-architect.co.uk/saudi-arabia/kingdom-tower-jeddah>

seizing his role as a Prince, highlighting it and hinting his readiness to rule officially if asked forward the same way he is serving unofficially.

3- Islamic Capital for hegemony:

Building the hegemonic image of this distinctive Prince who is the servant of his constituency, the Muslim who is traditional and liberal, the bridge between the West and the East, and the philanthropist are part of a constructed symbolic capital which enhances the Prince's leadership and fields of power. However, in the case of the Middle East what I call **the Islamic Capital** should stand as a category by itself because it is an essence for this hegemonic construction of an accepted dominating self. It is as important as Bourdieu's economic, cultural, symbolic and social capitals but distinctive by being Islamic not just religious. Aware of this importance the Prince prays in front of every camera that films a documentary about his life and exposes a set of Islamic practices as part of his busy quotidian recurrently. He confirms his Islamic background in every interview and distinguishes himself from the Western liberalism labelling his own liberalism as being Middle Eastern.

In the 2009 Kate Humble's *Frankincense Trail* documentary for BBC, the Prince appears in her journey following the old caravan trade of Frankincense from Yemen to Bethlehem during her necessary passage by what is now Saudi Arabia. Their first conversation was:

Kate: I believe you are the grandson of the founder of Saudi Arabia

Al Waleed: yes I am

Kate: I am amazed that you bother to work!

Al Waleed: I think that every person has to work, it is part of our religion, of our ethics, of our habits...every person has to work and produce.

Kate: you have amassed a huge fortune, are you the richest man in the world; no?

Al Waleed: no I am among them.

Kate: is there such a thing as too much money

Al Waleed: well you know, really it's a....you know once you go beyond a stage then it becomes academic. There is so much you can do with the wealth, but more importantly is how you can apply your wealth to help society, apply part of it to the system and advance certain causes that you believe in. (The Frankincense Trail documentary, episode on Saudi Arabia and Egypt, 2009)

Through this statement, we notice Al Waleed's intention to portray himself as a humble Saudi who works hard despite his emphasised status as one of the world's richest men⁶³. He explains

⁶³ At the time of this thesis revision in 2015, Alwaleed announced that he would give away the totality of his wealth (35 billion dollars) to charity "including empowering women" through his own Alwaleed Philanthropies organisation, modeled on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Guardian available at

that work is a religious duty and adds that Saudis do not lay down around lazy; they work at the highest standards and achieve a lot. It is not clear however what this conversation or even Al Waleed's entire segment is doing in Kate's documentary, apart from the fact that Al Waleed tries to come out as a link between the West and Middle East.

The Prince granted Humble an access no other journalist can get. Not only she followed the trail inside Saudi Arabia but dived in Saudi shores to look for old sunk ships that carried the incense which is not accessible to others. While Humble expressed her sorrow that the Saudi authorities would not allow the removal of the historical objects she found underwater for further studies, she was thankful to dive in a sea hardly anyone can access. In exchange, it seems, Humble showed in her documentary part of the Prince's life in the Saudi desert as part of her 2000 miles journey following the trade that first connected the Middle East with the West. In such a strategic appearance, Al Waleed was shown as a philanthropist and a royal Prince receiving ordinary men from different tribes as if they were his constituency.

Kate: Then I travel alone with the royal family for another two hours through the night until we are deep in the Saudi Arabian desert, every month the Prince meets with local tribal leaders and their subjects in a traditional event called a *Majless*. As a welcome, each of the high-ranking guests is bathed in frankincense they trap its sweet perfume in their clothing. There is no social security in Saudi Arabia, so it's custom for Arab leaders to give money to their people. Tonight the Prince will give away hundreds of thousand dollars of his personal fortune.

Al Waleed: this is very unique to the Gulf region, and even more unique to Saudi Arabia. These traditions have been going on for a long, long time. It is part of the interaction between the members of the royal family and their subjects, it's not obligatory but I like to do it because it's part of my culture, part of me living in the Saudi society.

Kate: These tribesmen come from the region directly surrounding the Prince's desert retreat. Some come just for themselves some represent their entire family and each has written his plea down on paper.

Kate: so you have requests for having to pay a lease on a house?

Al Waleed: This for example, this guy says: I have lots of people and I want some money.

Kate: He has a big family and he needs help supporting them

[Camera shows one of the Prince's personal assistants, Nala, taking a lot of requests]

Nala to Kate: This one it is his first time to submit a request to his Highness and he doesn't have any job, so he requests to find him a job

Kate to Al Waleed: Do you have any idea how much money you've given away?

Al Waleed: Tens of thousands

Kate: Tens of thousands of course

Al Waleed: and billions of dollars

[an old man comes and says things to the Prince]

Kate: is he very happy?

Al Waleed: well he said that he needs a car, he was emphasising it, actually over emphasising his request

Kate: well he is not going to get penalized for that he'll still get his car

Al Waleed: Yes of course. This has been going for 25 years now. This is really Islamic practice

Kate: so is there a concept of heaven that you go to a special place if you...

Al Waleed: No, some people in the extreme Islam they talk about this. First it's a duty; and Christian, Muslim and Jewish people, God decides where to put them (The Frankincense Trail documentary, episode on Saudi Arabia and Egypt, 2009)

The discourse coming out from the Prince's documentaries, public appearances and international interviews are multiple but fixed across different platforms. In this excerpt, the Prince is using Kate's BBC series to show three things. First, the women who surrounded him were not *harem*, but working individuals even in the desert settings. His wife, who was present as well, was filmed sitting with Hala Sarhan, managing director of Rotana Studios but also the influential woman in Arab media who was in exile from Egypt at the time (see Chapter Two). The Princess answered Kate's question "But don't you worry that your husband is surrounded by so many beautiful women, I mean not to say that you are not a beautiful woman, but don't you sometimes get a little bit kind of why does he need all these women around him? To this Princess Ameera stated: "No, no because I know the cause behind it, and all of these beautiful women are well raised women, well brought up and they have very good ethics, and with him I don't worry about it. No I actually encourage it". This image and discourse is directed to the West indeed but is targeting the conservative authorities in Saudi Arabia in the process as well.

The second point Al Waleed tried to showcase is what he termed an "interaction between the members of the royal family and their subjects". He distributes money in front of the camera stating it is a charitable gesture. During his appearance with De La Villardiere on M6 he also distributed money to households he visited in Riyadh and to those who queued outside his palace. From inside the house of a poor woman, De La Villardiere asked Al Waleed twice before this later agreed to disclose the amount of money he gives to each family, although he noted that charity must be kept a secret. The Prince is not only exposing his charitable acts to French and English media but also creating a dependency on his money from inside Saudi

Arabia by creating a reputation of the ancient generous Arab men in the process and seizing his role as an Arabian Prince. The queues of people who are shown standing to come forward and ask him for cars, houses or just money are overwhelming. This action is emphasised in every documentary appearance.



Figure 4. Al Waleed's *Majlis* meeting Saudi citizens to answer their special requests

The third point is his use of modern takes on religion especially regarding terrorism and other religions. In the segment quoted above, he highlighted that only extremists claim to know who is going to heaven and who is not. He emphasised that Christians, Muslims and Jews alike are in the hands of God. With De La Villardiere, he had more time to arrange a visit to a mosque during Friday's prayer. When the French crew felt targeted by the Imam's sermon, they asked Al Waleed if he ordered it. The Prince replied that he talked to the preacher to inform him of the French crew's arrival and asked about the theme of his sermon. This later told him that it would be about the relations with non-Muslims. The Prince then said that if he did not choose that theme he would have asked him to do so. Briefly, the sermon as translated to French by the French producer as follows:

“...Islam and Muslims are the subjects of accusations linking them to terrorism, violence and extremism...Even Islamic clothing creates a problem in certain countries and social classes...They say that certain Quranic verses and the prophet’s sayings speak blatantly about terrorism and incite for it. This is totally contradictory to reality. The Prophet says that Jews and Christians have the same rights as Muslims. The Quran teaches to treat them well”. (*Zone Interdite*, M6, 2009)

Through this statement, the Prince hit two birds with one stone. Although the French team felt targeted by the speech the Prince includes this message in all his interviews in a way or another. The purpose is to create the image of the defender of Islam in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East while criticising his country’s extremism and traditions that deprived him from seizing his birth right as a ruler in the holy Kingdom in the process.

The Prince added two verses of the Quran at the entrance of the George VI hotel at the heart of Paris as a symbolic act and a political statement marked on the walls of an iconic European monument.

“Well you know I am a Muslim. I am an Arab. I am very proud of my heritage and my culture and I just put two verses of the Quran that are very relevant and very close to my heart and I put them in the main entrance of the lobby, over here [pointing at the verses]. They say ‘If you thank your God your God will give you more (*Wa In Shakartum La Azedanakum*); that’s one verse. The other verse says ‘All this is from my God’s blessings (*Hada Min Fadli Rabbi*)’” (Al Waleed: documentary by Riz Khan 2005)

It is safe to say that the emphasis on religion is part of the socio-political system of seeking and enhancing power because of the religion’s cultural and anthropological significance for the people of the Middle East. Understanding a system of power in this region has to consider the role of religion because whether it is used or not, people still evaluate a powerful public personality based on his Islamic Capital; Al Waleed makes sure to accumulate enough resources to be considered Islamic with distinction. He is not only a devoted Muslim whom God privileged as marked by the two verses but he champions Muslims by placing their holy book at the heart of Europe.

II- The PR project Princess Ameera Al Taweel: implications

1- The Creation of Princess Ameera⁶⁴:

The controversy of Princess Ameera Al Taweel is that she is the first Princess married to an Al Saud to appear publically, head uncovered, speak charismatically to media internationally and accompany the Prince like any first lady or queen in the Middle East or worldwide. Her pictures holding her husband's hand and meeting world leaders or attending royal weddings and speaking at international gatherings are available online and via the Kingdom Holdings' website at the dismay of Al Saud's and many religious authorities KSA.



Figure 5. Ameera a keynote speaker as Vice Chairwoman of Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation during the 7th annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative Sep. 21st, 2011

Before the Arab Spring of 2011, Al Waleed constructed a substantial liberal discourse of women's rights that he carried personally in public statements, interviews and documentaries. His, now, former wife Ameera Al Taweel seems to be yet another way that embodied this discourse serving as a "public relations" project for his political agenda. Talking about women's matters by men who hold no official position for such business has a sense of diminution in the

⁶⁴ Aameera translates to Princess usually called Al Aameera Aameera.

Saudi culture if not immoral. Why would a man preoccupy himself with women's matters? Prince Al Waleed had his share of attacks in this regard. At last he placed a charismatic Saudi woman to speak for women about the exact same issues. The fact that the Princess repeated what he stated before and nothing more raise the question about her usage as a mean for an end rather than just a wife of the Prince.

Princess Ameera Bint Idan Al Taweel Al Ossaymi was trained for one year in Paris to move from a Bedouin background without any elite circles to be a fashion icon⁶⁵. Like Queen Rania of Jordan and Princess Salma of Morocco, Ameera meets the world's leaders beside her husband while being pictured in the process. Despite the fact that Al Waleed does not hold any political office and that she repeated his statements as obvious in all the interviews conducted with different Western channels the Princess symbolised a modern but alien image to that of Saudi women; proving that a Saudi woman can be fashionable and outspoken even on CNN and FOX news. Her mere existence publically was a big controversy and a strong political statement by the Prince. Ameera could never have had the freedom to appear without a scarf publically without the authorisation of her husband. Tradition allows Saudi men to authorise their wives to do what they want, including driving, but Saudi men never dare to go against the mainstream rules of their religious state.

Ameera first grabbed attention in 2009 when she stated that she is ready to drive. In an interview with Luke Beerman - Deputy Head of the Rotana channels - he denied that the Rotana group is following any kind of agenda. He then picked up a Rotana magazine and said,

“Look at the main title of this magazine. Look “the Princess is ready to drive” and she can if Al Waleed allows her by the way. But not even Al Waleed would take such a move. It is more complicated; never ask such a question, as nobody will answer you. The nature of media work is much more complicated than setting an agenda and implementing it. It is more about manoeuvres according to the circumstances, cultural settings and the powers involved. (Interview with the author: Egypt 2009)

In fact, the level of attentiveness and the use of these little tactics that can help adjust strategies are impressive. To reach his targets Al Waleed does not tire from maximising power using small tactics and big strategies forcing change or penetrating a space within fields of meta-powers and operating from within.

⁶⁵ According to a contact from her close network whom I keep anonymous as they refused to be quoted in this research.

The Prince shifted to talk to Arab audiences directly after the Arab Spring in the same fashion he used to address the Western media. One of his channels, Rotana Khalijiyya, broadcasted an interview with him that aired and was broadcasted in another fourteen Arabic channels. Al Waleed sat in a round table surrounded by the key media personalities throughout his Empire and a selection of specific pictures of himself all over the walls of the studio.⁶⁶ Ali Al Alyani highlighted that the Prince took the lead to allow his wife to come forward and speak on television as well as travel and appear with him in important meetings to ask him whether his family members, the leaders of Saudi Arabia disapprove of such a move. The Prince denied, stating that Ameera is like any ordinary Saudi woman which makes her the best ambassador of Saudi Arabia and Saudi women. The Prince dismissed the critics he received for allowing his wife to appear publically especially that his brother attacked him repeatedly on different media platforms accusing him of committing a grave sin by exposing the family's women⁶⁷.

Princess Ameera, 20 years younger than Al Waleed, is often presented as Prince Al Waleed's fourth wife, but this number seems to be rounded replacing an alleged number of seven or eight⁶⁸. He divorced her in 2013 and the reason communicated to the public is the Prince's unwillingness to have children with her; a right culturally sealed in the contract of Muslim marriage⁶⁹. Allegations circulate that the last wife of Al Waleed is Princess Asma Bint Eidan Al

⁶⁶ Saudi Jamal Khashoggi the director of the Prince's news channel *Al Arab*, Egyptian Tamer Amine, the key media figure presenting *Sa'a Massriyya* on Rotana Egypt, Saudi Ali Al Alyani the presenter of *Ya Hala* show on Rotana Khalijiyya, Abdallah Al Medefar presenter of *Liq'a' Al Jum'u'a* on Al Resalah TV and Saudi female presenter Maysaa Amudi (not veiled) the presenter of *Sayedati* on Rotana Khalijiyya and whose name is linked to women rights all rotated in asking the Prince questions already addressed in his other international interviews and biographical documentaries. The walls of the studio were covered by the Prince's pictures with interesting world leaders such as president Khatami or King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, as well as the pictures of his childhood that can be found in his biography by Riz Khan.

⁶⁷Prince Khaled criticized his brother occasionally when he judged that he is not following the teachings of Islam. He has been harsh at times and nicer at others but he issued many statements each time and reported him to the elderly including their father Prince Talal. Lately Prince Talal started to appear in interviews on Rotana Khalijiyya and Al Resalah where he did not criticize his brother yet. It will be interesting to follow if Al Waleed will manage to buy out his brother. One of the links to some of his statements is available here <http://www.anbacom.com/news.php?action=show&id=2069>

⁶⁸His previous wives are: Dalal Bent Saud Bin Abdelaziz, Iman Al Sudairi, Khoulood Malih Al 'inzi, Maha Said Altumaimi, Rayou Khaled Al Matiri, Asmae Al Osaymi, then Ameera Al Taweel

<http://alkhaleejonline.net/articles/1419533568210699200/الوليد-بن-طلال-عن-وديا-ينفصل-طلال-بن-الوليد>

⁶⁹Thus for someone who believes in women's rights and prides himself in observing the Islamic rules marrying a wife who is 20 years younger and depriving her from children in the Middle East despite the extreme wealth of the husband is a moral breach to her Arab/Islamic specific rights. <http://alwafd.org/منوعات/642119-الوليد-بن-طلال-عن-وديا-ينفصل-طلال-بن-الوليد>
[منها-الإنجاب-لر-فضه-ز-وجته](#)

Taweel Al Ossaymi Al Otaybi the elder sister of Ameera⁷⁰. Once divorced, she apparently married Al Waleed's cousin Abdel Aziz Ibn Fahd Ibn Abedlaziz Al Saud and the Prince married her sister Ameera. In an interview with Wall Street Journal Ameera dismissed a question about how she met the Prince and how did that change her to answer the second part of the question only. She confirmed that she did not change; in contrast her current image is exactly who she is/was⁷¹. The fact that the Princess appears only on the international media platforms where the Prince holds shares certainly helps control over the interview questions and topics and grants repetitive presence. Yet, repetition characterises all of these interviews uttering a rehearsed fixed message already spoken by the Prince.



Figure 6. Synchronized appearances according to the public event

⁷⁰The name of this wife seems to be erased publically but close circles confirm she was his wife and now his cousin's. Arab Times still exposed this as available here

http://www.arabtimes.com/portal/news_display.cfm?Action=&Preview=No&nid=5221&a=1 or
<http://institutie.blogspot.com/2011/11/blog-post.html>

⁷¹ The interview is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LYZFXOAIpk



Figure 7. Ameerah in Zouhair Murad’s Dress & Al Waleed in the Traditional Saudi outfit attending Prince Willam & Kate Middelton’s wedding

The Prince is very careful about his public image and follows an aggressive strategy to construct a fixed one that he tailors constantly. Figure 6 and 7 show how the two royals appear publically in synchronised clothing. He issues memos and statements from his company the Kingdom holdings to rectify or correct any miss-information. His team edits his Wikipedia page constantly where the number of his marriages is currently reduced to two women; one at a time⁷². The first name is Princess Dalal his childhood friend and mother of his children and second is Princess Ameerah. It seems that Prince hires a watchdog services to track his public and online profile. As an example, when people started to circulate the picture of Ameerah as Princess Khoulood⁷³ his divorced fourth wife, who does not enjoy a good reputation lately⁷⁴, the

⁷² The number changes to seven in the Arabic version of Wikipedia

https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/سعود_آل_العزیز_عبد_بن_طلال_بن_الوليد

⁷³http://www.arabtimes.com/portal/news_display.cfm?Action=&Preview=No&nid=5221&a=1

Kingdom holdings made sure to issue a memo correcting the information. Blogs, amateur YouTube videos and unpopular newspapers circulated these pictures but the issue was treated seriously because the Prince addresses an audience that does not check its sources. The star video clip director Mirna Khayat, confirmed that the Prince has a specific strategy of media presence. Whatever he exposes is meant to be there. Her production company is taking care of filming him on the move. He is constantly filming his activities and produce features and video content about himself on the go just like a King or president in the Middle East (Interview with the author, Beirut 2011)

2- The discourses of Princess Al Taweel:

Via her appearances and discourses Princess Ameera showed charisma, eagerness and commitment to women rights in Saudi Arabia. Regardless of Al Waleed's project for her she certainly committed to voice women rights issues seeking change. Born to a Bedouin family that has no special political, social or economic status in Saudi Arabia, Ameera Al Taweel holds a business degree from New Haven University. She is a well-spoken young woman who developed the same narratives as her royal husband. Al Waleed trusted her with his Foundation where she dedicated her time to support projects aimed at poverty alleviation, disaster relief, interfaith dialogue and most importantly, women's empowerment.⁷⁵

“ [What Saudi Arabia is doing for women's empowerment] is a lot of things, but in my own perspective I can't speak on the behalf of the government or what the government should do, I can speak about **us women** and what we want to happen, and it can only happen through us, and I think there is a certain lobby in Saudi Arabia for Saudi women right now. They're trying to get together women leaders, women lawyers together, you'll see women doctors together; they're creating a certain lobby to voice out there voices out there. And the decisions of the king to have women vote in municipal elections and have members of *Shura* (consultative council) didn't come out of nowhere, there was a movement from Saudi women called “*baladi*”, and they all gathered in front of municipal election, saying we have to vote, there is nothing against it in the law that says we can't vote. And because of that movement, because of that gathering of women we saw effects, which was the decision of women to vote. So women are gaining their rights themselves and I would love to see them gather more voices out there concerned more and just continue through the challenge.” (Charlie Rose, 2011)

⁷⁴ “Egyptian tycoon, Saudi Princess locked in legal battle” available at <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/egyptian-tycoon-saudi-Princess-locked-in-legal-battle-1.561752>

⁷⁵ “The Power Princess: Ameerah Al-Taweel and Her Work For Women's Rights.” Accessible at <http://www.glamour.com/inspired/2014/04/ameerah-al-taweel-the-power-Princess-of-womens-rights>



Figure 8. Princess Ameerah Live on CNN with Christian Amanpour, Sep. 12th, 2012

In every media Princess Al Taweel repeats the bullet points of this same message using almost the same wording as her husband.

Princess Ameerah: ...when it comes to women's driving, I don't think it's a tradition. Women used to ride horses and camels; even we used to drive when cars first came out. I think it is introduced to us in a taboo way by closed minded mind-sets. And in my opinion, it is going to go away gradually, but women have to voice out their concerns; they have to. They have to gather as a certain mass and through being together it will be stronger than just one person voicing her opinion...

We don't need anyone to talk on our behalf. and it's very hypocritical for men to gather and talk about women, in my opinion, because you really don't know what it feels like until you live it and you can't live it unless you are a woman" (Princess Ameerah's interview with Charlie Rose, 2012, Bloomberg)

Indeed, through Ameerah, the Prince portrayed his vision of the liberal Muslim and Saudi woman who should enjoy her full rights⁷⁶ in theory and practice. By issuing statements and making public appearances Ameerah reflected the Prince's liberal take on women. She wore the latest fashion, appeared unveiled, travelled abroad alone, spoke to international media and held several important jobs, the latest of which (as of 2013) is vice chair of Al Waleed Bin Talal Foundation. She left the foundation after her divorce.

⁷⁶ Education, job, free movement, public status, driving, voting, etc.

In an interview with Saudi media personality Muna Abu Sulaiman who held this position before Ameera, Muna took pride in explaining how she developed the foundation to function to international standards. She explained how she was excited to push for a project that teaches fixed strategies to support local NGOs or charities that are funded by the foundation so that they develop campaigns and projects to international standards⁷⁷, just to be turned down. She said there were enough funds for it but no will at all (Interview with the Author London 2012). With the arrival of Ameera, Abu Sulaiman left the foundation and re-joined her show *Kalam Nawa'em* that she left for the foundation in the first place. Abu Sulaiman was an established image/icon of Saudi women thanks to her media appearances on Al Waleed's Arab media rivals; MBC. It is safe to say that this image of the outspoken advocate for Saudi women's rights is not credited to the Princess but to the power and capitals of her husband. Once divorced, Ameera ceased to exist as a walking icon of women's rights although she still works in the same domain. Her constructed network of power shrunk with the divorce and her image became less politicised.

Abu Sulaiman took her place back in *Kalam Nawa'em* at the expense of the other Saudi presenter Heba Jamal who had replaced her when she left for Al Waleed's foundation. Heba Jamal was anxious to hear that Muna Abu Sulaiman left Al Waleed's foundation; she knew she was coming back to take her place. She said: "you do not understand. They decide (hinting at Sheikh Al Ibrahim) and she has a good connection with them; they like her" (interview with the author, London 2012). Indeed Muna took her position back and Heba ended up in *Sayidati* show on Al Waleed's Rotana Khalijiyya but without the Islamic veil that she wore on *Kalam Nawa'em* generating wide controversies. It seems that Princess Ameera, and anchorwomen Muna, and Heba, benefited at the micro level from Al Waleed's macro level of power and elite networks. The Princess can be read as a PR project of the Prince but one that marked an instant step forward in the history of Saudi women. She was never meant to be a revolutionary project but rather an image of possibility. The significance of this project will only materialise as a real shift in the Saudi society if other powers share the Prince's desire for change.

III- The Empire, the role of the barons and power relations with Al Waleed:

1- Takeovers, policy shifts and power struggle inside the Media Empire:

⁷⁷ Help local NGOs develop structured projects apt to be followed, with short and long terms goals and work plans instead of just pumping money into the pockets of small dysfunctional groups here and there.

As developed in Chapter two, Al Waleed's media portfolio grew exponentially over a short period of time. Interestingly, it developed or faced difficulties in accordance with the Prince's policies and interests. Shortly after exchanging mutual praise in media, the Prince faced conflicting interests with the leaders of his channels and ended up shuffling the leading positions in Rotana, LBC Sat and Al Resalah after serious conflicts with his barons. Most of the Prince's business acquisitions happen via takeovers and adjustments. Sarmad Zok, chairman and chief executive officer of Kingdom Hotel investments and a board director of Kingdom Holding Company told Riz Khan that the Prince's investments are never ad hoc accident but rather well studied decisions "driven with a vision and strategy around it". He further explained,

"The Prince is a person who builds his investments around partnership. He does not go alone and that is why we and invest in four seasons; we don't try and rebuild another brand to compete with the four seasons. They are very good at it. They done it for many years we go in and we tag along their success and try to enhance the value of that investment..." (Riz Khan Documentary, 2005)

Al Waleed's strategy of takeovers reached his Media Empire whereby the Rotana group and Al Resalah developed from Sheikh Kamal Saleh's ART's specialised channels and LBC Sat from a deal to buy Saleh's shares in the channel as explained in Chapter Two. These takeovers seem to be smart strategically but failed at the human capital level. Competition, interests and ambitions of the media barons and celebrities within the Prince's institutions soared to conflict when they differed from the Prince's interests or ceased to serve his targets. Some celebrities went down the hill when they followed his agenda of breaking or titillating taboos related to women's rights and sexual decadence. The case of Hala Sarhan is exposed in the following section but that of producer/presenter Malek Malktabi is exposed in Chapter Five in details while examining the discourse developed by the show *Bold Red Line (Ahmar Bel Khat Al 'Areed)*.

Prince Al Waleed is shown in all his documentaries following his channels on the move, approving the content schedule from distance, and hiring his own personnel in anecdotal ways. In the documentary about his life for M6 he is shown interviewing pilots for his private jets and hostesses. The documentary shows how he dismissed a pilot from the first question of the interview because he hesitated. The Prince explained to the camera that he has no time to waste and his pilot must be quick and sharp. He would rather dismiss him at this stage while they are still on at land than wait for when he hesitates in the sky (Al Waleed, *Zone Interdite*, 2005). Apparently the Prince has the same attitude with many of his employees. If they do not follow

the same path, walk at his pace and serve his interests he does not hesitate to change them regardless of their ranking, achievements or even relationship to him. This probably explains why every employee with significant power is publically dismissed in a scandalous way.

2- Power struggle and hierarchies in the TV channels:

- **LBC Sat: Al Waleed versus Pierre Daher⁷⁸:**

As explored in Chapter Two when Al Waleed bought large shares in LBC and PAC (Production and Acquisition Company) in 2008 Daher called it an exemplary partnership that would inject capital in the channel helping it retain its leading position among Arab satellite channels. In an interview with Daher he zapped the talk about the Prince Al Waleed and said it was competition that made his channel join what he called a group of channels - avoiding to name the Rotana group - and making ventures a general procedure. He stated:

“Some 10 years ago, TV groups moved from a single channel to a network of channels hence the need for an incremental investment emerged. In order to maintain our leading position, we had to find a strong partner to follow the same strategy. Currently, LBC group relies primarily on advertising revenues and we are currently identifying new revenue streams such as co-production.” (Pierre Daher interview with the author: Beirut 2012)

In 2012, Al Waleed, who owns a majority share in the company, decided to exclude Daher from LBC and PAC. According to *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, the dispute escalated after Al Waleed accused Daher of extravagant spending at the satellite channel, while Daher accused the Saudi billionaire of violating his duties towards the local channel. According to Daher, “the main issue was the revenues.” Al Waleed decided to move LBC and PAC to his Rotana Group, and drop the Choueiri Group from media sales duties shifting sales in-house to Rotana Media Services (RMS). The results were disastrous, according to Daher.⁷⁹ He notes: “the Prince insisted on moving LBC SAT to RMS. I told him this would be suicidal. I disapproved. We had a board meeting and I said no, but he owns 85 per cent of the Lebanese Media Holdings. He wanted to make the move because he wanted them all under one group – under RMS... Our revenue went down by 50 per cent.” This dispute turned legal with an arbitration case pending in a Paris

⁷⁸ “Bin Talal Coup: What Remains of LBC?” *Al Akhbar* Newspaper, accessible at <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/3132>

⁷⁹Daher’s website lists all his official positions <http://www.pierreeldaher.net/>

court.⁸⁰ Zaki Shab stated that Al Waleed promised to boost LBC Sat's capital but he did not invest anything as promised which angered Daher. "The victims are all those employees who waited for their salaries for months and only found themselves jobless at the end." (Interview with the author, London: 2013)

BCI Timeline

1985 The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) is launched on 23 August by the Lebanese Forces militia

1990 Lebanese Civil War ends

1992 Daher founds LBC International (LBCI)

1994 Samir Geagea, who was leader of the Lebanese Forces, is jailed for crimes committed during the Lebanese Civil War

1996 LBC SAT is launched and LBCI goes global, covering the Arab world, Europe, America and Australia

2005 Geagea is released and takes Daher to court claiming ownership of LBCI

2007 Daher launches the Production and Acquisition Company (PAC)

2008 Prince Al Waleed bin Talal becomes the largest shareholder, winning majority shares in PAC and LBC SAT

2010 Rupert Murdoch also becomes a shareholder of PAC and LBC SAT

2012 The business partnership between El Daher and Al Waleed ends. PAC is liquidated and 397 staff are laid off. The majority are re-hired by LBCI but 45 dismissed workers are still unemployed with most still fighting for severance pay.

2013 LBCI and the Rotana Group are set to battle it out in a Paris court of arbitration. A decision is yet to be made on whether a trial will be fixed over Geagea's legal dispute with Daher regarding ownership of LBCI

Table 1: LBC timeline

- **The Rotana group and the case of Hala Sarhan**

The Rotana group is defined in Al Waleed's Kingdom Holdings website as follow:

Rotana Group is a diversified media company in the Middle East. It is the world's largest producer of Arabic music and a key distributor and producer of Arabic movies with a

⁸⁰<http://www.pierreeldaher.net/>

library comprising more than 1,600 movies. Rotana also owns a bouquet of leading free-to-air TV channels including LBC, Cinema, Khalijiyah, Masryiah, Clip and Musica broadcasting the latest Arabic movies, programs, series and music videos globally. Furthermore, Rotana has radio stations, a chain of cafes and its own magazine. It also operates a leading regional advertising sales arm (Rotana Media Services), responsible for advertising sales on its TV channels as well other media businesses in the region. Rotana's content is also digitally distributed globally. The Rotana Group employs over 500 employees located across the Middle East. HRH Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal, the principal shareholder of the Rotana Group, is also the beneficial owner of approximately 7 per cent of News Corporation's Class B Common Stock as reported on a Schedule 13G, as amended, filed on February 4, 2010. Rotana Group recently announced that NewsCorp has reached an agreement to exercise 50% of its previously announced option in Rotana Group, the Middle East media group. Under the terms of the agreement, News Corporation will acquire newly-issued shares in Rotana for \$35 million. The investment will take News Corporation's total stake in Rotana to % 18.97.

Michel El Murr the former General Manager of Rotana stated that

“The Prince selected the right people for it. Plus he was involved directly in each and every small detail and you know how energetic he is and how dedicated he is when doing something. He is very picky and he follows every small detail and I think this is what made the success.” (Riz Khan Documentary, 2005)

Hala Sarhan prides herself in making the success of Rotana. Formerly an influential TV personality hosting big stars and discussing taboo issues that attracted millions of viewers, Hala Sarhan is now a media outcast; at least at the Pan Arab level. She started in the 1990's in the cable channel “ART”, owned by a Saudi tycoon too, and then moved to set up the Egyptian “Dream TV” satellite channel making it a leading TV station in the Arab world for a period of time. In both cases, Sarhan was dismissed from her job after she repeatedly touched upon sensitive issues and openly criticized the Egyptian regime. In 2002, Prince Al Waleed gave her a platform on Rotana Cinema to host her “Hala Show” and serve as head of the studios⁸¹.

In an interview with Amr Mandour, the planning and scheduling manager in Rotana, he explained how the start of the group was strong and grew gradually benefitting from Hala Sarhan's management tremendously⁸². Sarhan seems to be behind the creation of Rotana Classic/Zaman and the acquisition of the Egyptian classical cinema library. Mandour explains

⁸¹ Andrew Hammond, *Pop Culture Arab World: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Ink, 2005 p. 66

⁸²At the time of this interview, Hala Sarhan was in exile but everybody seemed to like her and wait for her return in the Egyptian headquarter of the channels.

how this idea of specialisation was new in the free to air satellite channels; it was so successful that other channels such as the Melody group started to appear. He said that the advertising revenues rose tremendously (Author interview: Egypt 2009). Similarly, Haitham Al Bitar, director of *Al Nashra Al Faniyya* (the show biz news) stated that Sarhan had a large network of friends with every celebrity in Egypt and the Arab world and that while she could host them in her show easily she asked the team of this special news program that she created to bring all sort of news even the taboo and upsetting ones. He adds: “she told us just broadcast it and if they get angry I will make sure we reconcile with them.” (Author interview; Egypt 2009)

In 2007, the famous media figure suffered the most serious political and media backlash when her program faked a news story about prostitution in Egypt. *Banat El Layl* (The Ladies of the Evening) episode which aired on Rotana Cinema, hosted four young women who posed as prostitutes and shared their stories with sordid details on primetime air with millions of viewers. While many Egyptians were furious at the show and at Sarhan for exposing a taboo issue that corrupted their societies, their rage was even bigger when they found out that the interviewed women were in fact paid actresses who assumed this disgraceful role in exchange for money. The affair was aggravated when the fake prostitutes explained how the police was invested in prostitution rings and demanded sexual favours from them. Hala Sarhan and her fake news bit were exposed in a newspaper article and on an investigative TV program where the prostitutes/actresses openly accused Sarhan of feeding them the words of their stories.

Facing jail time for defaming the image of Egypt and its institutions, Hala Sarhan fled to Dubai where she carried her work for Rotana and remained within Al Waleed’s network. She was even seen with him and his wife in the Kate Humble documentary sitting in his desert tent in a *Majlis*. She returned to Egypt after the fall of Mubarak’s regime in 2011, claiming that her last hardship was a result of a conspiracy against her by the former regime, not because of the inaccuracy of her news. With a new show “*Nassbook*,” (as opposed to Facebook, with *Nass* meaning people), on Al Waleed’s newly formed Rotana *Massriya* (Egyptian Rotana) she continued her editorial line exposing sensitive issues that are often deemed too sexual for the Arab viewer. In 2012 and according to official sources, cuts in budget and in airtime forced Sarhan, out of the program and the Rotana group altogether.

According to Nagla Abolnaga⁸³, deputy head of the department of art at the Egyptian quotidian *Al-Watan* News at the time⁸⁴, Hala Sarhan was in a constant battle with Turki Shabana, the acting president of Rotana Group. Her talk show “*Nassbook*” apparently did not score high audiences and as a result did not generate enough advertisement. There are other allegations that Sarhan was dismissed because the Islamist regime of that time put pressure on the channel to get rid of her in 2012 but this is hardly believable. Interestingly, Prince Al Waleed, although highly influential in both media and politics all over the Arab world, and the main decision maker in his channels did not lift a finger to help Sarhan this time. The moment Sarhan ceased to be an added value to him and Rotana he did not hesitate to change her. It is interesting that during her times of exile she was seen in the document made by Kate Humble in his Bedouin *Majlis* in the company of his wife. Irony is that both women are not part of the picture anymore.

The Rotana group Timeline

2005 Rotana cinema is launched in the 1st January bringing new Egyptian movies to the silver screen exclusively

2005 Rotana Zaman launched in the 15th of July starting the project of specialisation; this time specialising in classical movies from 1935 to the 1980s

2005 Rotana Tarab broadcasting Arabic classical music and dedicated an hour to the most prominent Saudi singer Mohamad Abdu known as Abu Noura.

2008 Launching Fox movies and Fox series in competition with the MBC group

2009 Turki Shabana, president of Broadcast in Rotana, changes Rotana Tarab to Rotana Khalijiyya targeting the gulf and Saudi Arabian families with talk show genres, series and movies. He was praised for “upgrading” the channel from a music space to a space for families.

2011 The Arab Spring started

2011 Rotana Massriyya (Egyptian) launched on the satellite space of Rotana Zaman and Hala Sarhan returned to Egypt

2012 *Al Arab* news channel to be based in Bahrain announced

2012 Hala Sarhan Left Rotana

⁸³ Author interview with Nagla Abolnaga who is the person who facilitated the field work in Egypt in 2009.

⁸⁴ Currently head of Rotana News

Table 2: Rotana Group key dates

- **Al Resalah TV and the tweet dismissal of its idol/director:**

The series of quarrels between Prince Al Waleed and his Rotana channels' managing directors continued in 2013 when he sacked the director of Al Resalah TV, Kuwaiti preacher Tariq al-Suwaidan. In a Twitter message, the Saudi Prince and Media tycoon announced that al-Suwaidan was fired "for admitting he belongs to the Brotherhood terrorist movement." Suwaidan says that this is no secret to anyone and especially to Al Waleed. He told Al Jazeera:

"As for being one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, this is not a secret to any rational being. I stated it myself, and not just now, but when I came back from the United States in 1991...in all media...whoever does not know I am among the leadership of the brotherhood needs to reconsider how he sees things. As for his highness Prince Al Waleed, we have a friendship that lasted eight years based on mutual respect. It was God's blessing on me and on him that we partnered for this Islamic project that I am proud of and happy to meet God with in the judgement day; this is Al Reslah TV a moderate channel." (5 September 2013)

According to a press release from the Prince's office, Al Waleed addressed a letter via a tweet to al-Suwaidan stating that "there is no place for those who carry any deviant thoughts at Al Resalah Channel."⁸⁵ Al Suwaidan on the other hand raised a simple question: was the channel influenced by any of these claims?

Al-Suwaidan presents his views as moderate and preaches the teachings of Islam based on the respect of individual freedoms (as long as it is in a polite manner and without hurting others). He hosts and guest stars in a variety of programs, notably in his show "What life has taught me" (*Allamatni Al-Hayat*) which I use as a case study in Chapter Six. He has a large base of fans on Twitter, averaging around two million followers and is very active on social media networks. Dr. Al-Suwaidan stated that he respected Saudi Arabia and Prince Al Waleed despite what happened and that he had never brought his political views to any of the programs on Al Resalah especially that the channel had its board of trustee (*Ulama*) who oversaw content and approved it. He stressed that he could only pride himself in how he developed the channel since its opening to what it became today (Ibid).

Conclusion

⁸⁵ The letter of dismissal is available in the CD attached with this Thesis

This chapter exposed a well-structured strategy by Prince Al Waleed to maximise power for total hegemony in order to boost his capacity as a Prince and a legitimate but a hindered potential ruler of Saudi Arabia. Mogul Al Waleed operates within more than one field that depend on and maximise each other as judged by the Prince's *illusio* and structured by his *habitus*. The Prince's agency in the Middle Eastern cultural field is supported by his Barons as Plamer and Tunstall (1991) advanced but constantly challenged by their own interests as De Certeau (1984) explained. Being cultural intermediaries themselves, each of these Barons including Pierre Daher, Tariq Al Suwaidan, Mona Abu Soleiman and Hala Sarhan have their own interests to advance. Each has their own *habitus* and process of accumulating capital to gain power within their own field. They are hardly acknowledged by the Prince and are prematurely disposed of if they stray from his own power enhancement project. His distinction in the field of media is based on their work but his economic power and overall distinction as the "shrewd investor Prince" makes him prone to replace his barons making them 'pawns' rather than actual barons. As freedman (2014) argued, media power is best understood as a relational property and the ability to hegemonize. To the Prince the Barons are the small others, to them he is the big Other; the one with all the capitals.

Being a media mogul in the Middle East is not only based on wealth but on a strong network of elites in power. Based on Bourdieu's (1979, 1993, 1996) toolbox the Prince clearly maximises his power by accumulating more economic, cultural, sociological and symbolic capitals. What distinguishes him in this case is the need to expose an Islamic Capital for audience maximisation. The term 'Islamic capital' emerges as a key concept to understand power struggles in the Middle East. Speaking for women rights and employing unveiled females in his companies needed a good campaign to stress that this is done as part of Islam not a liberal Western approach. This way the Prince constantly juggled aligning with the West and distancing himself from it in accordance with his targeted audience each time. The 'Islamic capital' might intersect with the other capitals, especially the cultural and social ones but it is specific enough to stand as a category by itself. It is in this religious field where agents use tactics based on justice and rights or/and on liberal values and try to find bridges with the West depending on their interests. The philanthropist work and the traditional habits joined with the new modern ones are the tactics deployed according to the *doxa* of this field. Alms giving (Zakat) should not be considered a charity or philanthropist work in the case of Al Waleed as islamically he is forced

to pay this tax. More importantly he should be discrete about it. However, as most Arab states hardly respect the system of Zakat and as the West is hardly familiar with such concept it does not hurt to use a little propaganda to expose this alms giving in the process of accumulating religious capital.

The Prince mogul should be read in positions of force and weakness alike. The mogul operates thanks to his network of elites. However, although such network of power is empowering it is limiting at the same time. Power balances each other thus when interests clash balance needs to be restored. Throughout this chapter, it is argued that the Prince developed his own strategies to advance his interests but when the system resisted his strategies he used tactics to overcome the challenges of the meta-powers surrounding him. Indeed, Al Waleed advanced his interests in more than one *field* both strategically and tactically in De Certeau's (1984) sense. His strategies always used what De Certeau presented as an opposite. When a strategy meets unpredictable events that stop him from reaching his ends the Prince uses tactics that are an ally to unpredictability to readjust his acts of power and keep serving his interests. The example of Princess Ameera Al Taweel as a PR strategy is indeed a manoeuvre in a De Certeau's sense. The Prince brought a Saudi woman and created an image that carries his meanings of women rights then took credit for her appearances to be added to his distinctive image as a shrewd man of power. Ameera gained a network of elites and ways of defying the Saudi norms based on the power of her now ex-husband and the Prince put his vision of a modern Saudi woman on one of them to lure support for his leadership and reformist approaches. This exchange of use is mutually beneficial and stands as long as all actors keep an *illusio* that interconnects them.

The discourse of human rights is entrenched in to the Prince's *habitus* and is key to his political struggle. Potentially, Al Waleed is heir to the Saudi throne and well positioned to be a Sunni Leader in Lebanon but both positions are forbidden for him; because of his mother and his position in the sphere of dominance with other powers in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. More importantly the discourse of women rights seems to be the weakest side of Saudi Arabia's image worldwide especially after 9/11. This brings to mind two points. One, the fact that the discourse of women rights is more developed in the West which makes it a discourse of power that pushes for change. If we look at the Middle East and the West from within the Hegelian master/slave dialectic and the politics of *alterity* or *otherness* in their philosophical and anthropological senses, the power of the Other or the Other culture in this case pushes for change

and resistance. The Arab states can resist human rights as they wish but the development of such discourse outside their borders backlashes on their borders the moment a mistake or a crisis such as 9/11 or the Arab spring happen; especially because they are established as corrupt states. This vulnerability makes any discourse based on justice and rights very popular. Prince Al Waleed profited from this to the maximum in the last few years. The contradiction in his discourses between Islamic Capital and usage of the West the big Other are but a confirmation of his overall strategy of maximising power using both tactics and strategies. The following chapter will expose the discourse of gender rights in his Media Empire. Although he never addressed LGBTQ rights publically the same way he approached women rights the fact that gender rights found room in his programs as part of his hegemonic strategies opened room for the topic of LGBTQ in the Middle East.

Perhaps it is necessary to understand agents in the field of Arab media as weak and strong actors at the same time rather than put them in a binary spectrum of weakness or strength exclusively. Each actor has a position of force and strategies to maximise that position based on their *habitus* and according to their *illusio*. Each follows or manoeuvres the existing *doxa* of their field of actions according to the subjective importance of their ends. It is the “war of attack” against the hegemonic systems in the Gramscian (1971) sense but war that seeks its own hegemony that is conditioned by a “war of position” which is the struggle that shapes ideas, culture and beliefs. Gaining concessions at different power levels by the different powers within the Media Empire gave room to constructed knowledge about the discourse of gender rights.

Being Gay & discussing it on Pan Arab Prime Time Talk Shows: Chameleon Strategies

Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom. — Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Vol. I La volonté de savoir*, (1976, 60)

“Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of “making do”.”
— Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984, 28)

This chapter explores the significance of *being* a discontinuous gender identity within an Arabic discourse and narratives as influenced by Western and Middle Eastern ideologies and as produced by the institutions of a Saudi Media Mogul. Researching such a topic empirically while considering the complex theories of *being* a gender and the political project of seeking a human rights justice for different genders in the Middle East proved extremely challenging. The problem of gender rights did not bypass the ontological level to alter meanings at the cultural level within the Arab states. The absence of equivalent modern and post-modern theories based on an exclusively Arab “will to knowledge” regarding the politics and nature of *being* are key to the deterioration of gender rights in the Middle East. If *being* gay took a philosophical “Performative” meaning from Foucault (1978-1984) to Butler (1990-2004) based on discourse as developed by Heidegger (1927), creating an “Arab gay” category seems to remain an Orientalist project of the “gay international” according to Massad’s (2007) rhetoric based on Edward Said’s (1978) Orientalism. Between diverse Western philosophical thoughts and political statements and the small scholarship by Arab scholars that alienates homosexuality as a Western construct, the “Arab gay” is not only an *erased*, “trouble” category but one that *exists* in the hiding via complex, cross-cultural, disputed, and power discourses. Researching the way discontinuous gender identities congealed via discourse on Pan Arab talk show genres in Al Waleed’s Media Empire helps to understand the particularity and complexity of this emergence within an essentialist culture, its shortcomings and its implications on the universality project of human rights. It helps assess the power of entertainment formats in taking erased topics from the hiding to the public consciousness; whether in a negative or positive ways. The Arabic jargon describing anything away from the hetero-normative content belongs to the insult taxonomy in the Arabic everyday life. It is within the *‘Eṭb* (Shame), *ḥshūma/ḥeshma* (Shyness and hide), and

Msekh/Masekh (perversion/metamorphosis) for those who are “well raised”. This makes it even harder to hear gay stories or discuss their matters publically without indignity or/and revulsion. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of case studies from Al Waleed’s shows exposes how the “Arab gay” gender category was translated to Arabic from the West without the equivalent critical theory that studies “gender” distinctively from sexuality. Using CDA based on Fairclough’s (1989, 1995) model, the attempt here is to critically analyse a corpus of social and religious talk shows that produced discontinuous gender discourses for the first time to the wide/diverse audience of the Middle East. At the same time, using online ethnography, archive research and semi-structured interviews conducted in Egypt (2009) and Beirut (2011) with key media personalities in Al Waleed’s empire, the chapter exposes the power and tactics of the individuals involved in producing and consuming such content. It tries to understand this discourse while orchestrated by individuals in power positions and narrated by the Arab discontinuous gender identities themselves. Social/liberal or religious the Arabic talk show space is indeed a miniature of the power structure of society. It lacks the infrastructure and the human calibre to push for critical thinking even when it is an adapted format from the West but it certainly has no control over the outcome of its discourse; since discourse itself is power. Thus, the discourses about *being* an Arab gay in the Middle East exposed the talk show space as an institution that pushes thinking about social or religious matters, Arabic language as impotent in describing its own cultural and subcultural realities, and the way media agents and gender identities use tactics and strategies to advance their own interests in the cultural field in the Middle East.

I- Case#1- تصحيح *Tassheeh* (correction) versus تحويل *Tahweel* (transformation) and “Chameleon Strategies”: CDA of the episode “Sex Reassignment” from *Ahmar Bel Khat Al ‘Areed*) Bold Red Line⁸⁶ (BRL):

The institution	LBC Sat TV
Space	Studio (<i>Āḥmar Bi Al-Khaṭ Al ‘Areed</i>) Bold Red Line (BRL) - Season One
Genre	Social talk show/adapted format from: “ <i>Ça se Discute</i> ” (1999-2004) – France2
Host	Lebanese Malek Maktabi
Subject of Talk	<i>Al Taḥawwul Al Jinsī</i> (Sex Reassignment)
Length & airtime	Wednesday 16/04/2008 from 18:00 to 20:00 (primetime)
Guests	Case Guests: Ayman from Egypt, Noor from Morocco, Abdel Kareem from Saudi Arabia, Mayssam from Lebanon, and anonymous cases from Kuwait Experts/Power-Halo: Egyptian Physician Dr. Atef Ikyabi, Lebanese Psychologist Dr. Gisele Azour, Bahraini Attorney Mrs. Fawziya Ginahi Phone calls: Dr. Yasser Jammal, an Egyptian plastic surgeon in Saudi Arabia and Dr. Ahmed Bakir a former minister and current member of the parliament from Kuwait.

1- BRL as an institution: A macro appropriation of the case study for CDA (Archive research and Fieldwork in Beirut 2011)

The reason BRL was selected after a structured observation of Prince Al Waleed’s Media Empire because it was the first talk show in the Middle East to open the topic of gender identity

A quick archive research shows that Bold Red Line (BRL henceforth) is an adapted format from the French talk show ‘*Ça se Discute*⁸⁷’ (We can talk about it), that was presented by

⁸⁶ I will be using the English translation Bold Red Line and its abbreviation BRL interchangeably to mention the show “العريض بالخط الأحمر” (*Āḥmar Bi Al-Khaṭ Al ‘Areed*).

⁸⁷ “*Ça se Discute*” aired on France 2 from 1994 to 2009, on Wednesday evenings just like BRL. It was presented by Jean Luc Delarue who looks strikingly the same as Malek Maktabi and lacked the hesitant guest section the different Power-Halo guests that BRL added.

Jean Luc Delarue. The subject of homosexuality was addressed on France2 TV, a month before the episode of *الجنسياتحول* *Al Taḥawwul Al Jinsī* (sex reassignment) on LBC Sat. As shall be disclosed via CDA *Al Taḥawwul Al Jinsī* as a *medical* procedure is the safe gate chosen by BRL to open the topic of gender discontinuity or “homosexuality” in the Middle East. The format’s structure hosts ordinary citizens as case guests, representing each Arab country, to speak about their own problems according to a chosen topic⁸⁸. As the anchorman of the show Malek Maktabi confirmed, the talk show then uses the narratives of these case guests to expose a social dilemma caused by rigid legal, social, religious, cultural or/and economic structures in the Middle East (Interview with the author, Beirut, July 2011). To highlight the daring and taboo nature of the show, BRL adjusted the format to include a “hesitant guest” (*Al Mutaraddeda*) section⁸⁹.

The show also invites a list of experts who sit facing the case guests and intervene as orchestrated by Maktabi. I call these guests the **Power-Halo** because they represent every branch of power in society, from the Psycho-Medico to the Juridical-Religious and Cultural powers. Their presence is maximised in BRL compared to the French version of the show. In the French studio of *Ça se Discute*, Delarue uses “**counter case guests**”⁹⁰ in the seats of BRL’s **Power-Halo**. Delarue’s experts were never confrontational, never gave opinion about the guests but rather expanded on the topic generally and carefully keeping a sense of neutrality while being free from value judgement. This minor shift in the adapted format changed the studio space from a democratic structure with plural views in the case of *Ça se Discute* to a policed structure in the case of BRL.

Another feature absent from BRL is *Ça se Discute*’s case writer, journalist, researcher or filmmaker who joins the show, sitting away from the case guests as well, to listen to their stories. They then self-criticize showing a progressive and learning approach to the socio-cultural issues raised in the studio giving the case guests a value and worthiness. In fact, the weight of this part in the format takes the viewer from a TV consumer to a reader or literary follower, thanks to the

⁸⁸ Topics ranged from discussing spinsterhood to unemployment, to children’s marriage to obsession with celebrities (see Appendix 6)

⁸⁹ The Hesitant speaks blurred at first from behind the scenes then decides during the airtime whether to step out to the studio and face society or carry on hiding. This is done in a carnivalesque/sometimes dramatized style

⁹⁰These are introduced one by one as the show progresses to be the counter experience/opinion in order to stir debate between equal counterparts and show different ways of living. Delarue might host one expert according to the need of the episode who would sit separately with the audience, away from the guests’ platform.

intellectual work advertised. The aim is to open different platforms for intellectual engagement and critical thinking about the topic. The Pan Arab adaptation omitted this part totally. Opening a first talk about a topic that evolved from sex reassignment as a practice to the morality of gender identity - in this case - without having other intellectuals from society engage in the discourse puts too much weight on the anchorman.

While most formats insist to keep the exact same features of the original show, some others allow slight changes. Moran (2006) pointed that content changes when shows are adapted. In the case of BRL, while the content is copied the change in the profile and positions of the guests in the studio proved totally changing of the initial format and its purpose altogether. It limited the possibility of further critiques beyond the studio space. Figures 1 and 2 portray the show as a copycat in terms of aesthetics as well. Moran said “the crust of the pie is the same from week to week but the filling changes” (1998, p. 13). This case study shows that both the crust and fillings follow the intentional needs of the adapting body and might not seem different but is indeed poles apart. Choosing a host who looks like the original format is a surreal plagiarism not a format adaptation; it is an objectification of the Arab anchorman in its extreme sense.



Figure 1. Malek Maktabi in BRL studio- LBC Sat (Screen Shot)



Figure 2. Jean Luc Delarue in *Ça se Discute* studio- France 2 (Screen shot)

Aesthetically the crust remained the same from *Ça se Discute* to BRL but in fact slight touches proved that even the crust loses its functions once translated into the cultural settings of the adapting body. The original format smartly dispersed the narratives between cases, counter cases, one expert and one intellectual while the anchorman orchestrated the different positions and developed the subject. In the case of BRL, even if unconsciously, Maktabi could only distance himself from the case guests' "troubled" narratives and investigated them forcefully. Investigating the case guests is believed to be pleasing to society. Maktabi's position of power in the middle of the studio made him superior thanks to the backup of the Power-Halo guests, his investigative tune derived power from the prevailing culture that defends heteronormativity. He said,

"Sometimes, I was not sure how much I could take on air. Not only I was not sure where the bold red line was but I was not sure what I thought either. The amount of information that people were disclosing on air about their lives was surprising to me as well. One day while I was trying to ask a guest to avoid saying certain things. She begged me saying 'please I am here already, don't stop me. I want to say it all for once'. It is tricky as the format of the show is new so I had to be really careful." (Beirut: 24-08-2012)

Even though his initial target was to foster change inside the Arab society as he stated, Maktabi had to wear the shoes of this society and be conservative because the formatted structure of the

show forced him to do so, especially that his aim as a TV star remains at the mercy of gaining popular admiration and scoring high audiences. Overall, the Arab anchorman who presents talk shows addressing social issues and using case guests' narratives cannot be qualified to advance critical thinking about *all* these social issues alone. Such settings can only put them in the chair of the discriminator, as no degree or experience would qualify them to work objectively while representing every field of knowledge in society with social authority.

Malek Maktabi moved from behind the scenes as an assistant in Marcel Ghanim's famous show *Kalām Al Nās* (People's Talk) to become a star of his own program. He said that besides launching a talk show about taboos as a first step towards change and social development, his main aim is to ensure continuity. He said

“at the end of the day I am a media personality, I have to make sure I am popular on air and my topics attract different members of society... We were number one when we were on satellite and even today we are still number one in Lebanon...

We try to choose as many topics related to human rights as possible. If you noticed we had an episode about youth unemployment but it is episodes like homosexuality, the story of Nojud Al Ali⁹¹, child abuse, sexual harassment etc. that attract viewers” (Beirut: 24-08-2012).

Maktabi refused to speak about the ban of his show from the satellite space and asked to address these questions to Pierre Al Daher. He said “you are meeting him next please ask him let him tell you. I certainly did not target Saudi Arabia.” What is important here is that Maktabi works from within a system that he tries to influence, but cannot help himself from being influenced by it.

Stardom, fame, power and the need to secure continuity seem to be a big influence to content in Arab talk shows. Such situations lead to the emergence of tactics by the producer or the anchorman as an individual whereby poaching credit for fame becomes a “way of making do”.

Malek stressed that he does not only present the show, but produces all his episodes assisted by a team of journalists. After the show's success, he felt more pressure to choose his topics in a way that ensures continuity “at the end of the day I am a media personality, content has to attract viewers if I am to carry on” (Maktabi, Beirut 24-08-2012). I asked him how he came up with the original idea of bringing life case guests, *unmasked*, to talk about a red line topic such as homosexuality. He said

⁹¹ Nojud Al Ali is the child bride who obtained her divorce at the age 10 after fighting against her arranged marriage at the age of 9 from a 30 years old man to become a key figure in the movement against child marriage in the region.

“I wanted something different. I wanted a show different from all the talk shows presented in the Arab world; something where people speak about their own issues not an expert discussion without the concerned subjects. The idea was so original and new in the Middle East that even the journalists (he meant the journalists/researchers in the production team) did not understand it when I asked them to search for the guests at the beginning of the show. They used to get me experts in the topic of the episode. The idea was so new it took time before they got it” (interview, Beirut: 24-08-2012)

For a moment, one might think that Maktabi’s choice of LGBTQ topics comes from his desire to attract audiences using taboo content. He distanced himself from gay rights politics during the interview and stressed diplomatically that his job is to open the problems of the Arab people for discussion. They are, then, free to make up their mind in all taboo topics not only homosexuality. However, the real concern here is that he concealed cunningly that his program is an adapted format; especially that I showed no knowledge of the French version and asked him directly if the show is his idea. He poached credit for the originality although his work is important enough to receive praise. The fact that the presenters themselves look alike as figure 3 shows makes it more likely that Maktabi was chosen as a presenter of the show because he looked like Delarue⁹². As discussed in Chapter Four, Prince Al Waleed’s is at the centre of his businesses. He does not only recruit each person working for his business empire but approves his channels’ content daily as shown on Riz Khan’s documentary (2005) (see chapter 4). In this same documentary he said he watches the French televisions constantly. The show might well be his choice; if not then its content is definitely approved by him and certainly not Maktabi’s original creation only.

⁹²He described the show’s idea as his own so I opted not to mention I am aware of the format adaptation to keep contact with him and his entourage for future research.



Figure 3 Malek Maktabi left and Jean Luc Delarue right

Reaching the prestige of originality and credibility is a daunting exercise for media anchormen in the Middle East. Not only they are surrounded by multilevel regulations and powers, lack of funding and opportunity, a stiff competition and the need for survival on live shows but their work on adapted formats is usually minimized to a secondary effort or/and copycat. Arab audiences point to this constant exporting of formats as impotence in creativity and in some extreme cases cultural colonialism. Sakr (2007) and Moran (2006) make some equally important points in this regard. Sakr rationalized from Arab warnings about the lack of opportunity for local creativity that “...investors in Arab Television may not see the development of local creativity and production capacity as their primary concern in selecting entertainment programming” (2007, p.112). Indeed and as explored in chapter four, Prince Al Waleed does not hesitate in changing key media personalities according to his shift in policies and equally give full support to the faces and names that are advancing his agenda. Moran and Keane (2004)

added that constant format adaptation and neglect of local creativity can lead to the disappearance or the fadeout of whatever local capacity exists (ibid). In this case study, it will be interesting to test if Maktabi is creative enough to produce a problematic content such as sex reassignment in an intellectual way or be limited by the regulatory forces, his own experience and the space he manages. As developed later in this case, testing new content in the Middle East can prove deadly career wise. Arab anchormen not only learn by doing but can fall into severe punishments in the process, especially in the absence of a legal and ethical code for the practice.

- **The genre's content and its social relevance: the topic, the space and the temporality:**

Unprecedented, on the 16th of April 2008 anchorman Malek Maktabi invited Arab “intersex”, “transsexuals”, “transvestites” and “lady boys” as named by the show itself from Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Kuwait for a talk about sex reassignment⁹³. From Joseph Massad's (2007) perspective, as guided by Said's Orientalism (1978), these names are problematic to start with since they are the creation of “the gay international” in areas where they do not exist. However, does the absence of such concepts from the Arabic discourse mean an absence of “homo” or “Trans” subcultures in the Middle East? Similarly, does an appropriation of foreign concepts mark a departure from the Arabic insult jargon that Massad ignores in his political statement and which is used to identify the gay category in the Middle East? From Judith Butler's logic (1990, 2004) as inspired by Foucault's (1976-1984) history of sexuality, to find a way to discourse is to exist. Butler even adds that it is better to be negatively spoken about than remain in a state of erasure. Based on the existentialist Foucauldian and Lacanian concepts of *being* and the *other* Butler (2004) tries to depart from feminist politics to the politics of possibility. For this, she reinforces the idea that universality can only be discriminatory as it can as well erase the Derridian (1963) *Différance*. Although she does not share Massad's political statements regarding “homosexuality” and conflicts with him on the benefits of exiting in discourse or being erased from it, both scholars seem to agree that the enlightenment project of universality is discriminatory and that categorization is problematic.

BRL's episode on “sex reassignment” not only helps explore how different Arab case guests articulated live on-air their “*Différance*” *within* or *outside* an Arabic “hetero-normative”

⁹³ I will be using sex reassignment as the accurate translation of Al Tahawwul Al *Jinsi* as “gender” (*Al Naw'u*) is not a clear notion in Arabic discourse. More than that, as shall be explored, the term is used within a normative hetero-binary meaning the person's sex not *Naw'u* (kind).

conversation but exposes the powers participating in such debate. A deconstruction of such discourse can also expose the meta-powers shaping the textual emergence of “Arab Trans” versus “Arab Intersex” taxonomies. In fact, the show’s relevance to the research can be understood like that of Foucault’s (1980) *Herculine Barbin*⁹⁴ diaries’ relevance to the emergence of gender theories and of the psychoanalyst exploration of *sexuality, being* and the *other* from the 19th century onward. Yet,

“Herculine Barbin can be seen as both an object and a casualty of the West's ever - expanding will to truth: not only was her body made into an exemplary artefact of modern- day "sexual science," but her life unfolded — almost uninterruptedly from beginning to end — within the very establishments that enabled the spread of this science” (Marc La France, 2005, p. 165).

Like Barbin’s diary, BRL’s studio marks both the first *appearance of* and first *talk by* discontinuous gender identities on a live Pan Arab talk show addressing a hetero-normative Middle East while stretching the margins of gender identity, but without an Arabic gender theory. To which extent are these live confessions a “power” discourse against the power structure of gender and sexuality in the Arab world?

Barbin’s diary served many homo scholar politics from Foucault to Butler (1976-1984 and 1990-2004). However, as Gomolka (2002) details, Barbin was lost in the translation of her/his diary entitled “*Mes Souvenirs*” (My memories) which became “Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite”. The title itself became a political statement and a categorisation that Barbin did not include for her/himself. S/he never called her/himself a hermaphrodite and used female and male pronouns to describe her/his feelings but according to the male/female binary not as a “Trans” identity. The trans-autobiographical writers who articulate sentient gendered experiences rather than “a scientifically based taxonomic speech act” can create intricate meanings. This is due to the fact that “the merging of gendered constructions within a text’s network of significations is vital to the way in which we understand both the text itself and the writer” (Gomolka, p. 64-65). This case study exposes how BRL case guests exposed themselves within hetero-binaries on a studio

⁹⁴“The memoirs of Herculine Barbin might represent the genesis of the practice of trans-subjectivisation through the linguistic manipulation of gender. Herculine’s life, told through her/his memoirs, exemplifies a linguistic attempt to expose a trans-identity relegated to the margins of nineteenth-century French life.”(Gomolka, 2002, p. 62) see chapter 2

platform yet while using borrowed terms from the Western culture and adjusted ones by the production team of BRL. Their stories were marked by political powers that policed their narratives to fit other “salient” political/power projects. Gomolka was concerned with McDougall’s and Foucault’s intervention in presenting Barbin’s diaries but in our case, such intervention is life on a structured space. Different individuals from producers to the anchorman, expert guests, the camera crew and the studio space/audience shaped the narratives of the case guests who unlike Barbin are still alive to face their hetero-normative societies. The secrecy of a diary and the use of its narratives by the post-structural/postmodern critical scholars of the 20th century after the death of the author might be different from the structure of a studio platform and its power politics. Yet, like Barbin’s case the narratives of the case guests, regardless of their articulation, marked their emergence into the public sphere from a state of total erasure. The difference here is that Barbin came before the development of gender and queer theories while BRL guests came after.

As Scannell (1991) and Livingstone (1994) described the talk show space

“is a public space in which and from which institutional authority is maintained and displayed (and in which) it can define the terms of social interaction in its own domain by pre-allocating social roles and statuses, and by controlling the content, style and duration of its events” (Paddy Scannell, 1991, p. 2 in Livingstone, 1994, p. 2).

This policed structure of the studio is not only exercising power on its guests and audience but it is shaped by that same power in the process. This case explores whether the Arab structure of hetero-normative sexuality is upset enough with the kind of narratives that will be exposed here through Fairclough’s CDA for any kind of cultural and legal change pro or against LGBTQ rights to happen; even if not intended.

I- Power structures and Chameleon Strategies talking about Sex/gender reassignment in the Pan Arab studio space: CDA

1- Textual, processing and social analysis of the introduction of the topic:

• What was dismissed?

Al Taḥawwul Al Jinsī (sex reassignment (SR)) and *Mutaḥawel Jinsī* (one who undergoes a sex reassignment surgery (SRS)) are new classical Arabic key words introduced into the space of the talk show that uses different vernacular Arabic. Before engaging in the textual analysis of the introduction of the term *Al Taḥawwul Al Jinsī* (sex reassignment) it is essential, as part of CDA, to highlight certain facts dismissed by the production team. In introducing the topic, which is a

first in the Middle East, the show opted for an introduction defining the term *Mutahawel and Tahawul Jensi* using a video of vox pops filmed prior to the live airtime. Sex reassignment is not an abstract term but a practice, well established in the Middle East, and the show will approach it as such from the first interview. BRL, however, chose to focus on public opinions about the term in a heavily edited vox pops format rather than directly exposing the practice leaving that responsibility to the main case guests' narratives.

It is important to note that while this Pan Arab public interest in the SRS and its patients happened in 2008,⁹⁵ a simple archive research shows that the medical procedure itself was developed and adopted from within the region during the 1950s. Dr. Georges Burou (M.D), a French born in Algeria, conducted some of the first Female to Male (FtM) sex reassignment surgeries (SRS) in Morocco, which makes such practice not as foreign as it is approached. In fact, the very first surgery dates back to the 1930s in Germany but Dr. Burou pioneered in inventing a variation of techniques of penile inversion for MtF transsexuals which is still used worldwide in MtF SRS today⁹⁶. Ideally such detail should not be absent from a show that claims to be introductive, informative and critical as advanced by Maktabi himself (Beirut 2011). Bringing SRS as a practice from the taboo to the public space in the Middle East to steer a debate necessitates factual information not just opinions. It is important to note as well that the first transsexuals that Burou transferred were celebrities at the time not secret personalities. Coccinelle⁹⁷, Bambi⁹⁸ and April Ashley⁹⁹ as portrayed in figure 4 were well known across Europe and among the very first public transgenders. Yet while their SRS intervention happened in Morocco such detail is hardly public in the Middle East. In fact, it is erased just like concepts related to transsexual identities.

⁹⁵ The same year LGBTQ rights resolutions started to be discussed in the UN meetings in an attempt to grant equal rights to LGBTQ based on gender orientation and sexual freedoms.

⁹⁶ Dr. Burou's technique consisted of using "the male genitalia as source of skin and sensitive erotic tissue to create the new female genitalia, including the vagina". His MtF surgeries kept sexual arousal possible for males who transferred to females; a privilege not available to FtM transsexuals

⁹⁷ Jaqueline-Charlotte Dufresnoy: known as Coccinelle and born in August 23, 1931 in Paris, France as Jacques Charles Dufresnoy. She is known for her work on *Les Don Juan de la Côte d'Azur* (1962), *Días de viejo color* (1968) and *Nuits d'Europe* (1959). She was married to Mario Heyns and Francis-Paul Bonnet. She died on October 9, 2006 in Marseille, Bouches-du-Rhône, France.

⁹⁸ Marie-Pierre Pruvot

⁹⁹ April Ashley: (April 1935) British Model and the first person to openly declare her trans-sexuality in the UK via the *Sunday People* in 1961

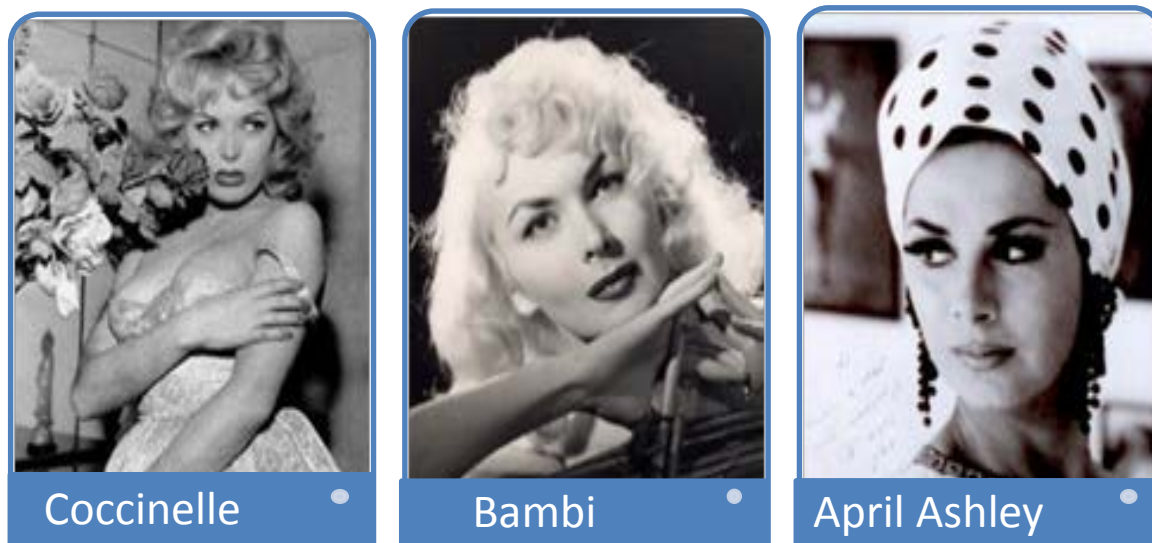


Figure 4: First SRS patients of Dr. Burou in Casablanca (1958-1960) & first public transsexuals in Europe

Dr. Burou concealed his surgeries in the basement of his gynecology practice in Casablanca and experimented on some 3000 humans until he perfected his methods before going public, an important historical fact which is absent from the Moroccan/Arab narratives to date. However and most importantly, the procedure was accepted by the Moroccan state and individuals who attended Burou’s SRS conference¹⁰⁰ in the United States to learn about the practice. Obviously, the cases that were presented by Bureau were not only intersex but transgender as well. One would expect that a show that opens the debate around “sex reassignment” for the first time, and have a Moroccan celebrity case on the studio, would not dismiss such historical facts but use them; if not for the sake of information and accuracy then at least as juicy material. The question remains whether the target of this episode is to really expose “sex reassignment” as a practice. Are the producers and anchorman qualified to engage in a gender rights and wrongs conversation via a problematic term such as “sex reassignment” at all? It is not clear if these sensitive topics are prepared with the appropriate research but it is clear that thoroughness and accuracy are absent.

¹⁰⁰Hazan, A. *Casablanca, la Mecque mythique des transsexuels Dans le Casablanca des années 60 et 70, un gynécologue génial et amoral avait fait de la mégapole marocaine la capitale mondiale du changement de sexe.* Slate Afrique, 03/10/2012. Available at www.slateafrique.com/95531/societe-maroc-casablanca-la-mecque-des-transsexuels.

BRL also excluded gay rights' activists from its Power-Halo guest list. It seems that LBC Sat as a TV channel takes a human rights stance when it comes to topics related to homosexuality in its news coverage. LBC occupied the Lebanese headlines when its news editor in chief Khalid Saghiehin agreement with Pierre Daher opted for a progressive coverage for the *Cinema Plaza* case of 2012. MTV Lebanon broadcasted in its tabloid primetime TV show "*Enta Horr/You are Free*" homosexual acts in abandoned cinema houses in Lebanon and called upon the local authorities to raid and arrest the people involved. LBC, a political rival of MTV Lebanon, adopted a progressive editorial line in favour of the homosexual detainees and covered the story of the arrest in primetime news attacking the instigators – MTV Lebanon – and the local authorities for transgressing basic human rights. LBCI was joined in by other media platforms, the written press and social media as well as activist groups such as *Helem* and Legal Agenda in its attacks shaming MTV Lebanon and calling it "homophobic". Mandour (2013) noted that "the LBCI Cinema Plaza news introduction on the night of July 31st, 2012 marked an unexpected change in the mainstream media discourse on sexuality...by turning the target of public shaming from homosexuality to homophobia" (p. 17). She added that this was facilitated by the failure of the state to provide basic rights to its citizens and the build-up of gay activism in the country. "The proliferation of fresh secular civil movements calling for sexual and personal liberties went in parallel with the emergence of young journalists who started to challenge conventional discourses in the media." (Mandour, 2013, p. 25)

When another controversy emerged following the shutdown of a gay/transgender club "Ghost" in the Dekwaneh neighbourhood in Lebanon, MTV Lebanon reported carefully on the event. LBC however, reported on the story along the same progressive lines. It attacked the mayor who ordered the arrests calling the acts against the club goers "inhumane." When presenter MTV's Joe Maalouf openly criticised the mayor on his show "*Enta Horr*" that previously resulted in the Cinema Plaza case, he was immediately dismissed this time. It seems that MTV Lebanon's director is a close political ally of the Dekwaneh mayor. Hence, what could have been a simple "news story" evolved into an issue of human rights that fuelled a war between two media stations. "Ghost" club, *Helem*, gay activists and the entire LGTBQ community in Lebanon benefited thus from the sectarian and political traditions of the Lebanese society and the media wars resulting from it. It allowed them access to the discursive space of primetime TV news.

This is to say that LBC does not seem to be against activists so it is not clear why they were not invited to BRL that hosted every single authority. At the same time Gay Rights's NGO Helem that attacked LBC and BRL's second take on homosexuality when it aired on the 28th of January 2009 joined efforts with LBC in 2012 to defend gay rights. It is worth noting that the episode analysed here did not attract controversy compared to the episode titled "homosexuality". Online news website MENASAT reported activists criticising the episode:

"It [Red Bold Line] managed to discuss every pop-psychology explanation for homosexuality: abuse, prostitution, lack of a father figure, a strong mother figure that overpowers the masculine figure in the household, a woman who was cheated on and didn't get enough sexual attention from her husband so she resorted to women...these are the reasons?"¹⁰¹

As should be disclosed via CDA the episode on Sex Reassignment, although a first in the Middle East, bypassed civil society's critic thanks to its toying with words. It generated, however, immediate reactions online. It is beyond the scope of this research to expose such reactions but what is important here is to understand that since the opening the topic of homosexuality for talk there are many positive changes at the social level. For example, it became easier to demonize the male virginity tests/rectal exams at the police stations in Lebanon¹⁰². The case of this researched aired in 2008 where the psychologist guest analysed the guests as patients. Since then, in 2013, The Lebanese Psychiatric Society joined the world in declaring that "homosexuality is not a mental disorder and does not need to be treated"¹⁰³. In 2009, Judge Mounir Sleiman from Batroun, issued a ruling based on the fact "that consensual same-sex relations were not "unnatural," and therefore shouldn't be subjected to legal penalty". Recently, Beirut based NGO Legal Agenda publicised the case of Judge Najji al-Dahdah ultimately who ruled that the transgender case that was in front of her "did not fall under Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code, which penalizes 'unnatural' sexual relations". It added that "the defendant's gender should not be determined solely based on her identification documents, but

¹⁰¹Sandels, A. (2009). *LBC program on homosexuality in Arab world sparks anger in Lebanon*. [Online] February 3, 2009. MENASSAT

Available at : <http://www.menassat.com/?q=en/news-articles/5911-lbc-program-homosexuality-arab-world-sparks-anger-lebanon>

¹⁰²Under the slogans "Stope Rape By the State"

¹⁰³ El Shenawi, E. (2013). Are the Lebanese Becoming More Tolerant to Homosexuality? [Online] 20 July 2013. AlArabiya News. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2013/07/20/Are-the-Lebanese-becoming-more-tolerant-to-homosexuality-.html>

on her self-perception and presentation,” the legal activist group reported.¹⁰⁴ Further studies should explore the recent changes in regulating or defending human rights in the Middle East since the televised coming-outs.

- **Introducing the topic**

The introduction produced by the team of BRL to introduce the concept of *Al Tahawwul Al Jinsī*(Sex Reassignment) and *Al Mutahawel Al Jinsī*(one who reassigned his sex) without adding the term surgery used vox pops from what seems to be different Arab high Streets. It used a mixture of sound bites organized following an editorial line using a selection of evocative still images as cutaways topped with Argentinian Tango music and suggestive sounds. The video filmed a number of individuals from many Arab countries including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan, men and women from different adult ages. These voices were scattered in editing in a way that fakes size and representation. They say short sentences then are cut very quickly and tailored to convey the production team’s meanings.

The video lasts two minutes and ten seconds only but is heavily coded into verbal and imaged snapshots that show the depth of the complexity of the topic. As Gamson Et Al (1992) would put it, reading all the codes used here will change from one person to the other. Yet, the CDA of the whole episode discloses how it follows a specific, carefully edited style and confirms the intended meanings. Decoding the significance of the selected text, sounds and images and the editorial classical Arabic terms introduced on top of the guests’ Arabic dialects during the interviews reveal a carefully crafted discourse. Furthermore, following the editorial line of the episode places the discourse of gender developed here within its social context and power structures and exposes how that power is more complex than a top down understanding.

As Detailed in Chapter Three, the CDA approach used here is following Fairclough's (1989, 1995) model which relies on three inter-related processes of analysis that are linked to three inter-related dimensions of discourse:

- The object of analysis: in this case verbal and visual texts and images
- The processes by means of which the object is produced and received: in this case speaking, producing, conversing, narrating, investigating, confronting, listening and viewing by human subjects.
- The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes.

¹⁰⁴ Bnoist, C. (2014). *Lebanon: LGBT Ruling the First Step*. [Online] March 6, 2014. Al Akhbar English available at <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18900>

According to Fairclough, each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis:

- Text analysis (description),
- Processing analysis (interpretation),
- Social analysis (explanation)” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 98).

The text of the show is in different Arabic dialects and uses selected classical Arabic terms. I translated the whole episode after transcribing it to Arabic and watching it several times over extended periods while marking the Arabic script for a proper translation and analysis that respects the cultural difference and respects the intended meaning. Chart (1) is a detailed map of the edited vox pops showing how BRL’s produced edited public opinions to follow an editorial line prior to the live airtime of the episode. The chart is coloured to ease reading the editorial progress. Between each colour the video used still images as cutaways to transit to the next meaning.

The chart shows the main image used before each section but only four cutaways out of six are analysed below¹⁰⁵. From the first box to the second the individuals interviewed were different people apart from the interviewee in line number (5) who is used as a transition throughout the video. In these two sections the first segment of the public was used to highlight a lack of knowledge about the term “*Mutaḥawwil Jinsī*”. Answering the question “Who is *Al Mutaḥawwil Al Jinsī*?” with the interviewer absent from the video, these first segments repeated the term “*Mutaḥawwil Jinsī*!” or showed facial expressions of shock or confusion. The second part in the chart confirmed horrification, rejection, and denial of the existence of individuals related to such a term. From the first segment to the second one, the message to the audience at home is that the studio space will address a shocking term as confirmed outside in different Arab cities. Straight from the shock and ignorance of the term, the second segment moves to comfort by reaffirming what the audience assumingly would feel about *Al Mutaḥawwil AL Jinsī* without even defining the term yet.

For this the editorial team cut sentences repeating the most common religious sentence used against anything evil; “*Au’du Bi Lah Mina Al-Shaytan Al-Rajeem*” (I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed). To be more comforting the section closes with the Iraqi lady in line

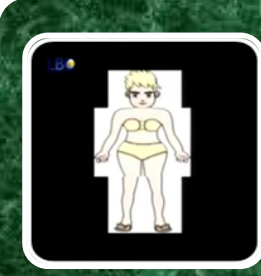
¹⁰⁵ I did not include the cutaway that leads to the video and dismissed the one before the closing segment just because of the limited space allocated to this research. The cutaways analysed here are enough to give an idea about the production team’s approach although the ones dismissed are interesting too.

number (15) who denies the existence of such cases “*ḥālāt*” in what she termed “ ‘*Andna*” (in our places, meaning the Arab societies all together). She spoke just before the Egyptian lady in line (16) who is the same person who coined the term “abnormal” in English in line (5) when no one showed any understanding of the term. In this segment she says that it is not one *Hala* (case) as brought up by the Iraqi woman but many different cases. This woman from line (5) seems to be used as a transition and voice for the production team as shall be shown in the next segment.



Suprised reactions:

- 1- *Mutahawel Jensi?* (Gulf, man)
- 2- *Mutahawel Jensi?*(Egypt, young male)
- 3- The *Mutahawel Jensi!* (Lebanon)
- 4- *Mutahawel!* (Levant: Old Man)
- 5- What do mean? "abnormal" (English)? (Egypt, woman)
- 6- →(2) Not "Natural" (in English) you mean? not natural (arabic for natural:*Tabi'i*)
- 7- →(4) What do you mean *Mutahawel?*
- 8- →(2) Like, for example, *Mutahawel Jensi* like "Shemale or something like this" (in English) you mean? Or what?



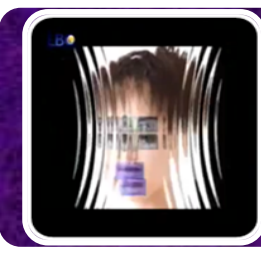
Rejection & denial:

- 9- *Mutahawel Jensi?* I seek Refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed (KSA man)
- 10- I seek refuge in Allah, I mean. I mean, it's not something good. (Egypt, veiled woman)
- 11- It is an absolutely rejected idea . I don't even want to think about it (Egypt, young man)
- 12- Excuse me but what do you mean *Mutahawel Jesni?* (Jordan, man)
- 13- Something not, not good (Gulf, man)
- 14 To be honest I never came across soemthing like this before or witnessed it. (KSA, man)
- 15- Such cases never happen in our societies (Iraq, woman)
- 16- →(5) There are many cases you cannot speake about one case only.



The disease & the definition:

- 17- A sickness (woman)
- 18- He might have an emotional vacuum, a familial void (Gulf, man)
- 19- Certainly this young man would be... (Lebanon, woman)
- 20- →(5) A nature, a bodily nature I mean
- 21- →(19) *Shad*, gay
- 22- →(5) He might have *Shudud*
- 23- →(19) Sexually sick
- 24- →(5) He might have tendencies (*Muyul*)
- 25- →(12) Changing sex from (music of awkwardness) euh!?! I mean!



Elaboration, positions & opinions:

- 26- Most of them are young men who pretend to be girls, I mean sadly. A bad image, I mean they give a bad image about women ; we (she means women) are ashamed of them. (Syria, woman)
- 27-→ (15) If , I mean, he psychologically rejects his personality (*shakhsseya*) that he was born with; NO. I mean, even society cannot accept him and no one can adjust to him naturally.
- 28- →(18) But I don't blame them about this thing, by the way.
- 29- I hope that my ear won't hear and my eye won't see at all this phenomenon of *Al Mutahaweelen Jinsiyyan*. and I hope I will never see it in the Muslim and Arab honorable society. (KSA, man)



The need to raise awareness:

- 30- →(9) It is a phenomenon, I cannot deny it, and it is important to raise more awareness (*Taw'iya*) about this thing so that people understand the diffrence between *Al Tahawul Al Jensi* and *Al Shawad*

Chart 1: The production and editorial approach in introducing “*Al Tahawwul Al Jinsī*” (Sex Reassignment) and *Al Mutahawwil Al Jinsī* (one whoreassigned his sex)

The editing process used outside voices but it seems that such use serves to put the discourse of the show on the shoulders of the Arab street before daring to engage in discussing it inside a studio. These individuals say short sentences cut very quickly and tailored to convey the production team’s meanings. The key point in these two segments is an editorial progress from highlighting the existence of something shocking to repeating the general views about it without even defining it in between. However, the graphic design used in the transition between the two sets of opinion hints, in quick snap shots with tango music, what the audience would consume subconsciously. The cutaway is first a big egg with a male and female lower human body on top of it; which stresses the biological source of designing the male/female anatomy symbolized by the egg. The second design is a picture of a cartoon boy whose body parts that define his sex category shifted from male to female creating a mixture that is not within the binary male/female. Figure (5) shows how the tactic of using a cartoonish figure softened the meaning as using a real human body could have been alarming and offensive to the viewer. Using the cartoon figure keeps the message hypothetical, quick, and suggestive. The production team must have thought this tactic carefully to save itself from using words to convey meaning at this level.

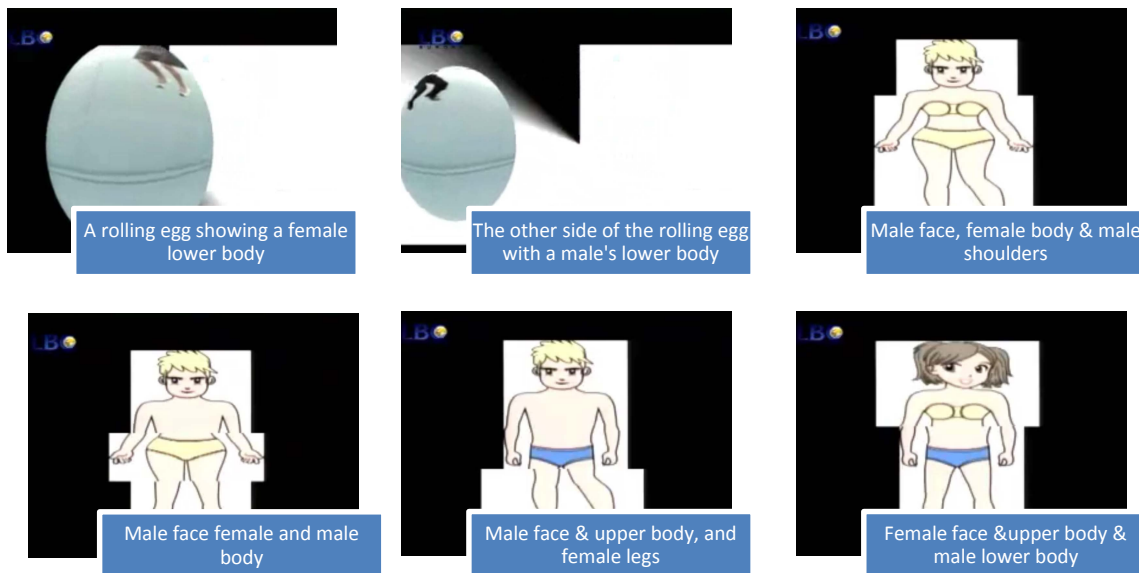


Figure 5: cutaway from shock to rejection of *Tahawwul* inducing a graphic definition

The third segment in chart (1) is a dialogue between the culturally conforming voice of a Lebanese woman in line (19) and the production team’s transitional voice as portrayed via the Egyptian lady of line (5) and (16). Transitioning to this section from the previous segment of rejection and denial hints that it will offer a definition and thus enlighten. The graphic design of the cutaway towards it used a gloomy corridor and introduced the question “What does *Mutaḥawwil Jinsīyan* mean?” - “*Mutaḥawwil Jinsīyan*” was written in bold red - from the back of an obscure corridor. As the question got closer to the screen the fog disappeared and the font became readable. More interesting here is that the cutaway lowered the audio level of the Tango music and added a soundtrack of a siren. The answers that followed make the siren that of an ambulance but as the cutaway preceded the vox-pops quoting “sickness” the sound hits two birds with one stone; it induced both sickness and criminology. The cutaway clearly gives a promise to answer the question but the answers that followed are produced in a more suggestive way than the cutaway itself.



Figure 6. Cutaway from rejection & denial to the disease & definition section

The third section used words to highlight the common idea about anything related to a discontinuity or non-conformity to the binary gender identity. The producers here keep a link with the mainstream thoughts that this term “*Mutaḥawwil Jinsī*” assumingly triggers in the public sphere yet it is not clear yet if they adopt these same meanings or not. The term is in classical Arabic so it is not a word used in everyday conversation but the production team needed it to open the talk on an institutionalized public platform. The opinions gathered clearly

confused or mixed the term with “homosexuality”, or to be accurate “*Shudud*” (abnormality) as commonly used in the Arab world. In this segment, the terms repeated by the lady from line (19) are “*Mariḍ*” (sick), “*Marad*” (disease), “*Mariḍ Jensi*” (Sexually sick). However, the transition voice of the Egyptian lady highlights cunningly three different categories within the term *Mutaḥawwil Jinsī*. A “nature of the body”, “*Shudud*” and “*Muyul*” are coined by her in lines (20), (22) and (24) to suggest a taxonomic division whereby a person can be “*Mutaḥawwil*” because of biological, deviant and psychological reasons. This exact division defining the *Mutaḥawwil* seems to be the inner belief of the production team as should be explored later through the CDA.

This section closed with voice number (12) with the denial and rejection part. The Jordanian man was quoted saying “Excuse me but what do you mean *Mutaḥawwil Jinsī*?” In this section he seems to have been communicated an answer for his question. He shockingly said in line (25) “*Taghyir Al Jins* (changing sex) from (music of awkwardness) huh!?! I mean!” He instantly was cut away with a fadeout using new suggestive images. Figure 7, shows the two sets of graphics used to induce a psychological disorder. The first one is an Asian face, not the typical Arab features, who received shock waves into the head. Subsequently, her senses moved from their natural places in a disturbing way. The natural features never disappear but the new ones are highlighted in blue, grey and purple. Noticeably, the audio track on these images is that of a bird. Culturally, the terms “*ṣawṣaw*” or “kookoo” derived from the sound of the bird are used to denote that a person is crazy. Sometimes a whistle is used to depict this sound properly. The second image is some sort of ritual, dance, or a depiction of suffering more probably. During this trance, an introvert shape gets out from one of the silhouettes and the editing slowly brought it forward to the front of the screen; the shape is not clear.

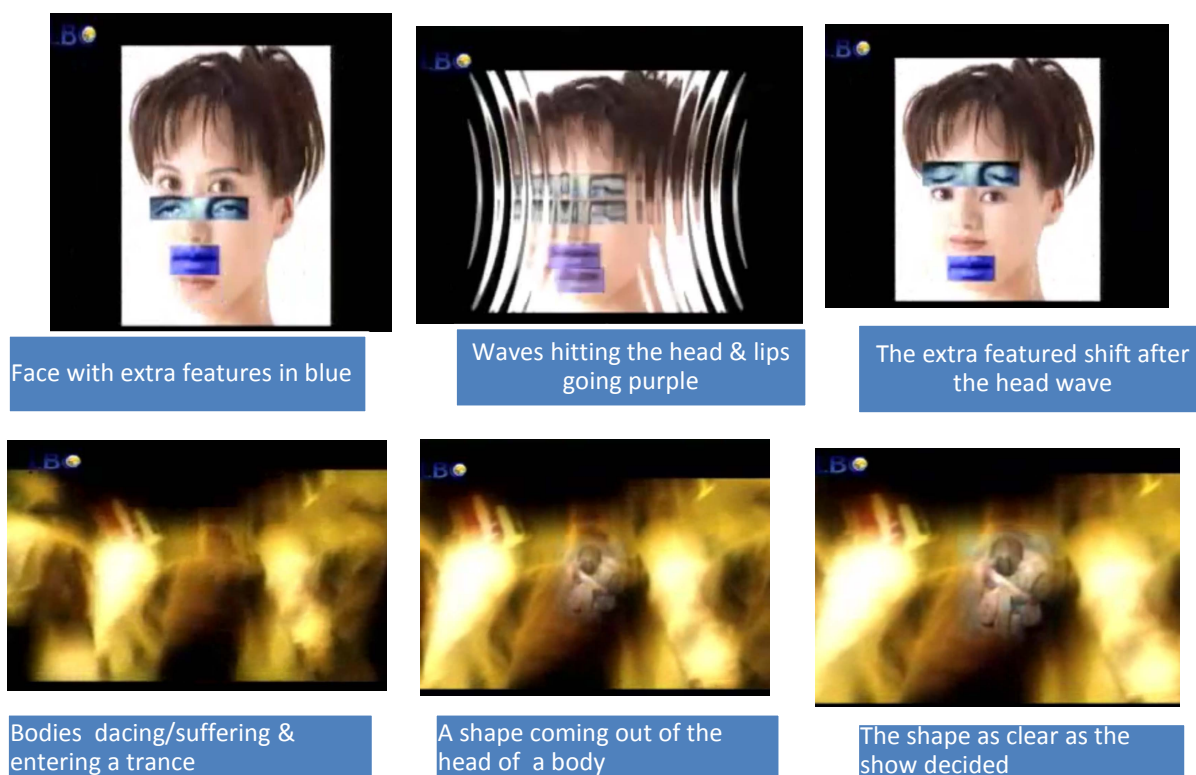


Figure 7: cutaway from sickness & definition to elaboration & opinion

This cutaway precedes the fourth segment highlighted in purple. It further expresses the social rejection of “homosexuality” not “sex reassignment surgeries” which is perceived therein as something *not natural*, *not virtuous*, alien, and pervert. Line (27) quoted the same Iraqi lady in line (15) from the denial section. In line (15) she said “such cases never happen in our societies”. In line (27) she said “If, I mean, if he psychologically rejects his personality (*Shakhṣiah*) that he was born with; NO. I mean, even society cannot accept him and no one can adjust to him naturally”. The word personality emerges here, but the interviewee is in fact elaborating on a point she denied previously in line (15). The interviewer must have communicated to her information that brought the term *Shakhṣiah* (personality). This section tries to highlight the psychological cause of the term “*Mutaḥawwil Jinsī*” as developed by the transition voice number (5) to move to the closing note. *Muyul* (tendency) then is linked to *Shakhṣiah* (personality) and thus psychology. In other words *Al Mutaḥawwil* might be inclined to change his sex because his personality desires so. Within the socio-cultural settings of the

Middle East, such desire can only come from a mad mind; this is exactly why homosexuality remains within the field of psychology.

The fifth and last segment is one line only as opposed to the several opinions in all the previous ones. It is, interestingly, the voice of the Saudi man from line (9) who said in the rejection and denial section “*Mutaḥawwil Jinsī?* I seek Refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed”. He is closing the vox pops saying:

“It is a phenomenon, I cannot deny it, and it is important to raise more awareness (*Taw'iya*) about this thing so that people understand the difference between *Al Taḥawwul al Jinsī* and *al shawādh*.”

It seems that the interviewer explained to him that *al Mutaḥawwil al Jinsī* is different from *Shududh*/homosexuality the same way as this short, over edited video tried to hint that there are different categories linked to the term *Mutaḥawwil*. Here, the Saudi man seems to be talking about what the transition voice from line (5) onward termed as “*Tabi'a Jassadīa*” (biology of the body). However, as the interviewer is absent from the video it is not clear what s/he is communicating to her/his interviewees. This segment was supposed to introduce the terms *Mutaḥawwil Jinsī* and *Taḥawwul*. After all the tricky and suggestive editing, the production team did not even define the terms it promises to clear from misconceptions. They did not clarify what will be explained or corrected, homosexuality and homosexual behaviours or sex reassignment as a surgery. All the terminologies raised here are problematic and convey confusing meanings. The cutaway at the end of the video that takes the audience back to the studio clearly goes back to the concept of *Mutaḥawwil Jinsī* as a surgical practice; a SRS.

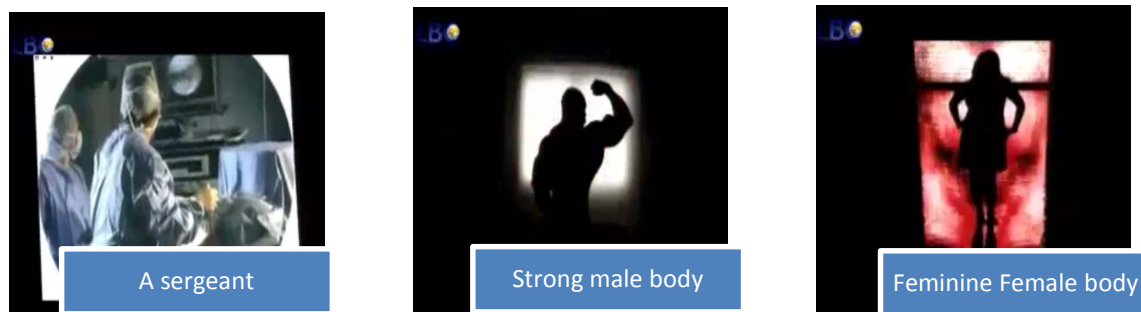


Figure 8 cutaway from the introduction video to the studio: a sergeant giving masculine and feminine features

Figure (8) shows how the closing cutaway used a picture of a surgery then rotated the picture of a male then a female silhouette highlighting femininity and masculinity and hinting that a sergeant gives feminine and masculine attributes. The following CDA of the interviews in the studio will expand and clarify the editorial approach and intentions of the show.

- **Description, processing and social analysis of the introductions presenting the case and expert guests:**

Back to the studio Maktabi introduced his case and expert guests dramatically.

Malek: Iman (female name) became Ayman (male name), Abdel Karim (male name) did it (female pronoun) after twenty years, Mayssam (female name) is a man who discovers *herself* at night and Mrs Fawziya Al Janahi: No for Taḥwīl, Yes for Taṣḥīḥ, Dr. Gisel Azour: education, education and then education, Dr. Atef Ikyabi: *Muṣaḥeḥ*(one who corrects), Besides *al Mutaraddedah* (a hesitant) a famous artist who reached global audiences; all these are my guests after the break

Malek started with the case guests whom he presented playing with the masculine and feminine pronouns. In Arabic, gender is identified grammatically and lexically; verbs and pronouns follow the binary gender rules. Playing with the gendered pronouns is not only shocking culturally but is an insult because it entails incompleteness and perversion; especially in the insult jargon. Calling a man by a female pronoun is offensive as it reduces his culturally magnified masculinity. One can easily witness violent disputes in Arab streets because of such an insult. Similarly, calling a woman by a male pronoun is insulting and diminishing as it assaults her femininity¹⁰⁶. The anchor's tone is both inducing and dramatically serious. While introducing each person their image appears behind him in a big screen where Mayssam (male) is hiding behind a Venetian mask and Abdel Karim (female) wears a masculine dark glasses and a hat; yet both guests are recognizable to their entourage. Ayman, on the other hand, showed his face and although the hesitant¹⁰⁷ guest did not appear at first, only a shade of her silhouette showed behind Maktabi, her description as an international Arab celebrity is more attractive than all the other guests. After she decided to face the public the hesitant guest was revealed as belly

¹⁰⁶Chapter Six highlights how femininity can be used for survival so undermining it is both insulting and disempowering.

¹⁰⁷Each episode from BRL has a hesitant guest who decides inside the show whether he wants to reveal his identity and speak publically or speak from behind a curtain with a modified voice. This section is absent from 'Ça se discute'.

dancer Noor from Morocco, who is not as famous as the show maintained. Noor from Morocco joined Ayman from Egypt and both showed their identities during the show.

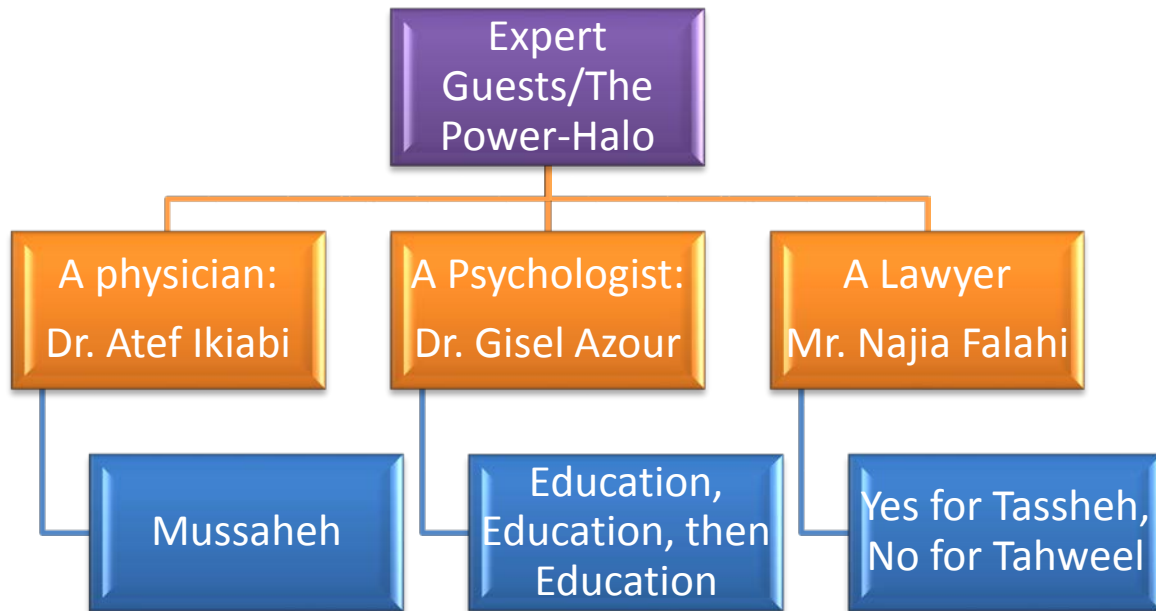


Chart 2 – (A): Slogans used to introduce the expert guests and enhance their power

Chart (2-A) highlights the slogans that Maktabi used to introduce the expert or the Power-Halo guests who represent different institutional powers in the society. He enhanced their power status via these slogans and stressed their collectivity through a consensus about the term *Taṣḥīh* (correction). Hence from here the terms *Muṣaḥeḥ* (one who corrects) and *Muḥawwil* (one who transforms) emerged as a clear dichotomy that will prevail throughout the show. This illustrates that both terms are set by the production team. The expert guests' slogans, however, will change slightly at the end of the episode as shall be shown in chart (2-B). Although Maktabi did not present a religious or government representative, at the end of the show he hosted a religious dignitary and received a phone call from an ex minister/current member of the Kuwaiti parliament -without clarifying which ministry he served. By adding these two authorities the show completed the circle of the power-halo; the medical, psychological, legal, religious, and the governmental powers were all present. Even the social

power was presented via the studio's audience and Maktabi's approach as shall be explored herein.

2- **Four interviews with four different gender identities: The right to *Taṣḥīṭh*, the “crime” of *Taḥwīl* and the cross-dresser challenge**

- **Ayman's narratives versus Noor's investigation: inter-sexuality versus trans-sexuality**

Malek Maktabi presented four narratives using four different styles in interviewing his four guests while keeping the same format¹⁰⁸. The following CDA¹⁰⁹ offers a comparison between the narratives and discourses developed with the two first guests Ayman and Noor as they help understand the careful editorial progress which shaped the rest of the episode. Ayman's interview was the shortest but formed the cornerstone of the episode and Noor's was the longest and highlighted its editorial line. Right after, CDA highlights the main statements, editorial developments, production choices and power use from the subsequent case and expert guests before revisiting the position of the Power Halo when it changed at the end.

The first interview was with eighteen years old Ayman from Egypt who is introduced as a *khunthá* (effeminate) in Arabic and “Intersex” in English. Ayman is the patient of the expert guest physician Dr. Atef Ikyabi who supported his patient's narratives twice; once during the video filmed prior to the show and second after his extended interview in the studio space. He confirmed that Ayman was a case of “*takhanuth*” to specify that he needs a legitimate biological help and differentiated him from *Shudhūdh* (perversion/abnormality). In the studio, he extended on his statement defining the English term “intersex” and distancing Ayman from trans-sexuality carefully.

- 1- **Malek:** (...) briefly, what is Ayman's and Sami's situation?
- 2- **Dr. Iklyabi:** Ayman and Sami have what is called intersex (English term) which is *Al-Takhanuth*
- 3- **M:** *Al khunthá*
- 4- **I:** *Al-Takhanuth*, and it is a medical condition that requires treatments. It is a malformation like any other deformity or congenital malformation that happens to

¹⁰⁸He uses an introductory sentence for the guest, start a basic short interview, introduce the person via a short edited video then start a long interview where he invites the intervention of the expert guests in the studio or from outside via phone calls as soon as he gathers enough information from the case guests to investigate.

¹⁰⁹As this discourse is new in the Middle East every word requires attention but to respect the space of the PhD I analyze the key points from each interview and compare interviews when there is an editorial shift. This approach helps to use Fairclough's three levels of analysis in one place while leaving space for the other case studies.

- any organ in the body; only what happened here was to the sexual organ. What happened here is clinical and requires a “correction” (*Taṣḥīḥ*) or treatment (cure).
- 5- **M:** What is the difference between correction *Taṣḥīḥ* and transformation *Taḥwīl*? Can you clarify this for us?
- 6- **I:** We do *Taṣḥīḥ* to the intersex (English term) cases
- 7- **M:** A malformation
- 8- **I:** This is a malformation of the sexual organs in such a way that when the child is born there is a confusion about whether he is a boy or girl. So we do the medical checks, the genetic analysis, x-rays, hormone tests and we do, I mean it’s important that we do medical checks to find out what’s his initial sex (Camera moves to Malek, behind him the picture of the two brothers kissing)
- 9- **M:** Intersex (English)
- 10- **I:** exactly, that is the “intersex” and it is, it is
- 11- **M:** A malformation
- 12- **I:** Exactly! What we do, we do *Taṣḥīḥ*; we bring the child back to his nature
- 13- **M:** what about the “transsexual” (English) who requires *Taḥwīl* *Jensī* (Sex transformation)
- 14- **I:** Ah! That’s a different story
- 15- **M:** Briefly?
- 16- **I:** That, that is a different subject. Usually that’s a man who is fully masculine and has a psychological need to transfer to be a woman and vice versa; a woman fully feminine at the body, hormones, organs and all levels. A fully feminine woman but she has a desire to change to man. This is a psychological problem.
- 17- **M:** You correct not transfer
- 18- **I:** exactly, exactly

The show started identifying sex reassignment surgeries (SRS) using a case of effeminacy (*Takhanuth*). In line (2) Dr. Ikyabi uses the English term “intersex” as a scientific word to describe the *takhanuth* (effeminacy) which is a misconceived and erased category from the public space despite its biological nature. He further explained the term in line (4) as a malformation similar to any other medical case so legitimately it requires a corrective intervention (*Taṣḥīḥ*, SRS). Right after this differentiation Maktabi asks the doctor in line (5) to explain the difference between *Taṣḥīḥ* and *Taḥwīl* which are classical Arabic terms while the conversation was in Egyptian and Lebanese. These words are neither medical terms nor commonly used in everyday life so clearly the show and the doctor needed them to police SRS within a heterosexual binary and they both engaged in giving them a definition linked to the surgical practice. It is obvious that they agreed on these two words to talk the talk publically.

Between line (4) and (12) Maktabi confirmed with Dr. Ikyabi that the *Taṣḥīḥ* is rightfully practiced to *cure* intersex (*khunthá*) patients who have a malformation; terms that Maktabi over-

stressed in line (3), (7), (9), and (11). These surgeries are defined to fix a biological, innate problem not anything related to what ascribed to the field of “psychology”. Right after in line (12) Maktabi asked the doctor to distinguish the intersex from the trans-sex that he inexplicably identified as someone who needs a *Taḥwīl*. Dr. Ikyabi explained that those who ask for *Taḥwīl* are a different story. He said in line (16)

“...Usually that’s a man who is fully masculine and has a psychological need to transfer to be a woman and vice versa; a woman fully feminine at the body, hormones, organs and all levels. A fully feminine woman but she has a desire to change to man. This is a psychological problem.”

In his intervention during Ayman’s video he added to this point about trans-sexuality “this is what we call *Shudhūdh*”. The trans-sex is presented as a scientific term synonym of “*shudud*”. He is identified as someone who seeks a change to please his own desires. As this change goes against nature and the social roles ascribed to men and women in the Arab society seeking it remains a psychological disorder, which was hinted in the introduction video differently. The intersex on the other hand is presented as someone who needs a cure because his condition is clinical and can be checked medically; it is not his choice.

Trans-sexuality and Homosexuality entered the field of gender and queer theories and left the psychological arena in the West. In the Middle East however, the absence of such postmodern theoretical fields or even a will to explore knowledge regarding anything outside the sexual binary keeps homosexuality within the field of psychology or within the world of deviance. As should be seen later, even the psychologist shares the belief that a homosexual requires a psychological treatment despite the fact that psychologists hardly succeed in restoring heterosexuality.

What just happened via this power-halo and anchorman-organized conversation summarizes the problem of gender identity, sexual orientation and the conception of rights and wrongs as a basis for justice from a Middle Eastern perspective. The production team needed the terms *Taḥwīl* and *Taṣḥīḥ* to differentiate between intersexuality and trans-sexuality in defining SRS. In the Arabic dictionary *Lisan al Arab* the term *Taḥwīl* means changing from one place to another or converting something from its initial state to another. The idea here is that *Taḥwīl* always happen from an original state. Another root of the word is understood as ruse and cunning action; *ḥīlah* (حيلَة). The term *Taḥawwul Jinsī* and its roots are therefore words to describe a change from the original constant, which is the sex at birth, to the other sex by a

human intervention against God’s will. This notion is both confusing gender with sex and intersexuality with trans-sexuality, which shows that in Arabic, translating the term gender reassignment to Al Taḥawwul Al Jinsī is culturally and religiously problematic. That is why this chapter uses sex reassignment instead. Gender or *al Naw’* (type) in Arabic is not a way to understand human categories in everyday life; sex or *al Jins* in Arabic remains the clear cut between the binary male/female. For this reason, the show introduced *Taṣḥīḥ* (correction) that emerged as a dichotomy with the term *Taḥwīl* (transfer). According to the dictionary *Lisan Al ‘Arab* the word *Taṣḥīḥ* means correcting something wrong to its right state. Other roots of the word *Sahha* means healed and cured and *Taṣḥīḥ Al ḥāl* (correcting one’s state) means reinitializing a person’s acquired bad state to its original good one. Thus *Taṣḥīḥ* does not intervene with God’s will but help reinitiate it if carefully proven that the problem is biological.

- **Textual and processing analysis of the opening dialogue, introductory lines and the pre-recorded videos used to present the story of Ayman from Egypt and Noor from Morocco:**

Comparing the opening line to their introduction videos and the videos produced about their lives shows how the two guests were approached differently although the format of their interview is the same. Following is the introductory conversation prior the introductory video of each guest:

Ayman (Intersex)	Noor (Intersex suspected as Transex)
<p>Malek: Ayman Sabri good evening</p> <p>Ayman: (slowly and shy) good evening</p> <p>Malek: Who is Iman (Female name)?</p> <p>Ayman: Me but uuh I was transformed (<i>Thawelt</i>) uuuh I mean corrected (<i>Tṣahaḥt</i>).</p> <p>Malek: And you became Ayman.</p> <p>Ayman: Ayman (in a shy little voice)</p> <p>Malek: Ayman and Sami (male names) two sisters who became two brothers</p>	<p>1- Malek: I move to <i>al Mutaraddedah</i> (the hesitant). <i>Mutaraddedah</i> can you hear me?</p> <p>2- Mutaradeddah: Yes I can hear you</p> <p>3- M: You heard Ayman’s and Sami’s story, how different is it from your story?</p> <p>4- Mut.: Actually, Ayman and Sami’s story is not very different because initially it is similar to what happened with me.</p> <p>5- M: Yes! You are an artist, I will speak about your story, but you are a famous artist. What are you coming to say here tonight?</p> <p>6- Mut.: I came here today to ask people to stop judging and being unjust without knowing the real reasons and conditions under which the patient (<i>Marid</i>) or the child, or even the</p>

	<p>parents live.</p> <p>7- M: You want to tell us your story while hiding or publically?</p> <p>8- Mut: I want to tell the world and in Arabic I am a woman, audacious, accepted what God bestowed upon me, Proud of what I achieved despite the fact that I was born <i>khunthá</i>, meaning with two sexes. Thank God this did not stop me from showing the world my femininity and Art.</p> <p>9- M: So you want to tell your story hiding or showing your identity?</p> <p>10- Mut: No I want to tell you my story while I am not hiding</p> <p>11- M: You have nothing to hide?</p> <p>12- Mut: No, I wish to say it out loud.</p> <p>13- M: Go ahead</p>
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As shown above, Maktabi opted for a basic, short dialogue with Ayman that opened with greetings and controversy, yet nicely. Then he turned to ask him about his female gender using the third female pronoun to hint the absence of “Iman” (Ayman’s female name). Ayman, who was speaking at the beginning of the interview in the Egyptian dialect, spontaneously moved to speak in Classical Arabic to answer Maktabi’s question He shyly said “*Tḥawalt*” (I did transfer SRS) and then quickly changed his mind to use the production’s team concept “*Tṣahaḥt*” (I did a correction SRS). At this stage of the interview, the *Taṣḥīḥ/Taḥwīl* definitions were not developed yet, as Dr. Ikyabi spoke after Ayman’s extended interview. This is, yet, another evidence that the terms are invented by the production team.

Noor’s interview, on the other hand, followed after the full exposure of Ayman as a “legitimate” case of a *Taṣḥīḥ/SRS*, thanks to the appropriate interviewing style used for him (as shall be explored later) and the support of his doctor’s testimony. When it was Noor’s turn, the terms *Taṣḥīḥ* and *Taḥwīl* were already set as a dichotomy that polices the SRS surgeries. She not only lacked the support of the power-halo guests present at the studio or even the support of her own medical files - that she said were given to the production team - but she was addressed differently by Maktabi the moment she entered the studio. The first question that Maktabi asked her as *Al Mutaraddedah* (The hesitant) was not “*what her story was*” as he did with Ayman when he asked him “*who is Iman?*” but “*how her story differs from that of Ayman.*” Placed in a

policed comparative position from the beginning, Noor opted to match Ayman's story but due to the *Taṣhīḥ/Taḥwīl* dichotomy, Maktabi investigated her narratives in a provocative way.

Encouraged by Maktabi's sympathetic tone with Ayman, Noor opted to step out from the hesitant chair to tell her story. While in hiding, Maktabi did not confront Noor. The later entered the studio under the audience's applause and walked slowly in a black strapless gown that exposed her femininity. This red carpet entrance received several negative comments by some of the three millions and three thousands Youtube viewers that watched the video. It is not clear if this hesitant approach and the bold entrance were staged or spontaneous, but in both cases it is obvious that Noor could not have anticipated the shift in Maktabi's interviewing style. Soon after disclosing her identity and joining the studio, Maktabi announced few procedures and it is here where the tone of the show changed. Maktabi said to the camera:

Maktabi: I want to request from Ayman to leave the studio and the talk from now on is for adults only. Noor is a sexy show artist who will be talking about her problem today with a Bold Line.

First, the anchorman addressed Ayman to leave the studio using a dramatic voice and looking towards the camera/audience; not towards him. He categorized the show as a program for "adults only," suggesting that Noor's story is full of adult's content whereas Ayman's case was not judged in the same way and hence did not require any age restriction. On the other hand, Noor was introduced as being a "sexy" show artist; which is considered as less orthodox as being "gay".

It seems that Maktabi uses a lot of these dramatized sentences that draw on sensuality to attract the viewers' curiosity. To present Ayman's introduction video, he looked to the camera addressing the Pan Arab audience directly and said "Ayman and Sami (male names) two sisters who became two brothers," leaving much of the details to a short video introduction showcasing his poor background in Egypt's rural area of Zaqazeeq. In contrast, Maktabi introduced Noor's video saying: "Noor is a sexy show artist; tonight she speaks about her problem with a bold line."

The differences between the introduction videos for Ayman and Noor are even more striking. For Ayman, BRL used a filmed video from his neighbourhood exposing the poor and religious background of his family, the biological origin of his problem via his brother Sami who is in the same case as him, the change in gender roles according to sex via the sister who lost her two sisters to have two brothers, the uncle's support as he adopted their case and the doctor who

confirmed all his claims “scientifically”. In this video the focus of CDA is on the narratives of the family as the interview repeated Ayman’s, the doctor’s and the uncle’s discourses all over again, so these should be analysed in the interview section.

First, figure (9) shows snap shots from the video to show the ambience and images delivered. These are important to understand the full narratives presented via this case.

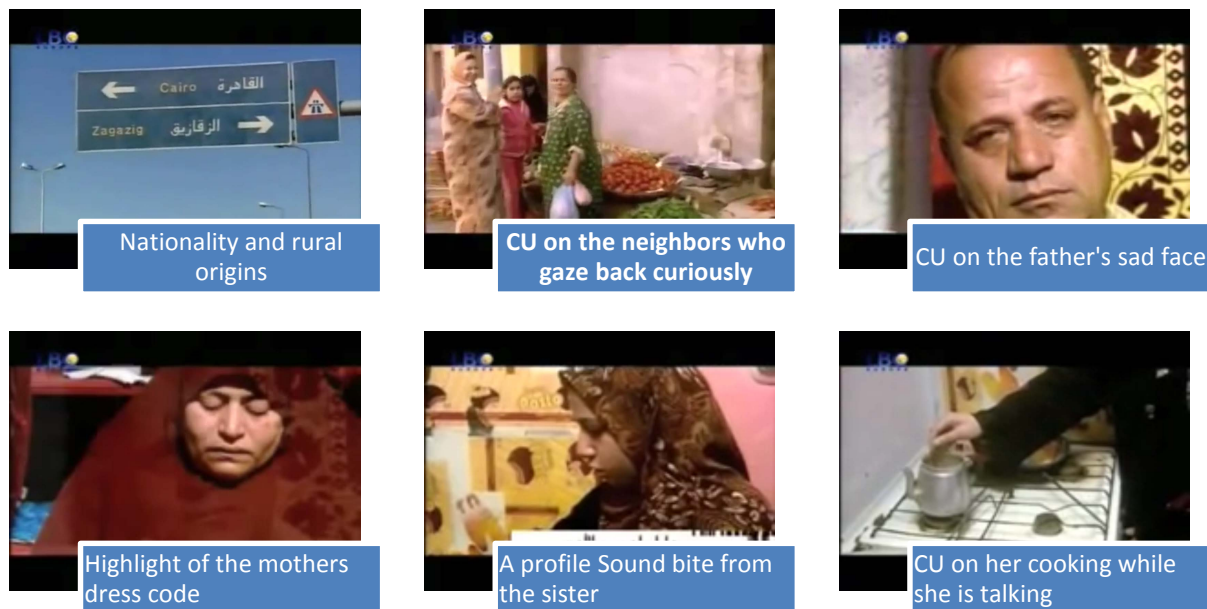


Figure 9. Ayman's family inside his house and neighbourhood in his introductory video

The sister for example was filmed in the kitchen, not facing the camera, and talking in a very shy voice while cooking.

The sister: My feelings towards my brothers who were girls and became boys are mixed; of course I was happy for them but I was sad at the same time. I was happy to finally have brothers who will protect me (*Yeḥmūni*) and at the same time preserve me (*Yeḥafdū A'layya*), at the same time I was sad because I will be lonely without sisters to talk to; I mean girls talk.

Apart from the discourse raised here the settings chosen by the production team in Egypt is inexplicable. The video positioned the sister in the kitchen for her sound bite and her

narratives placed her within the traditional discourse that sees a female as weak subordinate human in need of protection. A simple sex change operation raised the brothers to the status of guardians despite the fact that society still questions their masculinity, so they have to protect themselves first. The sister probably wanted to give her brothers this status in support for their questioned masculinity but her narrative exposes one of the realities of being woman in the Middle East (see Chapter Six). She even lost the persons she used to talk to as if the moment the gender changed, conversation and confessions disappeared.

Another example is the mother who started talking while a tilt panned from her covered feet to her head showing her religious dress code and conformity with the social traditions. The purpose here is to highlight that the family is religious not deviant. The camera paused on her sad face and the video faded out to the father teary with sad music before the sound bite.

The mother: I am very tired but not from them; from the way people look at us and at the surgeries. I developed a psychological problem...People do not want to forget this story.

The father was presented as a poor man and erased his tears while talking sadly about his new sons. With the uncle, they both stressed the pain and the psychological distress that the family faces because of something naturally bestowed on them by “God”.

The father: It’s because, of course, the kids in the street here say some nasty things “you were a girl and became a boy” and stuff like these. The children get upset about their situation; it’s normal”

The uncle: Of course people’s talk and gossip affect them psychologically; and the same happened to their father, he psychologically tired.

...This case exist, I don’t understand why people or society are repulsed by it. God is the creator of male and females and we still pray to him.

The father, mother and uncle joined the two boys to stress that on top of having to face the pressure and expenses of all the surgeries, they have to face people’s stigma. Ayman said “whenever I forget I am a girl something comes to remind I am one” and Sami said “I dream to be a hundred per cent man,” meaning to be accredited as masculine socially too.

Noor’s introduction video, on the other hand, was a compilation of short excerpts of her belly dancing performances focusing on her breast or parts of her body without even including the face sometimes. The video added still pictures where Nour poses in belly dancing outfits seductively while lying down in bed. Her video has no text but is highly suggestive. It used a sensual song

by Natasha Atlas repeating the sentence “don’t deprive my heart from the warmth of your light (*Noorak*)” as the name Noor translates to light from Arabic. It lacked the familial and expert support that Ayman had. Figure (10) shows how the narratives used for Noor sexualized her body and gave her no legitimacy making her narrative prone to social and moral check by the authority of the anchorman.

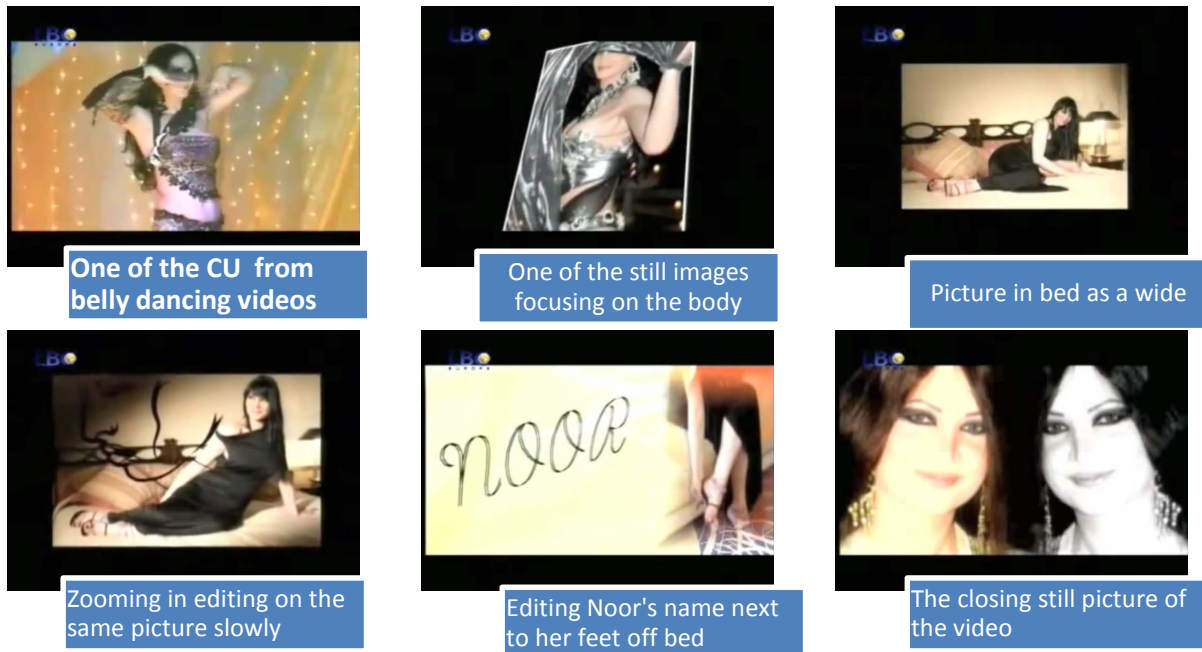


Figure 10 Noor’s introductory video of short belly dance videos and sexy portraits

Textual and processing analysis of Ayman's interview style:

Ayman's interview was a linear straightforward conversation and a repetition of his introduction video. The tone set by the anchorman was gentle, dramatic, and supportive. The interview can be divided into five main sections just like the introduction video, portrayed in chart (3).



Chart 3. Ayman's linear interview style and targets

At the beginning, Ayman was asked questions to show his connection to God.

- 1- **Maktabi:** Ayman, in the report your father was crying. When do you cry?
- 2- **Ayman:** When I am...I feel sorry for my father because...I was with my brother, I mean, me and my brother were girls then became boys.
- 3- **M:** when you suffer Ayman, with whom do you talk? Do you talk with your father, your mother, your uncle, or with God? (Stress on God)
- 4- **A:** With my uncle and I complain to God.

- 5- **M:** What do you tell our God?
 6- **A:** I tell him please God cure me and my brother and let us get married like any normal human being.
 7- **M:** You want to get married?
 8- **A:** Yes
 9- **M:** How many kids do you want to have?
 10- **A:** Whatever God gives us
 11- **M:** How many do you want? Do you want girls or boys?
 12- **A:** (smiling) both! Boys and girls

In line (1) Maktabi slightly drove him to talk about his relationship with God in dealing with his pain. When he did not get the right answer for his question in line (2) he paraphrased it to include multiple choices in line (3). He used the term *our* God to stress commonness and solidarity as worshipers of God and seekers of his justice against the injustice of the human world. The cultural meaning of this solidarity is presenting Ayamn's case as righteous and society as infringing on his right to happiness. As soon as he established that link, he moved to ask about a basic right. Marriage emerged here as a natural right because the scenario of Ayman's case confirmed him to be legitimate for an SRS. The anchorman did not challenge his gender identity for marriage as he did subsequently with Noor who adopted a child because she does not have a uterus. In line (9) and (11) he asked Ayman about the number of children he wants to have making it a normal development after his correction/SRS. Thus he gave the practice of *Taṣḥīḥ* the power to preserve the reproductive male role so automatically, they emerged as the right type of surgeries not; *Taḥwīl* as shall be confirmed later via Noor's case. He also showed, cunningly, that Ayman has no psychological problems with femininity and masculinity via line (11) because he accepts both genders as an offspring. This division of psychology and biology seems to guide the show all the way through.

Maktabi goes on to define and highlight some problematic features of masculinity and femininity as shown in the following passage.

- 1- **Maktabi:** When did you discover that you are a boy?
 2- **Ayman:** When I was six, I felt that my voice changed and I broke my cousins' arm when I was trying to take a toy from her.
 3- **M:** you felt that you are strong, you mean strength?
 4- **A:** yes
 5- **M:** Your brother in the report says that whenever he forgets that he was a girl something reminds him that he is a girl. Do you have something that reminds you that you are a girl?

- 6- A: We had a piercing and we used to wear girls' clothes
 7- M: Do you still have the piercing?
 8- A: yes
 9- M: it annoys you
 10- A: Yes
 11- M: did you like it when you wore girls' clothes or did you refuse that?
 12- A: I refused it
 13- M: When you were at school or in your neighbourhood, with whom did you play?
 with boys or girls?
 14- A: with boys, I was more inclined to play with boys

In this selection, the anchorman highlights features of masculinity that have nothing to do with the biological sex of the boys, or their gender identity but which are constructed culturally. In line (3) Maktabi highlights strength after Ayman's story from line (2) whereby he discovered he was a boy because he broke his cousin's arm while trying to take a toy from her. In line (6) he mentions ear piercing as the only feminine side remaining in his body. Then in line (11) comes a banal question but the purpose is clearly to highlight the rejection of female clothing when a person is "naturally" male. Last, another biased question in line (13) makes one wonder whether Maktabi is aware of how his discourse is tracing boundaries between *being* male and *being* female based on cultural practices that have nothing to do with sex or gender. One does not have to be male to play with boys and vice versa, at least not in every Arab country. Even in conservative countries, a real separation between the sexes starts at puberty. Bringing up such a discourse can be misunderstood and misinterpreted. The last thing the show desires is that parents start to get worried if their kids have more friends from the opposite sex.

The interview goes on to restate what came up in the video as summarized in chart 3. Maktabi asked questions to stress the humanitarian side of the case by showing the unjust pain Ayman faced from social scrutiny. He highlighted again the change in social roles by the change of sex via a question about the sister and closed with the uncle's and the doctor's testimonies re-stressing the social and legal support of this case. The production team put every effort in producing Ayman as a right holder because his case allowed for it.

Textual and processing analysis of Noor's interview style:

Noor's interview showed an editorial shift that testifies to the complexity of opening a discussion about gender and its influence on human rights. Once she stepped forward from behind the hidden space, she tried to stress three main points. At first, she tried to argue that she is exactly like Ayman, which means an intersex. Secondly, she explained that her problem is in the body

not in the brain while often pointing to her head and heart to stress the distinction, which means she did a *Taṣḥīḥ*/SRS. Thirdly, she stressed that she is beautiful and full of femininity thanks to *God's* help; and successful because of the pain her situation caused her. In other words, she tried to show that God supports her by giving her beauty and success. Chart (4) shows the difference in the interviewing style compared to Ayman's as the conversation entered a vicious circle of *Taṣḥīḥ* versus *Taḥawwul*. Noor found herself trying to prove that she did a *Taṣḥīḥ* and Maktabi challenged her story with a *Taḥwīl* scenario, initiated and supported by the psychologist guest.

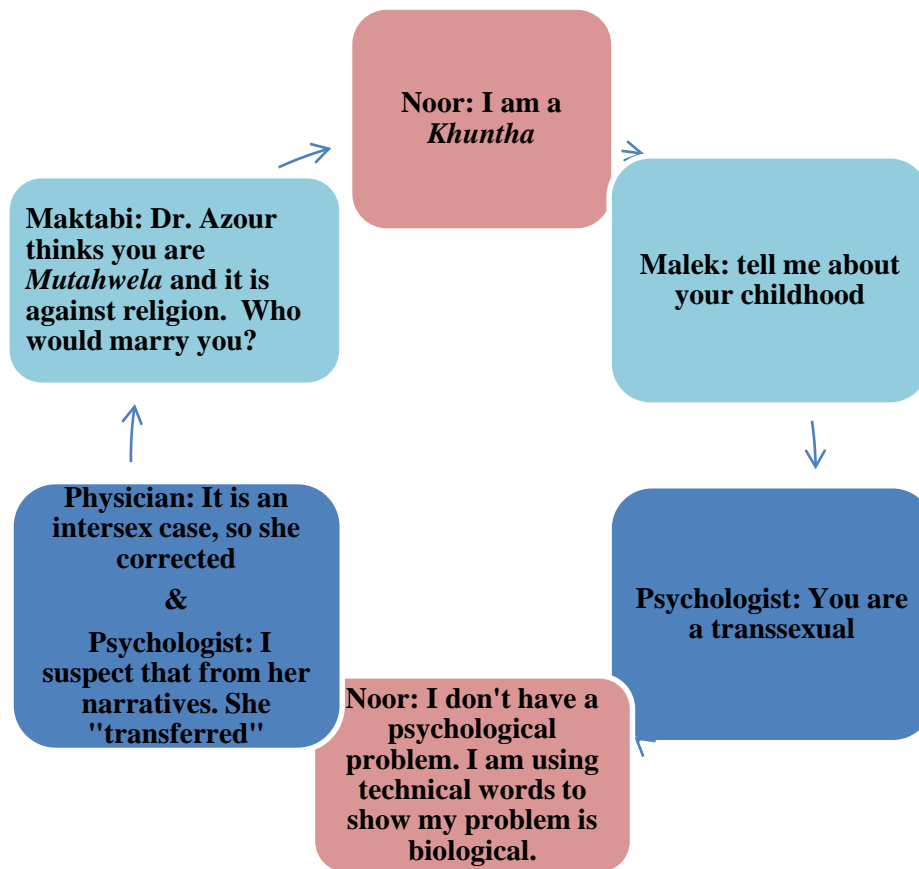


Chart 4. The interview style adopted for Noor: investigating *Taṣḥīḥ* and *Taḥwīl* Noor's interview was the longest and attracted over three and half million views on Youtube. The first set of questions that Maktabi asked were about her story since her childhood. He wore the shoes of a psychologist and Noor took the role of the patient. He asked her to narrate her story to introduce the case while at the same time he looked for that moment where her gender changed from its natural state.

- 1- **Malek:** When did you discover your problem?
- 2- **Noor:** The same story as Ayman and
- 3- **M:** (interrupting) I mean which age?

- 4- **N:** (after deep breath) At the age of five, I didn't feel within the boys category; boys who play with boys (pointing to the right side with her head). I always felt inclined (pointing to the left) towards the girls' category [she was speaking a mixture of Lebanese and Egyptian, not Moroccan, so she stopped here saying in that same mixture] Excuse me but I want to highlight for the Moroccans who are watching us here tonight that I cannot speak Moroccan so that all the people understand what I want to say; in Lebanese and Egyptian as well. Sorry my Moroccan fans and Morocco whom I love and cherish dearly. (then she carried on) That's why I reached this result today but before there was pain.
- 5- **M:** No! Slowly so that I understand your story; I start to understand your story more. You said you were playing with girls not with boys and at the same time we said there is a genital malformation.
- 6- **N:** Exactly
- 7- **M:** What do you mean? Explain to me more where was the genital defect that you had?
- 8- **N:** (slowly) the genital defect that I had was in the (hesitates) genital parts
- 9- **M:** (interrupting) you had a male organ?
- 10- **N:** I will say what you want; I will tell you. I was *Khunta* (an effeminate) (pronounced slowly and carefully), which means (hesitating) both sexes at the same time.
- 11- **M:** Both organs you mean?
- 12- **N:** Both! But they were, as they say, suffocated. Do you understand?
- 13- **M:** yes
- 14- **N:** '*un sexe atrophié*' (sex atrophy) as they say in French. Then I started to tell myself I am a girl but for my family I was a boy
- 15- **M:** How was your relationship, I mean, with the sexual organ that you had?
- 16- **N:** There was '*un désaccord*' (a disagreement); meaning there was no harmony between my sex and I. I feel; since I was a child, when I go to the toilette like everyone I pee while sitting down; sitting down do you understand? I mean I feel, since I was a child, that I am a girl. But I had the chance to be corrected (stress corrected (*Tṣahaḥt*) so that I feel that I exist and I truly was since the beginning fully woman
- 17- **M:** (interrupting) what was your name before the surgery?

The style of the interview with Noor is investigative. It started gradually asking basic questions with the anchorman taking the role of the psychologist. Noor tried to summarise her story by identifying with Ayman's narratives but Maktabi did not allow her. After he asked her to start narrating from her childhood she deviated in line (4). It was the beginning of her interview and she tried to highlight that she has a fan base that loves her and a country that supports her before narrating her story. Maktabi recapitulated in line (5) the points he developed during Ayman's interview. In line (7) he directly asks her to speak about her genitals. Noor was hesitant and spoke slowly trying to provide a careful narrative as exemplified in line (8), (12) and

(16). In line (16) she answers a “ridiculous” question by Maktabi who inquired about her relationship with her male sexual organ. She tried to answer diplomatically giving the example of how she uses the toilet as proof of her femininity. She used the French word for sex atrophy to explain her case as the word *khunta* is culturally value-laden; given the culture of shame and erasure that accompanied such category in Arab societies. *Khunta* lacks a scientific power similar to that of words like intersex and sex atrophy.

Maktabi interrupted her all the time directing the interview towards what he wanted to hear not what she wanted to say. His questions never asked her to develop her answers but investigated it. After a lengthy discussion inquiring about her mother, her childhood and her boyfriends since adolescence, he gathered enough information to turn to the psychologist in the middle of the interview to ask about her opinion regarding what she heard from Noor.

Dr Giselle Azo’ur: It seems to me, according to what Mrs Noor said, that this is a *Tahwīl* case; however, it might be joint with some malformation since birth; because some cases of *Tahwīl* might be joint with malformations others might not. However, what is certain, the way I can describe this case, is that this is a case of *Tahwīl Jensī*

Malek:*Tahwīl?*

G:*Tahwīl*

M: not *Taṣḥīḥ*?

G: No, not *Taṣḥīḥ*; because, I will explain why. According to what she said it is possible that she was not happy with certain sexual organs; but the most important thing is her feelings as a female. While at birth her biological and her socially attributed gender is masculine at a time where she felt she was a girl since five years old; I mean these contradictions here between what is biological and what is psychological show that this is a case of *Tahwīl Jensī*

M: but Doctor, *Tahwīl* is against *Shari’a*, against the law, against many things?

G: Now we are talking from the scientific side

M: yes

G: we are talking from the scientific side. The person who is in this situation thinks that nature was unfair to him and he has to correct the mistake that happened. He thinks that he will suffer his entire life if he doesn’t correct his situation; in other words if he doesn’t do a surgery he will have several psychological problems including depression, anxiety, and personality disorders. For this reason the person who is in this situation believes that either he should correct the situation, otherwise the worst will happen.

The psychologist is making a point here at the expense of Noor. Without enough narrative from the case guest, she used the terms developed in the show to police her SRS within the correct and the wrong as perceived by the show and the Arab society. For no sound reason and without checking her medical reports, she judged in line (5) that Noor was a transsexual

hiding behind the intersex umbrella simply because she said she had a disaccord with her sexual organ in line (16) from the previous segment. Maktabi's question that led to that answer was inappropriate to start with. The moment the psychologist placed Noor in the *Taḥwīl* category claiming that she is using a scientific approach in line (9), Maktabi adopted a surprised look. He even stated in line (6) "but Doctor, *Taḥwīl* is against *Shari'a*, against the law, against many things?" expecting the psychologist to elaborate. The ridiculous aspect of this question is not only that the expert is experienced in psychology not *Shari'a* but that she is not even a Muslim. Unlike his approach to the case guests her lengthy intervention was not interrupted by Maktabi unless he wanted to stress or confirm a word that caught his attention like in line (2), (4) and (8). The psychologist's intervention was of authority to put Noor's image and her narratives into question.

The moment Noor was "suspected" as a transsexual, Maktabi used the next power against her; that of religion. Even when Dr. Ikyabi, the physician, objected the psychologist's conclusion stating that Noor was clearly a case of *Taṣḥīḥ* SRS when he was asked to intervene, Maktabi turned to Noor ignoring what the physician said and quoting the psychologist again.

- 1- **Malek:** (turning towards Noor) what do you say Noor? I mean the Doctor (meaning the psychologist) says, that according to what she heard from your story up till now, she says that you are a *Mutaḥawwilh* (mutant) and no *Taṣḥīḥ* happened. And as we said *Taḥwīl* is against *Sharia*, against the law, and against religion.
- 2- **Noor:** I am not a mutant, I corrected my gender (*ṣaḥaḥt Jinsī*). What I am saying is technical (she used the French term 'cote technique' to note that she speaks scientifically). Even...as they say...I can't take off my clothes for everyone to see but I did not have testicles like men. Do you understand? I had a clitoris but a clitoris that is called "nerves" clitoris [I am not sure what she means here and if the word is French or English but probably she means a long clitoris view what follows she just tries to speak scientifically using foreign languages] Long which is "Clitoris" (in English this time) I mean when I went to do the *Taṣḥīḥ* (correction- stressing the word correction) surgery I brought with me the "attestation medical" (in French)
- 3- **M:** medical report (in Arabic)
- 4- **N:** Medical report. They did not take out a male's sexual organ and put the females' one, No! They just shortened the clitoris.

Although distressed, Noor held a firm position arguing that she is a religiously legitimate case. She used confusing medical words in both French and English to show that she has a technical jargon she could have never acquired if she did not consult expert doctors. She even said "look I speak with technical words" subsequently. She was invoking the power of science

against the power present at the studio, but this science seems to be available via a foreign discourse. To support the legitimacy of her case religiously and therefore be accepted socially, Noor needed French and English words because the Arabic terms translate to value-laden if not insulting meanings like the term mutant evoked in line (1) and (2). Maktabi on the other hand was handed a gift by the analysis of the psychologist as it helped him elaborate and get out of the safe zone of “*Taṣḥīḥ*” to touch upon the complexity of “*Taḥwīl*” and its social, legal and religious rejection. Thus the show, even if it opened a topic of human rights, did not take a human rights’ approach to it.

From psychology, religion and medicine, Maktabi moved to highlight the legal status of Noor by reading an article about her in the news stating that the court in Morocco refused to acknowledge that she is a woman questioning why it would do so if she was indeed biologically a woman. He said “you are famous internationally and you travel a lot, at the airports they stamp on Noor Al Deen (her male name) not Noor”. She answered smartly “they stamp on a piece of paper not my heart”. She added that she trusts the Moroccan justice and she is sure that it will do her justice eventually. She also contested the fact that Maktabi is using the newspaper’s article as if it was the Moroccan court judgment; especially that her case was still open.

Before ending the interview with Noor, Maktabi became more confrontational with questions, which are value-laden, more provocative, yet echoing a general voice in the Middle East. Some of the questions were as follow

- 1- **Maktabi:** To which extent can a man get closer to a woman who did gender transformation (*Taḥwīl*)?
- 2- **Noor:** (sadly) ask a man not me!
- 3- **M:** Based on your experience, you said that your relationships were a failure?
- 4- **N:** uuh
- 5- **M:** Does a man have enough courage to approach someone like you?
- 6- **N:** There are many people in this world who have failed relationships without having had a *correction* surgery (*Taṣḥīḥ*). A normal woman may not have successful love relationships; this is a problem that anyone in this world can live!

This was the closing question but other questions ranged from: you cannot have children, how do you define femininity then? Why do you try hard to change your name if you believe you are accepted as you are and claim you have a large fan base? While Noor tried to answer all these sounding disappointed from the question itself she defended the legitimacy of her case as much as she could. In these last questions as quoted above, Maktabi used the term *Taḥwīl* in line (1)

insisting that Noor did a *Tahwīl* regardless of her account during the long interview, the physician's and even psychologist's conclusions. She answered stressing the term *Taṣhīḥ* in line (6) not giving up until the last minute. However she said "a normal woman may not have successful love relationships" acknowledging she is not normal. Indeed, having to argue so much for her case might well make her feel outside the norm.

The CDA of the cases highlighted above shows the main editorial procedures and the effort played to address the topic of sex reassignment in a cultural way without any sound critic or will to knowledge. It also highlights the ideological approach and beliefs of the production team who is very liberal compared to the next case from the religious channel Al Resalah. The rest of the episode in this case adds two more important points. I will only highlight the main shift they marked in the discourse studied here and leave the rest out as it repeats what had been addressed above.

- **Transsexual Abdel Kareem from Saudi Arabia and cross-dresser Mayssam from Lebanon**

Trans-sex Abdelkareem:

Throughout his interview, Saudi Abdel Kareem tried hard to sound biologically legitimate for a "correction" *Taṣhīḥ* surgery not "transfer" *Tahwīl*one. From previous questions it appears that he told Maktabi off air that he was a transsexual as coined in French by the anchorman and agreed by Abdel Kareem at the beginning of the dialogue. However, after listening to Ayman's story and witnessing Noor's investigation, he tried to fit within the intersex/*Taṣhīḥ* umbrella, but Maktabi confronted him on air making him more anxious than Noor. Chart 5 summarizes the main points that were raised during Abdel Kareem's interview.

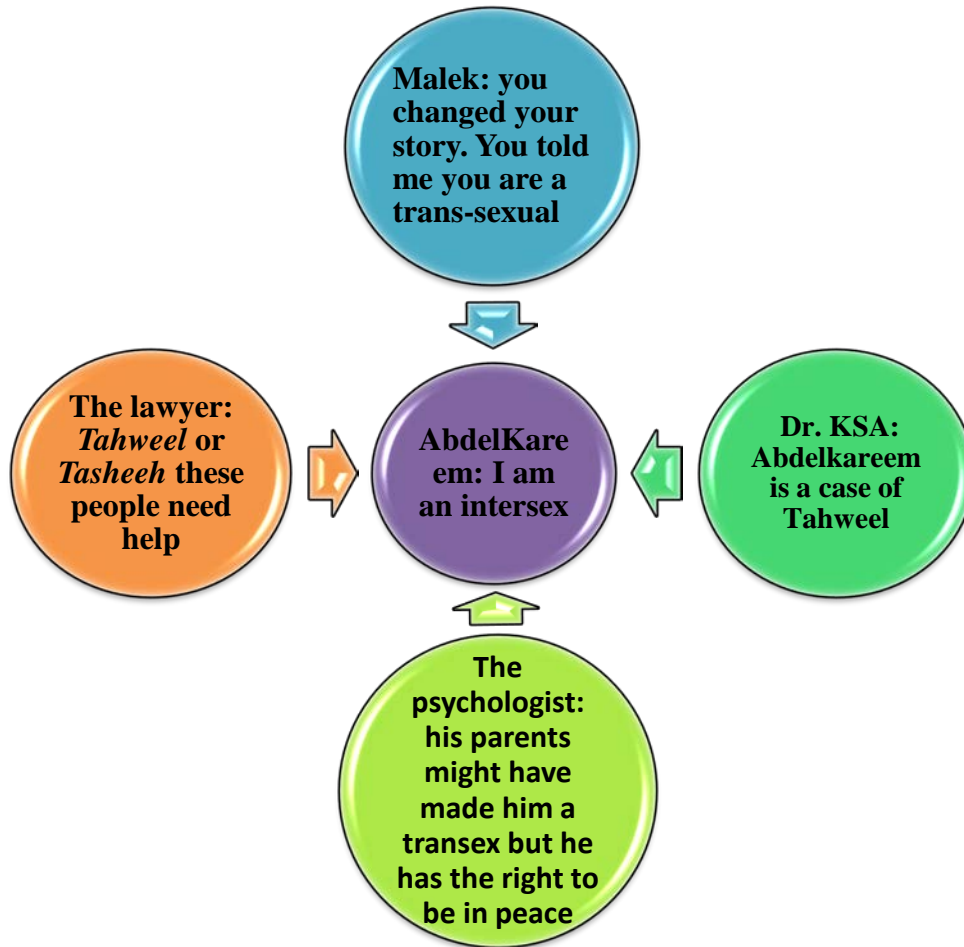


Chart 5. Interview style with Abdelkareem/Soumaya from KSA

Being Saudi, Abdel Kareem risked serious punishments if he was judged deviant. It seems that the show did not give much importance to this important detail. Even worse, the TV program invited a medical expert from Saudi Arabia despite the fact that a medical expert is already present at the studio. Ironically, both doctors are originally Egyptian. Dr. Yasser Jamal joined the show via a phone call from Saudi Arabia to answer Maktabi's investigative questions about Abdel Kareem's narratives. Maktabi opened the debate asking Dr. Jamal about his opinion:

- 1- **Dr. Yasser Jamal:** Regarding *Tahwīl*, and as advanced by the brothers in the studio (he means the experts), and greetings to Dr. Ikyabi my dear friend, *Taṣḥīḥ Al Jins* (Gender correction) is correcting a wrong situation to the right one, whereby there is a malformation problem at the body level that we correct to the right gender of the person. Concerning disorders at the sexual identity level, which is *Taḥawwul Jinsī* (Gender transformation), this *Taḥawwul* is not allowed, it is not right and there is no *fatwah* that allows it. For Abdel Kareem and based on to what he says...it shows that he is a female who wants to transform to a male.

- 2- **Malek:** (interrupting) so Abdel Kareem is undergoing a *Taṣḥīḥ* surgery?
- 3- **Y.J:** Abdel Kareem is doing a transformation because he has the female chromosomes XX, and had a Uterus
- 4- **Malek:** (correcting what the doctor) *Taḥwīl* Jensī
- 5- **Y.J:** All he is talking about is the psychological reports, and in his diagnosis of gender transformation cases, the psychologist sees the patient as a victim, imprisoned in a body that differs from what they perceive
- 6- **Malek:** (interrupting) it means a disorder in the gender identity which is ‘Transsexualism’
- 7- **Y.J:** Gender identity, or change in gender identity, the loss of gender identity are all different names to the issue of gender change or transformation.

Dr. Jamal Yasser did not add anything new but simply repeated from line (1) to (7) what his colleagues at the studio already explained. He even greeted Dr. Ikyabi acknowledging him as a colleague. It was not clear why he was called forward until Maktabi asked the next set of questions. Maktabi clearly needed to include a Saudi voice in the show. However, Saudi officials are careful in making television appearances especially on the set of controversial shows such as BRL and Al Waleed’s LBC. That is why Dr. Yasser was called to represent the Saudi official voice despite being Egyptian. The following questions that have nothing to do with the doctor’s expertise or status clearly show the purpose from including a phone call from Saudi Arabia:

- 1- **Malek:** Dr. Yasser please I want to ask you a question, how does *Shari’a* law look into this matter based on your domain and experience in Saudi Arabia
- 2- **Dr. J. Yasser:** Of course *Shari’a* forbids what is regarded as a gender identity disorder and considers it a crime punishable by religious and civil decrees. When God created Satan he said ‘and I will prompt them to alter the creation of God’ (Annisa’ Women:119)
- 3- **M:** I want to ask Abdel Kareem, did you get a Fatwah?
- 4- **A.K:** Yes
- 5- **J. Y:** ...It is impossible that he could get a fatwah to allow him to change his sex but I can’t judge Abdel Kareem unless I see his papers and medical reports. He can say he has a *fatwah* but according to what he describes, he is a case of *Taḥwīl* not *Taṣḥīḥ* so it is impossible he get one (*fatwah*) from any authority.
- 6- **M:** He says he has one, what do you think?
- 7- **Abdel Kareem:** Anyway! I will go back to Saudi Arabia and meet with Dr. Yasser and expose my case directly...

Maktabi was overly polite with Dr. Yasser. He asked him “to allow him to ask him questions” as exemplified in line (1). In other sections he said: “please allow me to ask one more question, I am sorry I know we are taking from your precious time”. He surprisingly asked this physician to give a position according to *Shari’a*; which is not within his area of expertise and despite the fact

that he hosts a religious authority at the end of the show. While Dr. Yasser was narrating the verse from line 2 highlighting that *Tahwīl* is the work of Satan “and I will prompt them to alter the creation of God” (*Annisa’ Women:119*)...” the camera panned covering the faces of Noor, Abdel Kareem, and Mayssam who appeared anxious. Once Maktabi clarified from Dr. Yasser that Abdel Kareem can never manage to get a *fatwah* (religious verdict) allowing a transformation surgery, Abdel Kareem tried to close the discussion by saying he will go back to Saudi Arabia and clear this with Dr. Yasser, as if he is compelled to do so. The doctor here exercised more power than he probably intended thanks to both Maktabi and Abdel Kareem, although Dr. Yasser tried to hint in line (5) that he needed more documents to be accurate. This resulted in portraying Abdel Kareem as the face of the deviant transsexual as explained by the guests and by Dr. Yasser’s religious and legal opinion. He ended up being the face of these definitions by the simple virtue of being the case guest who is used to bring up this discourse for the first time in the Middle East.

Abdel Kareem broke down in the following conversation, which gained him the sympathy of both the lawyer and the psychologist who confronted him earlier

- 1- **Malek:** Why do you have this pressing need to do a transfer surgery?
- 2- **Abdel Kareem:** So that I live like any human, not being a human who lives not knowing if he is a man or a woman, lost, unable to live anywhere; with which gender will he live?
- 3- **Malek:** Why do you have this pressing need to have a male sexual organ?
- 4- **Abdel Kareem:** So that I can get married. I am a human too. I am not a wall or a chair; I need to get married like any human who needs to get married.
- ...
- 5- **Abdel Kareem:** the last 20 years I lived were painful. I could not face society, I could not live with woman or men, all the time locked in my room, I do not talk to anyone and no one talks to me, I refused food and water,
- 6- **Malek:** (interrupting) did you try to suicide?
- 7- **Abdel Kareem:** A lot, by taking big amounts of different medicines that I did not even know what they were for. Either I know my identity or die; but spending my life on a chair which caused my severe obesity; No.
- 8- **Malek:** (interrupting) the project of surgeries is ongoing, after that you have done the surgery outside Saudi Arabia. How do you feel and how is your psychological state?
- 9- **Abdel Kareem:** I felt I was dead and God started to resurrect me.

Despite the investigative tone that Maktabi was using before, he softened his language after seeing Abdel Kareem tormented and on the verge of a break down. In line (2) and (5) Abdel Kareem stopped arguing that his condition is a legitimate case of *Tashīh* and spoke about his

feelings. In line (4) he called for the right to get married like any other human being. Following that, Maktabi was unusually kind and supportive compared to how he talked to him before and even helped him expand on his ideas via the question in line (8). At this point, he made it clear that the surgery performed outside Saudi Arabia resurrected Abdel Kareem and gave him a second chance to live after years of pain within the legal mayhem highlighted through this case. His interview closed with the juridical authority, represented by Attorney Fawzia Jenahi. The expert guest was presented in the introduction of the show as someone pro *Taṣḥīḥ* and against *Taḥwīl*. Here, she is quoted saying:

“At the end of the day I take into consideration both doctors (looking at the psychologist and medical experts at the studio) if they give them reports. Because the case of Abdel Kareem as we saw is tragic...at the end of the day if it is *Taṣḥīḥ* or *Taḥwīl* this is what makes them comfortable. I cannot judge if the reports say they need *Taḥwīl* or *Taṣḥīḥ* I just use them to get a religious decree and take the case to court...”

Although the attorney took a humanitarian position here, she is bound by the legal system and cannot bypass the need for the medical check to get the *fatwah* prior to seeking justice.

Lady boy Mayssam:

The last case guest had the shortest interview because she confronted Maktabi and all his guests in one go, not allowing anyone to judge her and without hiding behind *Taḥwīl* as shown in chart 6.

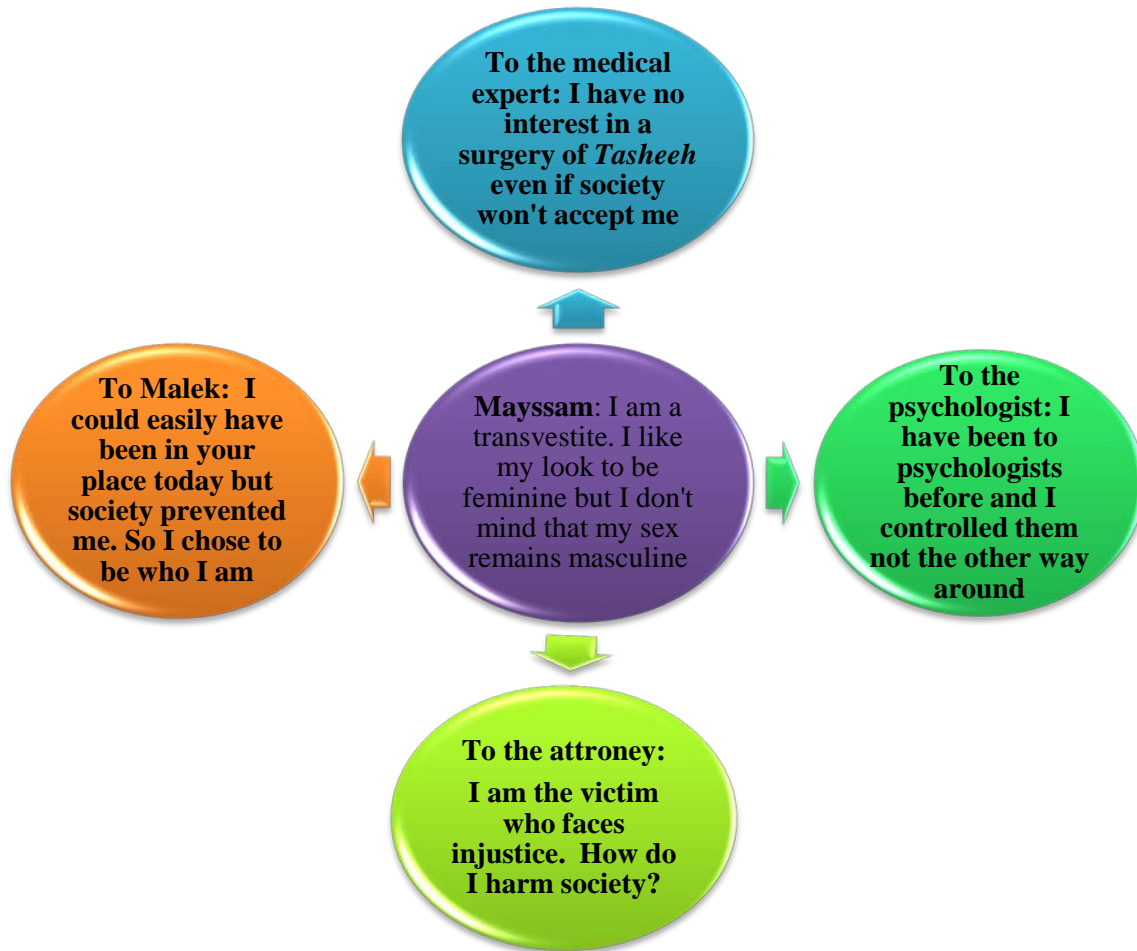


Chart 6: Mayssam's interview style: a lady boy who does not seek SRS

The fourth guest, Mayssam, is a transvestite or lady boy as he called himself. Even if he was hiding behind a Venetian mask, he actually revealed a different gender identity that is not looking for a religious safe harbor, but exposing a nature and a victim as he said. He did not hide behind the *Tahwīl / Taṣhīh* dichotomy

- 1- **Malek:** Do you expect people to accept you?
- 2- **Mayssam:** Well I came to talk so that they try to accept me because at the end of the day, I did nothing wrong, I am a victim, I did not do this to myself for the fun of it. I am the creation of God like this, a victim in the society. It might have been caused by the way my parents brought me up or the environment where I was raised in, but at the end of the day I was deprived of many things, maybe the first thing I was deprived of finishing my studies because I could not carry on with my life, living behind the mask of the masculine and despite that I still faced people's gossip and stigma; so NO, I prefer to live like this and have fun, because we only live once.
- 3- **Malek:** Have fun? What do you want to do?

- 4- **Mayssam:** live my life, go around, meet people...at the end of the day I will not get married. Nothing will make me marry or no woman will accept this look. Besides a woman does not mean a thing to me, she is nothing more than a friend whom I like to shop with and check for fashion...
- 5- **Malek:** Do you have a problem of sexual orientation; Are you a man who likes a man? Or do you have a problem in the gender identity or do you consider yourself a woman who needs a man?
- 6- **Maktabi:** No I remain a man. I have no problem with my identity or my organs.

In line (2) Mayssam highlighted how the moment society suspects that an individual is outside his natural sex because of signs that are visually identifiable although erased from the Arabic textual public discourse, the person faces social scrutiny and discrimination even if he tries to abide by the rules. He tried to argue that if he could he would rather be focusing on his studies and facing no problems. But he cannot change who he is so he preferred to embrace his identity. In line (4) and (6) he clearly explained that he embraced himself and publically stated that he is a man who likes to look like a woman and fall in love with other men only. In line (5) Maktabi asks his question making a distinction between two problematic areas “*Al Muyul Al Jensi*” (sexual orientation) as opposed to “*Al Huwiyah Al Jensiyah*” (gender identity). It is obvious that he researched some key terminologies to open his discussion but he does not seem to understand what they truly mean. He is satisfied by putting them out there to show that he is highly qualified and educated. As these terms are usually in classical Arabic or English, placing them out there without further explanations does not serve any target other than admiring the anchorman for knowing such difficult, eloquently developed terms that no one understands.

Mayssam was on the defensive when he first faced Maktabi, the expert guests and the public. He may have managed to take control for few minutes when he was talking.

Malek: There is a group who thinks that you corrupt society; you are astray

Mayssam: (Interrupting) why would they consider me corrupting society?

Malek: (intervenes and both talk at the same time) **Mayssam:** There are many people like me

Malek: Some people from society see you like this! You dance in a nightclub; you have relations (he pauses) that are forbidden (stress on forbidden); this is society, I am transmitting the society’s point of view. Society sees you as astray; what do you tell society?

Mayssam: I came to tell society that there are many cases apart from me; they have to try and accept this thing. At the end of the day I am not here to harm anyone; may be society might think I harm myself but I am a victim and I take responsibility for this. They should go after those who hurt people, who kill, who steal and raid; these are the people to be judged not (people like me)

Malek: You, what do you do?

Mayssam: I dance

Malek: What else?

Mayssam: Nothing but dancing in life; that's it...If I wanted to be man like you I could have been in your place now but I cannot. At university I had a double major and Media was something I would have loved to do but I could not continue. I had to be who I am and who I like to be. I am not forced to put a mask on my face to succeed. Finally, I decided to do what pleases me not what pleases people.

Maktabi interrupted his case guests constantly but in line (2) and (3) Mayassam did the interrupting. He stopped Maktabi each time he felt that he is judging him. He stood for himself in line (4) calling himself a victim and asking society to focus on the real criminals. When he was listing the type of crimes Maktabi asked him what was his? He replied "I dance" in line (6). Maktabi did not seem to be satisfied with the answer. He tried to shame him by asking "What else?" in line (7) trying to hint that he is a prostitute. Mayssam's answer was smart which evoked another breach of rights and revealed the face of the discontinuous gender identity in the Arab society. All the previous cases sought acceptance and expressed a need to get married but Mayssam highlighted another basic right; the right to education and the right to work. Maktabi paused for a moment before he continued in his attempt to shame Mayssam, who indirectly advised Maktabi to not think high of himself just because of his influential job. The guest added that himself was a media student and he could have achieved the same status as Maktabi if he played by the rules of the social power structures. Instead, he decided to be free at least at night. He confronted all the other power-halo guests as portrayed in chart (6) and refused the psychologist's analysis even when she sympathized with him.

3- **The extra round of power checks: The Kuwaiti legislator, the expert guests' new positions and the *sheikh***

- **Extra Kuwaiti cases and parliament official: The Discursive power clash between discontinuous gender identities and the government rhetoric:**

Closing the episode, Maktabi offers an interesting power/resistance conversation. He used four masked cases from Kuwait who narrated their stories rotating and completing each other's narratives in a pre-edited video. Four young men, who want to change or changed to females (not clear), highlighted the following in an edited clip¹¹⁰.

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Person 2: There is a difference between transgender, *shawādh*, and Lut’s people. We are not Lut’s people (people of Sodom). What makes them Lut’s is the male sexual organ; as far as we are concerned we do not want this organ.

...

Person 2: we are a masculine society...If a woman who is created by God is considered only half a person or incomplete by society, what do you expect for a man who becomes a woman. He will be destroyed.

...

Person 4: the family, all the family did not accept this situation. For them this is *shudhūdh* and strange.

Person 3: people help the police if they see a *Mutahawwilh* (transgender) in the street they ring 777 and the person gets arrested from the public space.

....

Person 1: a while ago when the police used to hurt us we sought refuge in human rights NGOs

...

Person 2: They called their lawyers to watch us as if we were a show, not to help us

Person 4: at the end, when things got serious, when they saw that people and society are all against us, they were forced to be against us as well otherwise people will be against them as well because they are standing with us.

The person in line (1) makes an interesting statement. The Middle East does not differentiate between any genders identities outside the hetero-normative binary. Anything outside this binary is *shudhūdh* or *Lewat*, from the people of Gomorrah and Sodom. The person in line (1) shouted she does not fit the definition of Lut’s people because she simply does not want the organ that defined them as Sodom’s. The second line highlights another important point. Men who change to be females or play the passive role, which is deemed feminine, are punished severely compared to men who take the “active” male role. The statements in line (7) to (10) confirm Massad’s (2007) claim that NGOs do not really help the gay identities they create thanks to their categorization, but instead make them an easy target of social scrutiny. However, that does not erase such categories because as it is voice here, they do exist in the Arab society. The NGOs might lack the powerful tool against the different powers in the society but Arab gays form a subculture after being cornered from all sides and are yet to come-out of the closet.

To comment on the points raised by this group, Maktabi organized a phone interview with Mohammad Baker, a former Kuwaiti Minister and current member of the parliament, to get his perspective on the legal situation of these genders in Kuwait.

- 1- **Mohammad Baker:** The Kuwaiti legislator looked into this matter as a crime according the Islamic jurisprudence (*Shari'a*), which is the main source of legislation in Kuwait, and according to science as well, these actions are unacceptable. They are a crime that has to stop because they are like microbes which if left at ease spread. It happened in the West when such things were considered part of human rights and many people caught it so it became vital to besiege it here and stop it from spreading to other people. As we know the prophet (PBUH) said, "God cursed the women who try to look like men and the men who try to look like women". It is, also, common knowledge that many diseases appeared in the West like AIDS because of the homosexuals (in English) or sexual acts
- 2- **Malek:** (translating him) *Al Mithliyeen*
- 3- **M.B:** (carrying on) that are forbidden, like *al shudhūdh Al Jensi* (Camera cuts away to Mayssam) or *Mithliyeen* or call them whatever you want; in the eyes of Islam they are *Mutashabiheen* (copy-cuts) of the other gender and they follow people of Lut's practice.

The Kuwaiti legislator spoke here about "these actions", "they", "microbes" then identified them as homosexuals later in line (1). He attributes AIDS to homosexuality and maintained that it is a disease that already spread in the West. In line (2) Maktabi puts the Arabic word out there but the Kuwaiti official articulated the general attitude towards the term "mithly" in line (3). He said "*Mithliyeen* or call them whatever you want; in the eyes of Islam they are *Mutashabiheen* (copy-cuts) of the other gender and they follow people of Lut's practice". It is noteworthy to highlight that this intervention follows the logic of most shows or *fatwas* that addressed anything related to gender identities outside the heterosexual binary at a smaller scale. Maktabi's show approached the topic, although confusingly, in a much more liberal way than the subsequent shows. The next case will show that a guest that does not fit the gender binary division is insulted on live television. At least Maktabi conversed and exposed many cases where the expert guests realized that criminalizing homosexuality or anything outside the hetero-normative discourse is not a just solution.

The religious experts

At this stage the expert guests changed their position slightly thanks to the narratives brought forward by the case guests even if they were highly policed. The lawyer was first introduced as a supporter of *Taṣhīḥ* never *Taḥwīl* in chart 2.a. As chart 2.b. shows she closed her statement requesting that society accepts the *Taḥwīl* and *Taṣhīḥ* SRS. She said:

"We do not want to throw them in jail. It is not a solution that we fight them with imprisonment and it will never be. I mean the psychologists have to sympathize with them, some doctors do not

even accept them. They say this is *shudhūd* we don't accept it. So I say the doctors should accept and research if there is a cure they can try and heal them; I mean it is impossible that they are left hanging between the sky and earth. Until when will this carry on? They have to help them either let them transfer (*yethawulūn*) or cure them. This is all I wish for and I wish that society accepts them when they get corrected (*yetsaḥaḥūn*), society must accept them. Society refuses them before and after, even those who are corrected (*Muṣaḥaḥin*). If the *Mutaṣaḥḥihin* suffer before and after imagine what happens to the *Mutaḥawwilīn*.

The attorney touched the heart of the problem. She challenged those who refuse to deal with people who show any form of discontinuity within the normative gender narratives to find an alternative, a possibility, to research instead of criminalizing. She highlights the immorality of not trying to address this problem in a more humanitarian way. The attorney's position developed after hearing the narratives of the case guests, following the *Taṣḥīḥ/Taḥwīl* dichotomy set medically and certainly thanks to her experience in dealing with similar cases through the justice system in courts. Not everyone is in her position. Before this show the discourse of gender discontinuity never accessed a structured, institutionalized public sphere. The attorney's position was supported by the psychologist but this later clearly thinks that gender discontinuity is a psychological and personality disorder which does not go in sync with the American Psychological Association resolution of eradicating the stigma of mental illness associated with gays and lesbians since 1975. The Psychologist seems to be more in sync with the 19th century European schools of medicine and psychiatry where mental illness was a weapon to eradicate religious and juridical control over sexuality. Making the gay and lesbian a psychological pathology was a progressive approach to move them from the arena of sin and crime to that of sickness and innocence. Throughout this show, Dr. Azour's position seems to go in sync with the School of Freud that stated "if [your son] is unhappy, neurotic, torn by conflicts, inhibited in his social life, analysis may bring him harmony, peace of mind, full efficiency whether he remains a homosexual or gets changed..." (Reprinted in Jones, 1957, pp. 208-209, from the American Journal of Psychiatry, 1951, 107, 786). However, this position is bypassed by post-modern scholars in the West. The state of mental health in the Middle East is an area that needs investigation, as it remains underdeveloped given the cultural disregard to psychology as a serious field of medicine and its link with madness.



Chart 2. (B) Power-Halo’s position shift

The show closed with a religious signature. A *sheikh* joined the studio for the last minutes to give a lengthy intervention that lacked any engagement with the question, either critically or from a religious perspective. The sheikh mentioned that the *khunthá* is acknowledged in the inheritance laws without explaining how and why or raising any juridical inquiries. Similar to the other guests and the anchorman, the sheikh jumped to quick judgments. He did not express any will to knowledge regarding gender discontinuity and raised no inquiries regarding it. The sheikh elaborated and spoke uninterrupted without a focused religious verdict. He approved of Ayman and Noor whom he sees as victims, not of nature, but of doctors. He held the surgeons who performed the *Taşhīh* on Noor responsible for her transgression in belly dancing. He dismissed the legitimacy of Abdel Kareem’s and Soumaya’s cases and condemned their ‘perversion’. He finished by calling the laws to change to help intersex individuals.

II- Case# 2 The Islamisation of liberalism in the religious talk show space: An episode on *Shudud Al Resalah TV*:

1- **Background and relevance:**

Channel: Al Resalah TV

Talk Show: *Bidūn Ihrāj* (Without Embarrassment/Without Discomfiture)¹¹¹

Genre: Religious talk show

Anchor: Khaled Al Otaybi

Episode: *Al shudhūdh Al Jensi* (Perversion as synonym of Homosexuality)

Length: 84.19 mins

Date and time: 20/07/2009

Expert guests (As presented by the anchorman): Dr. Khaled Al Hulaybi a social consultant and the director of a family development center in Al Ahsaa in KSA, and Dr. Abdelaziz Bou Zrara a psychologist and someone “who cured cases”

Although Al Resalah TV is in the same group of Al Waleed’s channels it approached the topic of LGBTQ in a completely different way than LBC Sat using a different style and editorial lines. Following the same CDA approach in Bold Red Line, this section will look at how *Bidūn Ihrāj* brought up the topic of “*shudhūdh*” after it started to loom around many TV channels¹¹² since Bold Red Line’s initiative. In fact, like BRL, *Bidūn Ihrāj* is the first religious live talk show that dedicated a whole episode to the sexual practices of the discontinuous gender identities in the Middle East. Unlike BRL, *Bidūn Ihrāj* followed a basic structure therefore the focus will be on the content directly. The structure is based on a conversation between an anchorman and a religious personality, and invites an expert according to the topic in the second half of the show. The anchorman introduces the topic via a pre-edited video, starts his interview with the main guest and receives phone calls of cases who narrate their stories or people who intervene to give an opinion or a testimony, elaborate on the topic or/and raise an issue.

In the episode related to homosexuality, the show hosted a “social” expert as the main guest then a psychologist joined halfway through. It also used a masked testimony and phone calls expressing opinions or narrating a personal story related to “*shudhūdh*” in support of the

¹¹¹ Appendix 5 presents a sample of topics covered in Bidun Ihraj

¹¹²Sabaya, Future TV, Al Nass, Rotana Music, *Sira We Nfatahet Ma’a Zaveen*

main guests' arguments. Unlike BRL, the structure of Without Embarrassment (W.E. interchangeably with *Bidūn Iḥrāj* henceforth) is very basic and not heavily edited. Therefore the focus in this section will be on the discourse and narratives adopted by the anchorman, his guests and the callers more than the structure of the show itself. Thus, produced and presented by Khaled Al Othaybi, W.E. opened with a monologue¹¹³ by the anchorman, showed a case based opening video, then moved to debate its legitimacy and other cases of “*Shudhūdh*” with the first expert guest, Dr. Khaled Al Holaybi. Dr. Al Holaybi is the director of the centre for family development in the Eastern province Ahsaa in Saudi Arabia and the supervisor of the centre's website almostashar.com¹¹⁴. The second expert, is Dr. Abdulaziz Bozarah; presented as a mental health consultant. Both the anchorman and Dr. Al Holaybi are dressed in traditional Saudi attire while the psychologist is dressed in a Western suit.

2- CDA of the episode on *Al Shudhūdh Al Jensi* (Sexual Perversion/Abnormality):

• Introducing the topic:

Religious shows seem to favor a monologue style in their openings especially the shows that are based on the authority and charisma of their hosts who are supposed to establish themselves as leaders in moral issues. In his introductory monologue, Al Othaybi warned his audience that what was coming was appalling then exposed a case to open the talk about ‘*Al shudhūdh*’. The case is a shadow of a young man who seems to be Jordanian or Palestinian according to his accent. The Jordanian valley is suspected to be the land of Gomorrah and Sodom so this might explain the choice of the nationality; bringing a case from the Gulf directly can be problematic. The announced purpose of this episode is to reach “a remedy.” The following chart (3) highlights the key points raised in the introduction of the topic which is divided into three parts the anchorman's monologist intervention, the video presenting a case/prototype to introduce the “problem”, then another monologue before opening discussion with the “Expert”.

¹¹³ The usual style of religious talk shows

¹¹⁴ A non-profit website that receives inquiries and provide advice by “experts” in issues related to family, education, mental and medical health etc. It is not clear what kind of experts work for the centre especially that Dr. AL Holaybi himself is not a psychologist or a sociologist or a medical doctor.

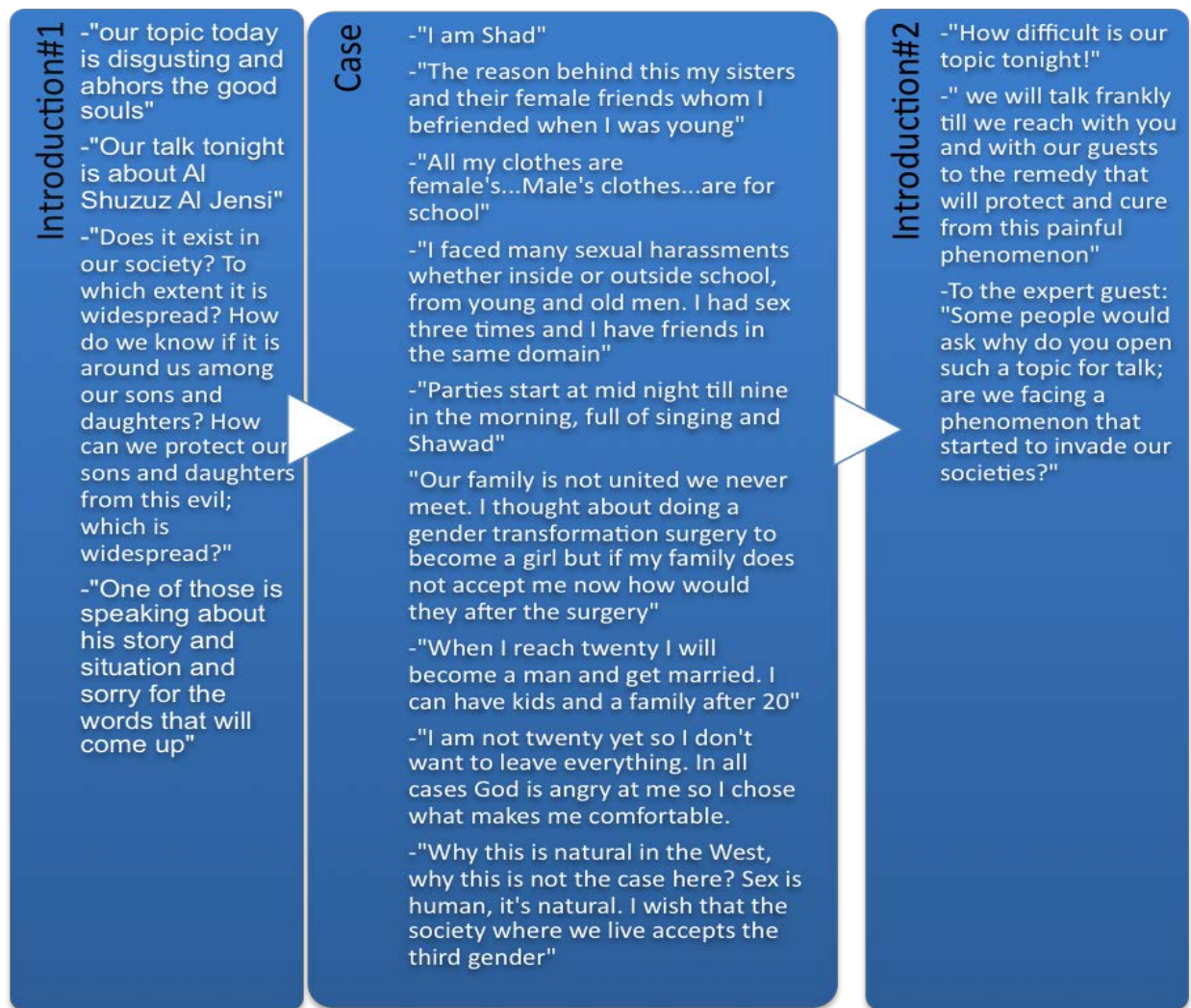


Chart 7: Monologue introduction style in religious shows

The video report presents a young female with long pink hair sitting on a red sofa. The face is blurred:

“I am “gay” (in English) and I live in an Arab country. My name is Badr and my friends call me Badouri (my Badr) or Bodour (female name). My whole life was with girls since I was born. I’ve been “gay” for the last three years and the reason is the influence of my sisters and their female friends with whom I spent my childhood.” (*Bidūn Ihrāj*)

In the narratives used here to explain his ‘abnormality’, Badr induces how the time spent hanging out with his sisters and her female friends influenced his sexual orientation. As a result, he likes women’s clothing only and does not feel comfortable dressed otherwise. This reinforces the idea of male/female segregation as a protective measure from deviance which is contradictory to Al Waleed’s discourse about women rights. Yet as it should evolve through the episode the target is

not re-enforcing male/female segregation but highlighting that the current measures of enforcing a certain sexual morality are not working. Badr only dresses like a man to go to school, school being the social establishment of power here, where he faces sexual and verbal harassments from both young and old men; hinting that schools are full of other men who want same-sex rapports. Describing his lifestyle, Badr classifies himself in a “domain” (*Majāl*) or what can be translated as a subculture. He says:

“I have friends in the same domain. Parties start at mid night till nine in the morning; full of singing. Most those who attend it are “*shawādh*” (perverts), all of them wearing female clothes. Sometimes girls attend and sometimes not just the “*shawādh*” and young guys. It starts with a dinner then dancing; all of them are dancing parties. In some of them some people have sex and in others not. (*Bidūn Ihrāj*)

Through Badr’s description of his typical lifestyle, using sentences uttered like bullet points, the domain where he put himself is that of “*shawādh*” (perverts) gathering to dance and have sex. In this case, the Arab gay category is portrayed as a deviant being whose life revolves around nightly parties, singing, dancing, dressing like women, and having sex and orgies, etc with no other interests or definitions. Badr carries on explaining the reaction of his close entourage to his sexual orientation starting with his family:

“My sisters condemn this situation at home, my mother condemns it but my brother and father are not aware of the situation. All of them are against I thought about doing a surgery to change my body into a female body but my family does not accept me now how about after the surgery? I will remain the same until I reached 20 or 21 then change. After 20 I can become manly and marry. I can have kids and form a family after 20. Now I am not 20 yet I don’t want to leave everything; in all cases God is angry at me so I’ll choose what makes me comfortable.” (*Bidūn Ihrāj*)

The report confirmed that Badr’s social entourage is within the norms of the “Arab society”; completely rejecting *Shudud*. Badr is introduced as lacking masculinity in the house hold where only a mother and sisters are in contact with him while his male family members are not aware of his being. The sense here triggers the idea of the eunuchs in the harems’ headquarters; where the place of the masculine is outside the house hold and the feminine remains inside with other females. The mother and the sisters are presented as passive, against, yet accomplice while the brother and father who form the authority of masculinity are in absence taking away with them the masculine attributes from the household. Irrational as this might seem this is exactly how the talk show opted to present the origin of *Shudud*. Badr carries on saying,

“My life among people is not good. I mean half the people accept this situation and the other half don’t. Why this is a natural thing in the West? Why it is not the case here? The human race is normal. I hope that our society accepts the third gender.” (*Bidūn Ihrāji*)

After presenting a report that started with the case devaluating himself, establishing that *Shudud* is indeed a perversion and ended by bringing up the West as the idol for such perversion the anchorman started his second monologue raising a necessity to address such an alien “phenomenon”. Al Othayby turned to his guests to analyse this “phenomenon” using, as we shall see in the next section, a discourse that views homosexuality as a Western immoral perversion that the West struggled with then started to spread into the pious Middle East. Such a position is not very far away from Massad’s orientalist approach but at the same time the reason he asks for non-categorization avoiding discrimination.

- **Interview with the main guest presented as “Social Expert”**

The conversation started by defining ‘*Al shudhūdh Al Jensi*’ and separating the Middle East from the West using statistics. In defining the term *Al shudhūdh Al Jensi* as a growing wave that hit the Middle East from the West, Dr Alholaybi said,

“In the name of God the most merciful, it is very difficult for me to say that this is a **phenomenon**. I don’t want to say it is a **phenomenon**, but it is highly unfortunate that studies show the existence of a big number of those. I am not going to mention the percentage because the percentage will mean that many people around us might be involved in this **phenomenon** but I want to say something very important. This **phenomenon** exists in Arab countries at a closer percentage to that of the Western ones; and this has two sides. The first side is that some accuse us of having this **phenomenon** more than them (The West). The second side is that many will revolt against me and say ‘how can you compare us to the West while it is them who have these things; they started to ask for naturalizing it a lot to become legally accepted and a man can marry a man in the church, etc as what happened in certain countries’. However, what do you want me to do with numbers saying that there is an Arab country that has at least 8800 Shaz; an Arab country! Another smaller Arab country has 47000 and an even smaller one has 26000 shaz; and these are numbers!

Dr. Alholaybi’s opening note is interesting. First he used the tem “*Dahera*” (phenomenon) five times to give statics proving that “*Shudud*” is a “*Dahera*”. In between he brought up the West as the big Other against which the topic will be developed although the cases are not Westerners. Throwing homosexuality at the shoulders of Western countries is mediocre strategy to avoid self-criticism and kill the will to knowledge. Victimization kills the will to knowledge.

Dr. Alholaybi, argued that the numbers quoted above about the number of *shawādh* in Gulf countries should be questioned saying, “We have to question these existing studies that are now widespread online. We have to ask those who conducted them and examine what they meant by *shudhūdh*”. He tried to maintain scientific integrity questioning the sources of his argument. Interestingly after defining the term *shudhūdh* - which will be explored later – he stated firm statistics about it in the United States of America from the very online sources he questioned when the Middle East was concerned. He said,

- 1- **Dr. Alholaybi:**...A study in the United States showed that 73% of the American population practiced this “*Janeb*”(side) once or twice; it’s temporary (he means a side of *shudhūdh* whereby a person experiences same gender sex once or twice then stops). While we will find that 10% of men and 15% of women practiced this thing for three years at least.
- 2- **Khaled Al Otaybi:** Oh My God!
- 3- **Dr. Alholaybi:** By the way these are solid scientific researches
- 4- **Khaled Al Otaybi:** and do you see that what happened they are is spreading to us!
- 5- **Dr. Alholaybi:** and it’s not strange that it spreads; there is an accusation that the *shawādh*’s websites are supported by Israel. And I say an accusation because I cannot specify now but it is not strange that the sites would be managed from there, and the *shawādh* too. Here in the Arab world they have no place and up till now they are calling forcefully to have NGOs to represent them, an opposition in the parliament and representatives too...”

This contradiction is a simple strategy to alienate homosexuality in the Middle East and identify any claim of its existence as non-scientific, un-researched and conspiracy. Israel is allegedly blamed of faking websites about homosexuality in the Middle East while it does not exist. The quote even shows how the guest anticipates his audience’s thoughts and throws degrading comments about the West in the process of answering those imaginary thoughts. In the first quote he hints that the NGOs normalized the deviance of homosexuality till gays managed to marry in the holy sanctuary of church. In the second quote, line 5, he shows how the Middle East is holding firm against what is introduced as a threat by not allowing NGOs and resistant the West moral degradation hinting that the mosque is protested from what happened to the church.

Defining “*shudhūdh*” Dr. Khaled Alholaybi said

- 1- **Al Othaybi:** Ok, we understood from what you said that *Al Shudhūdh* is not one level but many levels
- 2- **Dr. Khaled Alholaybi:** Levels and types as well! There are types and we Muslims will differ with the others in the West about the meaning of *shudhūdh*. We see

- adultery as *shudhūdh*; because a human has to meet (meet as in come together) a woman under a legal shadow (Shari'a). So if he meets her illegally then he is *shādh* (astray) from society; but the West does not see this *shudhūdh*. The West sees this normal, as long as she agreed and he agreed it is a closed case. Even the law does not punish in their countries unless it is rape; this is one side. From among what I read from them about this some see “*Al Estemnan*” (masturbation) as *shudhūdh*; and it is a self-operation done by a man or a woman”
- 3- **Al Othaybi:** It is what is known as “*Al āda Al Seriyya*” (The secret habit)
 - 4- **Dr. Khaled Alholaybi:** Yes! But we will agree with the entire world at the definition of *shudhūdh* when we say it is the meeting of a sex with the similar sex; the same sex love. And this type of *shudhūdh*, without any doubt if we define it and contemplate it thoroughly we'll reach at the end a condemnation of such a thing and this is where we are different from the rest of the world.”
 - 5- **Al Othaybi:** Ok! So as far as we (Arab world/Muslims) are concerned what are the levels of *shudhūdh*?
 - 6- **Dr. Khaled Alholaybi:** The worst level of *shudhūdh* is “*Mayl*” (inclination) of the “*Dhakar*” (male) to male and “*Ounthā*” (Female) to female then reaching a level where they have a full sexual intercourse; *Liwat* for males and *Suhak* for females. There is a less bad level whereby a male inclines towards another but they don't have a full sexual intercourse.

This attempt at defining *Shudud* stretches over place and time whereby defining means that this is a new thing and referring to the usual big Other/West means *Shudud* is coming from a different place. At the same time, the current place –the Middle East– is distinctive in defining this term in the “now and here” hinted by the talk show. The power of this discourse then is that since it is under a religious emblem it speaks to what Lalande called ‘*la raison constituante*¹¹⁵’ (Arabic: *al-‘aql al-mukawin*) to create a new meaning and to ‘*la raison constituée*¹¹⁶’ (Arabic: *al-‘aql al-mukawan*), to create a cultural distinction.

One of the main problems of this “definition” is that it is spoken with so much authority by a guest who graduated from the University of Imam Muhammad Ben Saud in Saudi Arabia with a degree in modern Arab literature. He has no authority or knowledge about what he is saying but he still defines and categorises as an expert in all the fields related to being a gender. He presents himself as a ‘social expert’ and shows Islamic Capital via his attire, beard, and his seat as an authoritative guest on a religious channel. However, what he is saying with authority has no substance; not even religiously. There is no religious text that defines the degrees and

¹¹⁵which refers to the mental activity that creates knowledge, constructs meanings and decides on rules and principles

¹¹⁶Refers to reason that is already constituted and which encompasses a whole repertoire, including the arts and sciences

levels of “*shudhūdh*” if we assume he speaks from a religious perspective. He is not referring to any scientific research or philosophical thoughts. He even contradicts himself. A statement such as “there is ‘a less badlevel’ whereby a male inclines towards another but they do not have a full sexual intercourse” is a contradiction originating from the fact that the guest got carried away in his improvised definition to stretch his image as an intellectual/expert. It is also a contradiction, as it understands the existence of male-to-male feelings while applauding abstention from the sexual act. Looking closely at what he says; he is indeed talking from his area of expertise; Arabic literature. An authoritative man throwing sensual sentences in classical Arabic such as “*Mayl Dhakar Li Dhakar*” etc. creates a show but does not talk to an Arab Reason as identified in Sabry (2007) based on Jabri. There is no real definition; just iterations that hardly translate into a full scientific or religious meaning or at least observe common sense. It is the general tone that is catchy on the screen.

- **Interview with the second expert: A psychologist:**

W.E. moves from defining to providing solutions and if the definition was based on anecdotal rhetoric the solutions are not any less irrational. The show invited Dr. Abdel Aziz a psychologist who “cured” many cases before. He joined the studio with such an authority and enlisted his success stories in curing homosexuality giving a promise to the audience to end their misery. Interestingly, even the psychologist starts his talk with a reference to the West thanks to the anchorman’s question.

“**Dr. Abdel Aziz:** Yes, yes. Not only our countries I remember I had a clinic in the United States and a young guy called me. He was 17 years old. He told me ‘it is the first time I have sex and it was with a boy and I liked the feeling. Am I going to be a “Homosexual” (term in English), am I going to be *shādh* doctor?’ I said no. You tried with a guy; try with the other sex then talk to me. He went and tried then told me ‘Wallah (by God) your words are true doctor’”

Apart from the fact that the psychologist uses the terms homosexuality and *Shudud* interchangeably the irony here is that the heterosexual sex outside the wedlock is strictly forbidden in Islam. Technically the Doctor advised “*Zená*” (adultery) on a religious channel just to prove that homosexuality is curable. In countries like Saudi Arabia *Zená* is punished by flagellation if the “grave sinner” is single and stoning to death if s/he is married. It is also highly stigmatized publically in every Arab country where women’s virginity and sexual piety decides whether they are a worthwhile human being or an unworthy category. Thus in order to prove the

doctor's skills in curing homosexuality an advise to do *Zená* slipped on a religious channel. Both the anchorman and Dr. Khaled spoke at the same time trying to stop Dr. Abdul-Aziz from carrying on in this vein but in a humorous way without any serious condemnations. The show is recorded for re-runs and this could have been edited out but it is still available on the channel's website.

- **Phone calls: more cases and interventions**

Bidūn Iḥrāj received many calls defining “*shudhūdh*” with the guests or just giving an opinion. Some of those who called were cases cured by the psychologist who claimed a success rate of 80%; without explaining what that means. The testimonies however did not show a strategic technique by the doctor or the callers as much as they exposed a stressed repentance to God and a fight with shame. One of the girls who was “cured” by repentance said:

- 1- **The girl:** I grew up in a family surrounded by men; my cousins from the two sides, my neighbours, yes! Apart from this my father relied on me as he has no son
- 2- **Al Othaybi:** you were undertaking males' tasks such as running errands outside the household?
- 3- **The Girl:** yes! I even helped my father fix the car so I ended up dressing up, talking and even walking like a man
- 4- **Al Othaybi:** how long did this last?
- 5- **The girl:** from 6 years old till I reached puberty approximately
- 6- **Al Othaybi:** and you were happy performing this role?
- 7- **The girls:** I was happy but why? Because I met praise from the men around me who were surprised that a girl can do all these men's tasks. They even called me male names sometimes

It is not clear why this is considered a case of homosexuality but the issues raised here are very important. She thinks, and the show confirms, that growing surrounded by men makes a person deviate from the right gender. She spoke with the anchorman about work as if it is the source of all ills. Fixing the car and running errands because the father has no son does not turn one homosexual but stating these as the cause of homosexuality worsens the fight for women rights and emancipation in the workplace. The irony is what followed. This psycho and socio analysis by the girl and the anchorman were of a period when she was 6 years old only. If she truly fixed the car at the age of 6 to puberty, which should be around 12 or 13 then this girl could have made a good engineer if it was not to this entire sexualisation of her work in a male dominated space. The narratives exposed here are contradictory and might be staged as well but the discourses that emerge from these stories are alarming at a multidimensional level. In fact, the show applauded this as a success story thanks to repentance and family support that helped the girl as it followed

in the conversation. While she carried on thanking her family and God for not letting her dress up like guys and stopping her from cutting her hair she suggested a book, giving this entire healing process an intellectual scientific aspect. Apparently she read this book to help herself fight homosexuality. Dr. Al Holaybi, then, asked her to repeat the name of the book so that he takes note of it to use it with those who seek his advice. This entire exchange of books and experiences alludes to the notion that the studio of W.E. is highly literate and emancipating. The show host himself stressed that he is finishing his PhD to be an authority in his space.

After long conversations with the guests and phone calls interventions and testimonies that exposed a clash between rationality and sexuality in such a religious conversational show genre the show closed with more recommendations. Adopting the conversational debate style did not drop the “do” and “do not” usual monologue style. Religion used to be discussed in a debatable way by the ancient scholars this monologues, self-gratifying, power and starhood seeking style is the invention of the Pan Arab satellite televisions owned by Saudi Arabia. Talking about *shudud* using different individuals from different social levels exposed a number of unspeakable/hidden problems related to sexuality in the Middle East; including incest and male/female different types of segregations. The show closed with two expert’s summarising notes.

“The first thing is fear from God; the *shādh* should not consider himself a criminal but a human who has hope. Even Sodom and Gomorrah had a chance from God before they perish; he sent Lut into them. (Khaled: (Intervening) the door of repentance). The door of repentance is open and the door of cure too. Now we have a danger coming from the Western world and we should not commit the same mistake. You know now in the West they started to get married and now we have NGOs and we started to copy them. Why they started to get married because they started to see this as a natural thing; this is not natural and it is possible to get rid of it by all means.

It is important to remind that this quote is coming from the psychologist not a preacher. The psychologist highlights that if the Western world did not cure its homosexuals it is because of NGOs and the lack of what Muslims have; “repentance”. First he is selling himself as a person able to cure from homosexuality using a religious discourse not a psychologist one. It seems that this Islamic Capital is not specific to Al Waleed’s strategy but a common practice to seek legitimacy. Aside from marketing his profile without clear evidence this guest did not add to the show anything different than the “social expert”, his presence was a multiplicity of guest number and a use of medicine as a power-halo only.

Dr. Al Holaybi closed the show right after him with another note taking the psychologist's note a bit further. He said:

It is pretty clear that the big role of the family and the intensive care that children get in every moment of their life, I mean if the prophet (PBUH) says “and separate them in bed” (meaning separate the children from different genders in bed) that is “*Jawame' Al Kalem*” (the prophet's concise speech/bottom of line). Certainly we have seen the big effects of what might happen, even once, during the childhood. I mean their future gets affected and they accept this thing. There is one thing missing in this episode. I urge the brothers and sisters to enter the specialist websites (his website) to look at the very bad medical consequences; which might reach 100% according to some studies. *Al shawādh* face sexual diseases that might range from Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and the worst one AIDS. The prophet (PBUH) reminded us that once lewdness spreads among a nation and they display it in public an outbreak of the Plague and pains that were not in their ancestors' appears.

The sociologist starts with a psychologist note analysing “*shudhūdh*” as an act that happens in childhood and affects the adult life. He picks up using religion affirming that it is only natural that when one goes against “nature” one is punished by the ugliest diseases/disasters. He then warns from diseases that are caused by and caught at a rate of 100% by homosexuals to use statistics after he warned and objected using them erroneously at the beginning of the show. Lack of expertise in the subject matter and the desire to show maximum knowledge produced a contradictory episode on Shudud alienating it to the West without a single self-critic but only victimization.

Conclusion:

The two different talk show genres analysed in this chapter bring to light distinctive implications about talk shows as power spaces and the discourse of LGBTQ rights in the Middle East. As explained in chapter four we have to understand that Prince Al Waleed never spoke in favour or against LGBTQ rights; that would have been against his Islamic Capital. However, such discourse found place on his Media Empire as part of a grand strategy that challenges the religious authorities and thus government in Saudi Arabia to open up for more democratic measures by using universal powers. The shows started to appear on the Prince's channels early 2008 in tandem with the General Assembly's decision to include sexual orientation and gender identity in the UDHR, which received 66 state signatories immediately. LGBTQ rights then benefited from this type of power that Castells (2009) described as a “relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interests, and values” (Castells, 2009, p. 9).

The discourse analysis of both shows showed that the approach to the topic of LGBTQ discourses in what became a televised coming-out of the closet is but a strategy to present homosexuality as a threat. Such constructed threat is allegedly facing non-democratic societies that enforce female segregation and pretend a non-existent sexual morality on religious grounds. It is obvious that none of the shows attempted a humanitarian approach to the topic and even threatened the lives of their guests. This hegemonic target explains the reason BRL and *Bidūn Iḥrāj* approached the topic in contradictory ways when addressing different audiences. It also explains why Wafaa Kilani who hosted a celebrity based tabloid show on Al Waleed's music channel hosted an episode about Al Mithliyya out of the blue, crediting Al Waleed for opening such an opportunity in a channel that broadcasts only music and celebrities¹¹⁷. This strategy was indeed so effective over two seasons that BRL was banned and LBC Sat entered a serious economic crisis.

In the Gramscian (1971) sense, this public sphere, as structured by Al Waleed and his cultural agents 'manufactures consent' and 'legitimacy' yet in the Foucauldian (1980) sense the LGBTQ discourse that emerged from the two regulated spaces is not and for all "subservient to power or raised up against it". The LGBTQ discourse produced in both shows is "both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy". It is not what the show intended for it to be but as "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart" (Foucault, 1998, p. 100-1).

In the case of Bold Red Line, the anchorman's thirst for fame and continuity, the case guests' strive for social acceptance, the Power-Halo's self-presentation as regulators and self-doubt or reaffirmation at the end of the show, the studio as a structured space, the whole discourse that moved from television to online platforms did not just reproduce existing knowledge and relations. It formed what Foucault (1976) would call a "strategic battlefield" where loss and victory are a possibility but what is certain is that nothing remains the same. Gramsci's (1971) ideas conditioned the "war of attack" or revolutions against a hegemonic system by a necessary "war of position" which is the struggle that shapes ideas, culture and beliefs. Such war is not rational but reasonable.

¹¹⁷This should be detailed in chapter 6

Expecting a straightforward, LGBTQ rights discourse from a Middle Eastern public space that are just starting to open this topic is a ‘liberal functionalist’ perspective on media. For Curran (2002) “the media role is to assist the collective self-realization, co-ordination, democratic management, social integration and adaptation of society” (p.136). Despite the negative discourse coming out of these two talk shows they still serve this very liberal target even if not intentionally. The fact, that BRL used the structure of a French adapted format gave it an advantage compared to *Bidūn Ihrāj* that reduced itself to ridicule by contradicting its own religious values in its attempt to be serious, rational and scientific. Livingstone and Lunt (1994) explained that TV as a “social space has the potential for both the reproduction of existing beliefs, representations and practices and the transformation of traditional social forms through the construction of a public sphere which mediates between established power (via argument and accountability) and everyday experience (via story- telling)” (p. 172). In both shows, discussions followed the stories narrated and although both were overly produced, they invited for thinking. TV as a low culture space demarcates a space of shifts and powers as Livingstone and Lunt say indeed (2001, p. 5).

At the lexical level, the type of language used in the shows to speak about gender identities that are outside of the binary male/female challenges Massad’s (2007) political position about categorization and its alienation as a Western construct. The language used by the case guests in both shows is neither Western nor culturally specific to the Middle East; it is the language of the subordinate and the subcultural who is erased from the public sphere but exist within unidentified categories that are in a constant encounter with Glocal ideologies. Thus, coming-out in these specific circumstances happens via a discourse built on what I call **Chameleon Strategies**. BRL developed two classical Arabic words to talk about sex/gender reassignment (SRS) but it ended up policing the term it vowed to define objectively at the beginning; after all the show’s host needs to keep his legitimacy in the Arabic public sphere. *Tahwīl* and *Taṣhīh* policed the SRS procedures within a normative binary while understanding gender as sex and vice versa. The show investigated the *Mutaḥawwil* as a “wrong” identity and the *Muṣaḥaḥ* as an identity that holds human rights and thus needs acceptance from society. Policing the talk as such is indeed regulatory and even discriminating but creating these two classical Arabic words (which makes them sound scientific) opened a window of legitimacy that most of the guests tried to fill in this reasonable chameleon strategy. What is more interesting is

that the last guest was not coerced to fit into this categorization. He challenged the whole studio including the Power-Halo bringing the worst out of Maktabi. He said I tried to be a man and tried to be a woman and in all cases, I failed to please society so I stick to who I am. It is these negotiations, powerful statement, strategies and tactics from within a legitimate power space that bring shift and change.

Bidūn Iḥrāj did not have to create any new terminologies. Titling the episode *Shudud* and setting it up against a religious discourse could only mean that this is a talk show to bash homosexuality. The discourse itself, however, is interestingly revealing of the strength and weaknesses of conversations within structured power spaces that render such indoctrinating shows irrational. Religious shows usually follow a monologue format, whereby one religious authority would speak for an hour or more using a language of “do” and “do not”. The fact that *Bidūn Iḥrāj* invited case studies, phone calls, social and medical powers into the studio-opened room for negotiations. The case presented at the beginning used derogatory terms against itself such as ‘*Shad*’. People who called were seeking help or raising concerns about what became a “growing phenomenon” targeting youth especially in schools in Saudi Arabia. Even these self-derogatory presentations are a Chameleon Strategy seeking acceptance from within what presents itself as a religious space. More importantly, attempting to sound liberal and scientific the host and the guests ended up stating unscientific, irrational and even non-religious statements. For example, in an argument to prove that homosexuality is curable, the guest psychologist advised a young man to try sexual intercourses with women then visit him, and confirmed that this worked. The shift to a conversational style in religious talk shows exposed the indignity of such powerful and highly dignified shows. Advising sex outside of the wedlock is a grave sin in Islam thus to hold conversation is apparently harder than delivering a sermon; it exposes contradictions.

A Chameleon Strategy, then, is the attempt to fit within the acceptable but remain the different at the same time. It is a method of negotiation where the individual takes the colours of its surrounding power structure trying to bypass its rules and regulations from within. It stands between the sly tactics of De Certeau (1984) and his grand strategies. It is not to challenge power but to seek its acceptance by looking like “the accepted” yet under “a different” category. Being a *Muṣaḥaḥ* is a breathing window for discontinuous gender identities that seek a dignified public life within their own societies. Such a strategy is not necessarily a tactic of the weak but

elites and power holders have to abide by the meta-power rules as well so to negotiate and reach their ends they too follow their own Chameleon Strategies in their everyday life. Chameleon Strategies are the all these alternative solutions one tries to find against power. Constant failure to synchronize into the system is what creates marginality, subcultures or even rebellion.

Massad (2007) finds non-identification safer and authentic to the sexual practices of the Middle East, unlike what he calls as the project for ‘the gay international’ who creates homosexuality where it does not exist. The stories brought forward and most importantly, the structure and language that discussed them testify for a different reality; even gay rights NGOs such as Helem criticized the shows fiercely. Yet against Massad’s political position and the gay rights NGO’s activism, the Arab discontinuous identities tried to find a reasonable space away from confrontation and without copying Western values; even if this means submitting to the psychological and religious discourse about homosexuality in the Middle East. Their aim is to share the public sphere thus stepping into a talk show and opening up about such personal matters is indeed bold. Why would one take such a risk if sexual identity is not important as Massad maintains?

Massad treats the Glocal influences of globalization as if they were optional. The field of cultural operates at a multidimensional level not within dichotomies of the supreme powers and subordinates. Cultures that resisted homosexuality are now forced to speak about it; certainly negatively at start, but the speaking process should reduce such negativity. The fast growing nature of media and ICTs in the MENA region or what Castell (1981) calls ‘Network Society’ and the exposure to Pan Arab and transnational television networks is rendering global discourses “glocal”. The entire world is ‘in transition’ and development must therefore be rethought as a regional, transnational, global project (Pieterse, 200, p. 45); not as an Orientalist scheme. As post-colonial theorists like Appadurai and Homi K. Bhabha advanced, “transnationalization may reinforce cultural (and national) identities, but *transcultural* processes are also a central feature of reflexive global modernity, expressed as ‘creolization’ or ‘cultural hybridity’”. This makes Massad’s political position irrational. It reduces people who want to identify as a specific category to subordinate, mere copycats in a predetermined way; this in itself is a discourse of violence. Scoring a point against the ex-colonial West should not come at the expense of the modern people who are open to discourses in a transnational way.

Women Rights & Wrongs in the Arab Talk Show Space

Discussing women's matters have been men's business for a long time in the Middle East. The new wave of human rights and feminist activists walked a long mile to secure basic rights for women in the region but Middle Eastern women remain behind the line of full equality in the social, economic and political lives alike. It is not until recently that women started to open women matters in the Arabic talk show space focusing on topics related to being, rights and wrongs as well. To expose the emerging discourses and narratives about women in Talk shows this chapter uses CDA, semi-structured interviews and archives research to look at two talk show genres as case studies of talk about women rights on Al Waleed's channels. If Al Waleed is indeed working to develop women rights in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia the primetime talk shows that open such topics should go in sync with his goals; after all he intervenes in the daily schedules of each channel as shown on all the documentaries about his life. The first case selected after structured observation is social talk show *Bidūn Raqābah* (Without Censorship) from LBC Sat and the second is religious genre *'Allamatni Al-Ḥayat* (Life Has Taught Me) from Al Resalah TV. Added to chapter five, this chapter exposes two main Arabic talk show genres as spaces of power where the gender discourse is influenced by both the structure of the genre, the host and the meta-powers of society. It seems that the Islamic feminist debate, is not absent from the religious talk shows of Al Resalah TV, but is it apt to secure change towards a women rights culture? It seems as well that media personalities who claim a certain level of liberalism fall short from deploying that as a power in their own cultural work, which raise a question about whether the image of what seems liberal is indeed liberal at the ideological level the Middle East. This chapter explores the way feminist Nawal A Saadawi was interviewed in the Talk Show that replaced BRL¹¹⁸ on LBC Sat and exposes the problematic way the director of Al Resalah TV takes a feminist approach to talk about women rights.

¹¹⁸ The case study of the previous chapter

1- Case #1. Ad absurdum in interviewing feminist Nawal Al Saadawi on LBC Sat

Episode: *Bidūn Raqābah* (Without Censorship)

Channel: LBC Sat:

The anchorwoman: Wafaa Kilani

Guest: Nawal Al-Saadawi:

Date:

1- Definition and Relevance

The choice of this primetime talk show as a case study is not random but the result of a structured observation that watched a number of shows where there is abundant content about women rights in the Middle East is a regulatory way. The name of the show itself *Bidūn Raqābah* (Without Censorship) highlights the significance of its subgenre. In using the term “*Raqaba*” (censorship) and giving a promise that the show will both escape it and never use it, Wafaa Kilani’s talk program comes out as a genre that will feed an eager need to address social matters in the Middle East. *Bidūn Raqābah* is an extension of *Dedda Al-Tayar* (Against the Current) that Kilani’s used to host on Rotana Music. Rotana music specialized on music only, so Kilani rose from a show that invites singers launching new albums to *Dedda Al-Tayar* to discuss sensational gossip and scandals of Arab celebrities. Thus when Kilani launched her new show on LBC Sat instead of Rotana to debate social issues with an opening episode with the Middle East’s controversial feminist Nawal Al Saadawi the question became what discourse would emerge from such an encounter and what purpose does it serve?

Cross-dresser and celebrity satirist Bassam Fghali criticized Kilni’s show in a satirist reproduction of the pre-launch promo of *Bidūn Raqābah* on LBC Sat.

2- The female presenter Wafaa Kilani: from the tabloid talk show subgenre to the social talk genre

Born into a Muslim¹¹⁹ family in Egypt, Wafaa Kilani is a TV host and media celebrity. She studied political sciences in a Libyan public university and worked in different Satellite TV stations such as ART and Nile TV before joining Al Waleed’s media conglomerate. Kilani recently married her Lebanese Christian colleague in a civil union (Layalina Magazine). As

¹¹⁹ I stress Kilani’s religious background here and right after her husband’s religion just because she questions her guests’ religious integrity repeatedly while she is married to a Christian which is forbidden in Islam and considered a grave sin.

stated before she rose to fame from tabloid talk shows interviewing singers and actors mainly on Rotana Music to a social talk show on LBC Sat. This shift seems to replace Malek Maktabi, taking over his air space since he is banned from it. Prior to moving to LBC Sat, Kilani hosted an episode on *Al Mythliyya* (homosexuality) on Rotana Music three months after Maktabi's episode on the same topic in Red Bold Line. Interestingly, the issues debated by Kilani had nothing to do with the presenter's show and its "light" content. Why would a celebrity tabloid talk show that focuses on celebrity gossip host a non-celebrity lesbian and a gay to talk about homosexuality in the presence of the same power-halo that Malek presented adding the point of view of the Christian faith this time?

When asked about this "coincidence," Maktabi expressed elegantly his frustration with Kilani and her "plagiarism" saying "You noticed? You see! I have nothing to say it is so obvious that you noticed". He said this with bitterness, trying to put the words on my mouth as a sign of his humbleness and hinting how his efforts went down the hill by being copied in the same institution not only the other TV channels (Interview with the author, Beirut 2011). Kilani on her side told *Laha Magazine* that Maktabi is a talented colleague whom she follows closely because he addressed important social issues. She just hopes that her show will not receive the same treatment and get banned.¹²⁰ By this declaration Kilani already put herself in the same talk show genre as Maktabi and even hinted that as dangerous as her "*Bidūn Raqābah*" might sound she can escape the trouble that Maktabi faced. It seems that the anchorwoman follows respectfully the editorial lines as put by the Rotana Media Group and Prince Al Waleed. She added in the same interview that she is grateful to the managing directors of the media group, especially Prince Al Waleed "who allowed her" to host a non-musical show in a musical program and a musical channel to serve the "intellect" of society.¹²¹

Kilani's episode on *Al Mithliyya* received harsh criticism; first because the topic is not in its place, second because she lacks the caliber/experience to open such topics and third because she did not do her research her topic but only made a show of her guests. Quotes#

¹²⁰Laha Magazine, Interview with WafaaKilani. [ONLINE] . Available from <http://www.layalina.com/content/%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A>

¹²¹ Ibid

3- The Guest Profile and its promising relevance to the show:

The episode of Nawal Al Saadawi was the opening episode of Kilani's new show in her new channel LBC Sat. Nawal Al Saadawi (1931) is an Egyptian feminist and acclaimed author of more than forty-seven books on women, equality and Islam. She is also an activist, physician and psychiatrist. Al Saadawi is the closest feminist to a Simone de Beauvoir version in the Middle East. No Arab woman has been the target of such controversy, attacks and polemic over an extended period without stepping backward. She faced, imprisonment, many *fatwas* (religious decrees) calling for her death, apostasy, *Hesba* (divorcing her from her husband) etc. She was imprisoned by the Egyptian government in 1981 for her leftist political position after which she wrote her "Memoirs from the Women's Prison."¹²²

Born to a large family of nine in a small village outside of Cairo, Al Saadawi was raised to a relatively conservative family that practiced genital circumcision but progressive enough to secure education for all the girls of the family. She studied at the University of Cairo and graduated in 1955 with a degree in psychiatry. She eventually became Egypt's Director of Public Health after great achievements in her field as a physician and academic, only to be dismissed after publishing her controversial work. Her books discuss issues of Arab women, their sexuality and legal status. Her call for the Egyptian woman "to take control over her body" while attacking radical religious group that consider women the root of all evil forced her to flee Egypt after her life was threatened by Islamic fundamentalists¹²³. Nawal Al Saadawi's profile is so controversially diverse and representative of a woman rights activist by being the woman she is which gives the assumption that a show that invites her as a first guest is indeed at risk of censorship. However, did Kilani interview her according to her profile, that of the channel or according to Kilani's expertise?

4- CDA of the interview by the music shows host with a controversial feminist:

- **Quote one: Presenter introducing the feminist icon guest:**

When Wafaa Kilani introduced infamous Nawal Al Saadawi, she started by listing a selection of her books then highlighted a list of stigmatized labels identifying her in the Egyptian society and Muslim world.

¹²²

¹²³Al Saadawi official website. Retrieved 2014-02-12. Available from www.nawalsaadawi.net

Kilani:

- 1- **The name:** Nawal Zineb Al Saadawi. **The profession:** a writer, a physician, and a fierce defender of women's rights. Among her many books the novel *Sukkot Al Imam* (the Fall of the Imam), *Emra'a 'Inda Nuqtat Al Sefr* (woman at point zero), *Mudhakerati Fi Sijn Annesā'* (Memoirs from Women's Prison), *Awraq Fi Hayati* (My life), *Lahdat Sedq* (a Moment of Truth), *Adab am qellat Adab* (Civility or Impoliteness) *Al Mar'a Wa Al Jens* (Women and Sex), *Taw'am Al Suṭa Wal Jens* (The twins power and sex) , break boundaries and much, much more I won't be able to list them all.
- 2- **The charge:** breaking taboos, foolish exaggerations, and apostasy. **The social situation:** an ex-inmate, whose books and ideas are confiscated, stigmatized as a disbeliever and infidel, and some demands the revocation of her Egyptian nationality. "*Hesba*¹²⁴" legal suits are filed against her to separate between her and her husband, and her name tops the lists of death punishments. Dr. Nawal al Saadawi good evening.

The title of the show, its promo, its first guest and the introduction used for al Saadawi gave a promise to discuss what this feminist icon stands for. The first part of the introduction listed some major feminist books and novels by Al Saadawi that not only champion women rights but narrate stories as an example of *being* a woman in the Middle East. The assumption was that the show would be the platform for an interesting discussion and literary critic for such internationally acclaimed intellectual work "without censorship" indeed. The second part of the introduction soon started to put value on the guest but at this stage, one might think that the anchorwoman is only trying to make the topic sound taboo and dangerous; "censorship" material. In her introduction styled as a card of identity and definition, Wafaa listed a number of accusations from "idiocy" to "apostasy". She described *Al Hala* (the social situation) by highlighting Al Saadawi as an "ex-inmate," topping the list of those wanted dead and who face requests of citizenship's revocation, "censorship" and *Hesba* legal charges to divorce her from her husband.

The controversy around Al Saadawi makes her indeed juicy material for a show that is just starting. Yet considering that the channel is owned by Al Waleed who supposedly monitors the content of all his TV stations let alone a new launching show, one would expect that a

¹²⁴ The term was originally used in relation to economic issues but in recent decades it has been used against writers and artists who say or do things that are deemed against Islamic law. El-Namnam calls this a "holy war against creative people" and says "new punishments have placed limits on writers' creativity" through lawsuits accusing writers of insulting the divine or promoting atheism. Cases have targeted Egyptian authors Naguib Mahfouz and Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid, and the actor Adel Imam. Adel Imam was sentenced in February 2012 to 3 months in prison for insulting Islam in his films and plays. Two days later the court rejected the lawsuit, which was described as "without foundation."

prominent intellectual and a controversial feminist like Al Saadawi would be addressed with more careful research and production efforts. She certainly can serve the women rights content the Prince calls for publically. When asked about her readiness to host such a prominent figure, Kilani responded:

“Even when Al Saadawi argued against Sheikh Metwally Shaarawy, she could not read all his work and listen to all his lectures. She only familiarized herself with the main points of his positions that is exactly what I did when dealing with her. I could not possibly read all her forty seven books, I only read 10 but I made sure I familiarized myself with the main themes discussed in her work.¹²⁵”

Kilani positioned herself in opposition to Saadawi the same way Saadawi was to Al Shaarawy. The host can indeed take positions against their guests but this is put here in a revengeful and sly way that does not highlight ideas but uses a popular and loved religious figure and promising the same “treatment” to the critical woman of his ideas. Saadawi is an intellectual and Sheikh Shaarawy is a well versed religious scholar thus Kilani is putting herself in the Middle as an equal. It then became more interesting to see what will come out of the interview.

Unlike what she claimed Kilani did not seem knowledgeable about any of Saadawi’s books she was well informed about the public charges against her instead. This reflected on her show as she decided to focus on three main themes during the show; religion, sex and politics. Just like her previous show, she did so in an uninformed, tabloid style and subjective way to create a spectacle.

- **Quote two: Name of the mother and the absence of equality in parenting**

Right after the introduction, Kilani discussed her guest’s name as follow:

- 1- **Kilani:** You became famous by your call for naming a child after both, his father and mother. You sign your novels as Nawal Zaineb Al Sayed but when someone asks you about your name you say Nawal Al Sayed or Nawal Zainab Al Saadawi?
- 2- **Al Saadawi:** sometimes I say Nawal Zainab Al Sayed and explain why, sometimes I say Nawal Zaineb Al Saadawi and sometimes Nawal Al Saadawi; it depends.
- 3- **Kilani:** when do you feel the urge to say your mother’s name, when do you feel the need to be linked to her so you mention her name?
- 4- **Al Saadawi:** When I meet people who do not respect the mother; in some societies people don’t respect mothers. In some societies they sing for the mother in the Radio but in reality she has no rights. So I insist as a kind of a challenge to say I carry my mother’s name.

¹²⁵Layalaina Magazine. (2012). *Wafaa Al Kilani A Distinguished Anchorwoman*. [ONLINE]. Retrieved 2014-02-12. Available from: <http://www.layalina.com/content/%D9%88%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A>

- 5- **Kilani:** which societies do not respect the mother?
- 6- **Al Saadawi:** many societies by the way
- 7- **Kilani:** Who exactly?
- 8- **Al Saadawi:** The Middle East and the West I don't want to say the Middle East alone. I travelled all around the world; China and Japan don't respect the mother. Even in the United States only the name of the father is used. We live in a society of class and patriarchy; the name of the father is the dominant.
- 9- **Kilani:** So you are requesting something that did not happen even in the most open societies! How can you ask for this to happen in our Arab, Middle Eastern -and let me say closed sometimes- societies?
- 10- **Al Saadawi:** I don't divide the world into East and West. I mean are there people who are responsible that this West is so developed compared to us and we in the Middle East are backward? Not at all, I mean not until lately that an American woman could open a bank account in her name. We have a heritage in Egypt, for example a woman has heritage, for example my name is Nawal Al Saadawi; I am named after my father but I won't be named after my husband. So we are not used to that. When I gave birth at the hospital in the United States they named my son Atef Al Saadawi thinking that Al Saadawi is my husband's name. Thus societies where women are named after the father, which happen in our societies, are more developed than the European and American ones where the woman take the name of her husband.

In line number three Kilani started by taking a superior position making use of her power as the one who asks questions by playing the role of the psychologist she is not; Nawal Al Saadawi is a psychologist. The way she framed her question makes naming a child after his mother not a right but a "need" by Saadawi to be linked to her mother and childhood. This superior position is confirmed later as the interview progresses. These questions escalated gradually leaving the viewer not certain if Kilani is professionally interviewing the guest or cornering her with narrow and absurd investigative questions killing the ideas she represents. In line number four Saadawi answered the question putting it back to the public sphere as a form of activism, protest, or/and resistance; not her own psychological need. Kilani then turned the answer against her trying to corner her again by asking her to specify the name of the countries that do not respect mother's right. Her question is more sarcasm than an actual question seeking to diminish Saadawi's reasoning and put her under the attack of the powerful entity of countries she is asked to name. This question stripped substance from her idea of seeking acknowledgement for the effort of the mother as equal to the father. More than that Kilani stressed the word mother hinting that in the Middle East the mother is respected; distinguishing mother from being woman. While Saadawi tried to ditch the question as it is not important for her argument Kilani restored it again in line seven. Here Saadawi reinitiated her position without specifying single countries and

generalizing the problem of equality to the West and Middle East alike stating “We live in a society of class and patriarchy; the name of the father is the dominant.” Here Kilani inexplicably states “So you are requesting something that did not happen even in the most open societies! How can you ask for this to happen in our Arab, Eastern -and let me say closed sometimes-societies?” Not only it is not clear why Kilani is making such an absurd comparison but the problem in her statement is stressing that if such equality did not happen in the West it has no chance to happen in the Middle East. She clearly does not hold the belief that her show can open topics about women rights and discuss them within the specificity of the Middle East regardless of where the West stands. So why invite Saadawi then? Saadawi tried to explain things further by avoiding the West/East dichotomy explaining that countries have different heritages and positions that favor women or disfavor them; the real question is to stress what is right or wrong regardless of the nation state. Kilani was bypassed by this argument, dismissed it all together moved to a different set of questions shelving all what has been said by Nawal within the banal. From here it was obvious that Saadawi was not invited to speak about her literary work or women rights as human rights.

- **Quote three: Veiling and unveiling are all about sex:**

Kilani quickly started to use religion against Saadawi. In the following quote the interview started to take a religious shape although none of the two women is religious in the orthodox way exemplified in the talk.

- 1- **Kilani:** How can an articulate person like you say -sorry to say this- veiling a woman in the name of Islam is like stripping her under the name of stardom?
- 2- **Al Saadawi:** Veiling and unveiling are two faces of the same coin. The woman who is naked says I think about sex and the one who covers means she thinks about sex too.
- 3- **Kilani:** You put the veiled woman in the same place as the prostitute (*Al 'Ahera*)?
- 4- **Al Saadawi:** No! Oh your reasoning and conclusions! You conclude some very weird things! I am saying, the idea of stripping women is a political system. Women are victims of the patriarchal class based society; either they strip her for commercial reasons or cover her to use her in religion, and none of them covers or uncovers because she wants to. I mean do children cover because they want to? Does anyone put makeup on because they chose to? We all live under pressures. A woman puts makeup pressured by the desire of the patriarchal, class based, commercial, capitalist society which turns the human being into a commodity, a sexual object and a tool of seduction. So a woman either puts makeup and engages in doing plastic surgeries so that men like her, or covers because she imagines every man as a wolf sexually desiring and objectifying her. But when a woman is natural and normal she perceives herself as a human being with a brain to use not just a body.
- 5- **Kilani:** Doctor did you veil when you were young?

- 6- **Al Saadawi:** Me veil? Are you certain from your stories?
 7- **Kilani:** I read it and I will tell you where
 8- **Al Saadawi** Did you read it in one of my books? Of course not; so stop it!
 9- **Kilani:** I read it in the book of Dr. Mahmud Jame' and he is an honest man from the (Muslim) brotherhood...Why would an honest man like him lie?
 10- **Al Saadawi:** you want me to analyze the personality of such people!
 11- **Kilani:** why would he lie?

Kilani opens the question of the veil in line one with an attitude. She marvels, questioning Saadawi's rationality and intellect in making the veil (*Hejab*) and nakedness (*Ta'arri*) two faces of the same coin. Ironically, Kilani is not veiled at all. Saadawi explained her position briefly in line two to be surprised by what the anchorwoman concludes from what she says. She tried to explain how clothing as a social habit is guided by an inner perception of the other as a sexual partner so covering becomes a tool to hide from sexual desire and uncovering a tool of calling for it in the mind of those obsessed about their intrinsic look rather than their rational *being*. The answer of Kilani came shocking yet in line with how she is conducting this interview so far. She concluded, shocked, that Saadawi compares the "pious" veiled woman to the "deviant" and "less valuable" prostitute (*A'ahera*). It is clear that the anchorwoman has no understanding of any gender rights theories or at least public discussions about women rights and their struggle. In line four, Saadawi, was shocked by her conclusion in a reductive way stating "Oh your conclusions! You conclude some very weird things" She then tried to raise the notion of gender construction as developed by the postmodern, critical school of the nineteenth century and later articulated in De Beauvoir's work. Kilani however dismissed all that and adapted the role of the psychologist again saying "Doctor did you veil when you were young?" She was trying to show that Saadawi's positions are a result from her troubled psychology since her childhood whereby she developed complexities from the veil. When Saadawi marveled at this information questioning its source Kilani stated "I read it in the book of Dr. Mahmud Jame' and he is an honest man from the (Muslim) brotherhood...Why would an honest man like him lie?" Trying to provoke her again Kilani called a man from the brotherhood honest and incapable of lying putting Saadawi in the ranks of liars who lack religious piety; because one of them must be lying.

In this excerpt the attempt to raise notions within the gender theories' fold were killed by the anchorwoman inability to converse in matters that surpass her intellectual level. However, the power delegated to her by the space she occupies as a host of a primetime talk show not only

jeopardizes the topic itself but reinitiates the discourse of hate against women who think outside of the box. Kilani does not practice what she preaches as she is not veiled herself and is even married to a Christian which is unaccepted in Egypt and every Muslim state. However, seeking fame, she does not abide by the morality and professionalism of broadcast journalism. She uses her gossip style methods, mastered in her previous shows in a place where they are lethal. Women talk shows as Wlatchow argued are indeed deemed absurd but in the case of the Middle East they are so for a good reason. Anchorwomen like Kilani are an example of the Bourdieusian symbolic violence whereby women in power re-initiate the same discriminations against women they internalized in everyday life.

- **Quote four: Prostitution and the Arab bastards: where is the man?**

From religion Kilani moves to speak about sex. In the following excerpt she jumps from sex to liberties to prostitution in the most trivial way still ignoring her guest's answers and with no skill to develop the conversation with her to an interesting level.

- 1- **Kilani:** Doctor, sex plays an essential role in your novels?
- 2- **Al Saadawi:** No, not true; isn't our life about religion, sex and politics? When I write a novel I have to touch on aspects from life. My novels are about life
- 3- **Kilani:** You are one of the advocates of liberties?
- 4- **Al Saadawi:** It depends on which liberties? Some free women are corrupt. I am against moral corruption and for reasonability and freedom; responsible freedom because freedom and responsibility are the same thing.
- 5- **Kilani:** If you were a president of an Arab country it would be impossible that you allow prostitution?
- 6- **Al Saadawi:** The most important thing is the legal reforms. Justice must make the man who is engaged in this prostitution accountable; because the woman is judged alone. We live in a double standard masculine, class based, society. The rich befriends the power and the man gets away from punishment. We punish the child. The child becomes a bastard while it is his father who committed the crime against him. We have to punish the father because he raped the mother; instead we punish the child; the victim. This is my problem with the patriarchal, class based society
- 7- **Kilani:** what is your target?
- 8- **Al Saadawi:** My target is to see a just society and what aches is that injustice is increasing in the world. See how a country like the United States goes to Iraq and Afghanistan, look how Israel is slaughtering Palestinians every day and all the massacres in Africa; is this a world? It's a jungle. How can people feel happy in this world? Look at the double standards at the ethical level; how a woman is punished and a man is released. All this bothers me.
- 9- **Kilani:** What do you regret in your life?

Saadawi raises some important points here yet all are unmet by Kilani's interviewing skills from the beginning to the end. Dragged to speak about prostitution Saadawi cunningly did not focus on the prostitute herself; which was Kilani's intention but the legal system that punishes prostitutes alone although in Islam men and women have to observe the same level of piety. They both have to abstain from extramarital sex and both are punished equally from a religious perspective for transgressing yet society punishes women's sexuality and rewards that of men. She highlights the most innocent victim for such disparity who is the child of such relationships who fails to have a decent social and legal status from his first date on earth. It is noteworthy that although children who are the result of extramarital relationships are incorporated into the state system in some Arab countries. For example, they are allowed to access public schooling yet they are still marked as "bastards" in the school cards which makes them subject to psychological breakdowns and social scrutiny at an early age. These important statements by Saadawi were not met by Kilani.

There are few female media personalities who manage to stand out in serious talk shows and kill this stereotype that a woman's talk show is absurd or trivial. For example, Shada Omar's weekly show, *Al-Hadath* (The Event)¹²⁶, on LBC-Sat on 24 April 2005, discussed municipal elections in Saudi Arabia. She hosted a debated by Saudi guests and Saudi callers giving vent to views on secularism and conservatism in Saudi society, enfranchisement of women and much else (Sakr, 2013, p.159). The problem of shows like Kilani's is that they are sensualized and made easy for the average viewer in a way that can bring a backlash rather than a change towards more women rights in the Middle East. Reducing the very few intellectuals to ridicule is a violent act of Arab TV channels that lack the caliber to engage with such personalities in the first place. It is a misuse of the public sphere that should not go unstudied and uncorrected.

5- So why feminist Al Saadawi and why tabloid's Anchorwoman Al-Kilani?

If the show is not going to speak about women rights why chose Al Saadawi as a guest? Al Waleed has a direct hand in approving topics in his channels as he showed in many documentaries about his life including that with his biographer Riz Khan. At the same time it remains unclear how is Kilani fit for such topics and why would Al Saadawi accept talking to her at all? When asked why choose such a controversial and intellectual personality to host on her

¹²⁶ The CD attached to this thesis provides translated excerpts from such shows as there is no space to analyze them here I join them to the thesis to open a gate for further analysis.

first episode of “Without Censorship,” Kilani responded that al Saadawi was sort of “a precious prey” for her and her audience.¹²⁷ Indeed, who has better sensational and controversial material than the author that had most of her books banned and censored in Egypt for such a long time? Using this logic, Kilani kept pushing for a sensational reaction from Al Saadawi when discussing religion, sex and politics on her show, failing to address the *raison d’être* of a feminist like her guest. This is clearly stated in Kilani’s statement below:

“My show is only an hour and a half; I opened the debate with questions on religion because that is the controversy in the Arab world now. Without doubt, Dr. al Saadawi is a fierce feminist and activist for women’s rights but that does not put her in a controversial position anymore as issues around women are not problematic in our societies anymore, except for one or two closed and conservative Arab societies. I want to open the debate on controversial topics.¹²⁸

The issue here is not only Kilani’s position that women in the Arab world’s achieved a status of rights and wellbeing that does not require any further development in the public sphere, but the fact that she thinks religion is the next taboo after feminism in her guest’s overwhelming profile. She positioned Saadawi as a controversy to religion and tried to steer the topic using her; or in other words using her women rights statements against her. It is easy for Kilani to attack Saadawi based on religiosity as such attacks are rooted in popular culture and traditions and do not require a level of knowledge and intellect. While if she is to converse with her in matters of women rights she will have to familiarize with the Western and Middle Eastern philosophies that Saadawi used to reach her own opinions and claims. By stating that religion is the new controversy Kilani only escapes from the real controversies that are beyond her capacity as media personality. She also mentions that only “a state or two” are still behind in women rights, which allegedly means the rest of the Middle East achieved full emancipation of women.

From her side Nawal Saadawi expressed her anger from Arab satellite channels vividly. She said “These mediums are ugly they use you and abuse you just to raise viewership” (Interview with the author, London 2011). She met me with the same type of anger saying

“I have enough from being misinterpreted....did you read all my books? Go read all my books and do your PhD about them; then I will answer your questions. I am not interested to answer anything related to women rights. I don’t even believe in women rights; it is a myth.” (Ibid)

¹²⁷Ibid

¹²⁸Ibid

When, I switched the topic to media not women rights she then started to talk after asking two questions. The first question was about my nationality and the second about if I live alone in London and if I like it. As I answered positively to all these, she stopped frowning then stated “Ahhh! Great! Now I will help you, you can ask me anything”. It seems that being a Moroccan who lives alone and enjoy it is a token to talk to Saadawi who, at her age, had enough of being questioned. She needed to tray me from the kind of people who get interested in her to trash her way of thinking and challenge it religiously; living alone and enjoying meant I am not the type of religious conservatives or women seeking men. I then seized the opportunity to ask her about Wafaa Kilani saying “How was your interview with Wafaa Kilani on *Bidūn Raqābah?*” Before I finished the question she interrupted saying “This Wafaa Kilani is a donkey. She is so stupid; all these satellite channels are stupid. They use you and they do not even pay you properly to bare their stupidity. She is stupid, write that; donkey” (interview with the author, London 2012). I tried to get her to elaborate on that but she did not want to hear a word about Kilani.

In this case study the topic of women rights was depoliticized and tabloid-ized thus became a backlash. No woman rights discourse can raise from such discussions instead only anger among those who are already readers of Al Saadawi and who criticized the show on social media networks pointing to Kilani’s limitations and those who take Kilani’s position and question why such a “crazy” woman would be let on television. The rest, including newspapers, chew on the demonized old woman that Kilani blamed for disrespecting religion while applauding Kilani’s “media” skills for exposing a “heretic/enemy of Islam” as if Kilani is the representative of Islam.

I- Case #2. A “feminist approach” to women rights by the male director of Al Resalah TV

Program: *Allamatni Al-Ḥayat* (Life Has Thought Me)

Channel: Al Resalah TV

Presenter: director Dr. Tariq AL Suwaidan

Topic: *Al Nissa’e* (Women)

First airtime: 21 Oct 2009

1- Case Relevance:

The title of the show, *Allamatni Al-Ḥayat*, highlights the authority of its star. Only individuals with significant experiences and status share their lessons from life; this even magnifies when the individual is a religious authority. The title of the show is a statement of

excellence indeed. Dr. Al Suwaidan shared his way of thinking as a developed code of morality that tries to alter an authoritative misinterpreted conception of Islam; an approach shared with the Islamist feminists. As highlighted in chapter four Dr. Al Suwaidan, Director of Al Resalah TV, received his dismissal letter by Prince Al Waleed via a tweet. Being a member of the Muslim brotherhood made the Prince make a show of him post the Arab Spring because of his views against the military coup that deposited elected president Mursi of Egypt. He told al Jazeera

God is my witness, the Prince is a witness as well as everyone else; I did not use Al Resalah TV for the benefit of the brotherhood or any other sect or party. And I did not eliminate anyone and everyone knows this. (2013)

Prior to his expulsion, Al Suwaidan indeed received praise from the Prince for his moderate and progressive stance on a number of political and religious issues. He presented a number of one man shows and was guest in others even on rival MBC. The grid of Al Resalah programs attached to this research shows how Al Suwaidan and only few other religious celebrities such as Ahmad Al Shugairi and Amr Khaled had their shows repeated more than once a day. Al Suwaidan run a daily show and changed titles or topics seasonally but he keeps the same approach, and preaching style as shall be analysed here. In the episode examined here he is talking with authority claiming he will correct the misconceptions regarding women rights especially that his channel is pro women development and emancipation as was stated in the mission statement before. Today the mission statement switched from targeting youth and women to targeting the “Arab family”.

During the field work in Egypt I sought to speak to a women rights activist religious figure who is veiled in black and wears gloves all the time; a religious face par excellence. Malak Azrara is a lawyer, TV personality, Shari‘a and civil law expert, specialized in family matters. She said

Ask Al Suwaidan why he would not invite me on his channel. I am not welcome by religious channels or women rights NGOs; including the ones run by Suzane Mubarak. These channels pretend to talk for women rights but not only they lack the expertise to do so but they commercialize the topic in a way that harms women. No one dares to speak about the real issues that women suffer from in these Arab countries. It is enough to walk in any court to witness all sort of injustices institutionalised since the law of Hamorabi. The problem of most religious channels is that the personalities who go up on air to speak about a matter that concerns Muslims speak without prior study or expert knowledge. Specialisation is a big issue. You cannot be a general doctor and do a heart or brain

surgeries the same way you cannot be a school teacher, lawyer or an amateur and preach in matters of the family religiously. In religion we have specialties and in-depth studies are required before a person is qualified to preach on legal and justice matters. What is happening now is ridiculous. Al Resalah would never invite me because I am an expert in Shari'a, civil law and believe in women rights. (Interview with the author, Egypt 2009)

2- **CDA What life has taught Dr. Tarik Suwaidan about women – ‘Allamatne Alḥayat: Regulating *being* woman:**

The show opens with a poem; not a verse of the Quran or any religious text as usual. The poem produced by Ibrahim Hafez (1872-1932) nicknamed the “poet of the Nile” (*Sha'ir Al-Nīl*). This poem is one of the most referenced poems in schools and televisions especially.

“A mother is a school. Empower her; and you empower a great nation.” –
Hafez Ibrahim

Dr. Suwaidan recites the poem before he opens his show showing a progressive approach in linking with Arab literature; in this case Hafez who is known along Qassim Amine's approach on women emancipation by the focus on motherhood and education. Hafez marks the first wave of feminism in the 19th century thus opening a religious show with his poetry is ground breaking even if women rights are beyond motherhood and education today. Suwaidan recited interesting verses including

“Your women are not jewels and ornaments for fear of loss you hide them in the mountains of sand; nor are they a furniture you acquire and shelve in the house; Time is shaped by their role in society and their loyalty is solid unchangeably”.
– Hafez Ibrahim

One of the most repeated sentences in most religious talk shows is that women are pearls and jewels. The exclamation “how can one let their precious jewels open for the public eye!” or the question “If you have jewels will you let them out without protection? Wouldn't you lock them a safe?” The problem is these popular iterations is not only that they objectify women but they resonate among them as *Ghazal*; many feel special and believe these statements literally. Starting with this poem Al Suwaidan distinguishes himself from the other religious shows and promises an Islamist feminist reading of women rights. Al Suwaidan then opened his show as follow:

Dr. Suwaidan: Peace, mercy and blessings of God, Welcome and hello to "What Life Has Taught Me", today's lesson is about women. The usual talk about women is around how she is the half of society and focus on the role she plays in it, but we will go beyond this talk to get into some of the basic concepts and ideas that will help to change the Arab

mentality to push for improvements in the participation of women and their role in society. We will talk in particular about the way certain people understand the Shari'a law's conceptualization that limits the role of women; certainly a serious issue. The subject of women needs a full program to talk about it; not one episode, but I chose some of the most important concepts that I would like to share with you, in "What Life Has Taught Me"

The introduction gives a promise to clarify misconceptions about women via a "lesson" so the audience are disciples sitting in the chair of learning. Erroneous *hadiths* and understandings of religion are dangerous and alerting. A Muslim audience who is keen to follow such shows will certainly sit and listen to save themselves from wrong doing. However, Dr. Al Suwaidan has to provide some serious evidence and warnings to achieve consensus among his diverse followers. Changing habits and misconceptions among the audience as promised across the heterogeneous population of the Middle East cannot happen if this audience is not predisposed and to change such understandings and attitudes. In this excerpt Al Suwaidan limited the misconception of Shari'a to "certain people" and promised to correct the wrong of these people. Not only it is not clear who are these people, but Al Suwaidan will also pick the most important issues about women rights which means leaving behind what is less important from his perspective. The following quote highlights some of the arguments used to achieve a change in perspective and highlight the most important issues regarding women rights. In a long monologue he said

Dr. Al Suwaidan: And let me begin with a series of conversations that are unfortunately still used by people. And I would love to comment on them. There is a certain *hadith* (prophets saying) that some people repeat and you can find it in some books which say "do not teach them (females) how to write" Oh my! Or another *hadith* that they ascribe to the Prophet "consult them, but go against what they advise,"- ask for her opinion and do the opposite of what she says; Oh my! These *hadiths* are all weak and added (fake), as Sheikh Nasser Al-Albani cited in his book series of added and weak *hadith*. These are just talk not religious *hadiths*. The right is that the Prophet (PBUH), said, 'women are the twin halves of men'. A *sheq* (Arabic for half) is a half and each half completes the other. When we split something in two we have two halves, they don't resemble each other but they complete each other. The prophet says: 'Women are the twin halves of men, only a generous man will treat them with generosity and only a lame one will insult them', narrated by Imam Ahmad. The prophet (PBUH) says also, 'The best is best to his family, and I'm the best for mine' narrated by Ibn Majah. He also says (PBUH) 'Treat women kindly, they are like captives in your hands.' Women often, but not always, are captive in their husband's house; controlled by him. The prophet (PBUH) said 'You have rights over your wives and they have their rights over you.' narrated by Imam *Altarmidhi*. Thus the correct *hadiths* are the ones referring to honoring women, and the support they give to men and that they have rights and obligations. This integration (*takamol*) is what helps build the Islamic civilization and the understanding of the great Islamic concept.

Al Suwaidan tried to correct some misconceptions listing erroneous hadiths stating that women are the other *sheq* (half) of man. Indeed this might be a better position than “consult them then do against what they say”; however, no religious show would dare state that a woman is a complete, whole independent from the being of men. When a man says that a woman is his other half this is usually seen as an act of charity and humbleness from his behalf; the powerful embracing the powerless. The discourse of women rights must accept that a woman is a full individual not a half of another already complete male self. Suwaidan, ironically, dismissed the end of the hadith about women being captives in men’s households to argue that religion gives full rights and value women. He tried to show that the prophet meant that only few women are captives so those who are in such situation should at least be treated well. However, the rest of the *hadith* says otherwise.

Amr bin Al-Ahwas Al-Jushami (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that he had heard the Prophet (PBUH) saying on his Farewell Pilgrimage, after praising and glorifying Allah and admonishing people, "treat women kindly, they are like captives in your hands; you do not owe anything else from them. In case they are guilty of open indecency, then do not share their beds and beat them lightly but if they return to obedience, do not have recourse to anything else against them. You have rights over your wives and they have their rights over you. Your right is that they shall not permit anyone you dislike to enter your home, and their right is that you should treat them well in the matter of food and clothing. – Al-Tirmidhi, *hadith* number 276.

Speaking about erroneous hadiths is an attempt to show Islam’s respect for women but then concealing the ‘beating punishment’ awarded to men is an act of ruse by Al Suwaidan. The *hadith* not only advise beating but speaks about women who lived in a different time as fully dependent on their husbands if they were not wealthy enough to support themselves. The prophet’s hadiths must be taken in their entirety, yet being on television not even Al Suwaidan can state these *hadiths* are out of date and shall be dismissed in the modern time as the Islamist feminists do. It is much easier to write such arguments than state them in a talk show. Dismissing the punishment part that has no equal advice for women in case their husbands transgress and defining them as the guardians of their husbands’ houses deserving food and good clothing is a discourse that might be progressive for women in Arabia at the time of the prophet as Wadud (2006) or Barlas (2009) would want to read it but it is in no way disappearing today; why would it? Holding to these hadiths and seeking new interpretations to such texts is a waste of time and energy in a time where women feed and clothe themselves and men are more likely

to bring other women to the household than women. Religious men shy away from addressing these issues when they try and argue for a special emancipating discourse within Islam thus their privileged positions remain unshaken and validated thanks to religious texts. The purpose is to stress the sacredness of a text that needs massive efforts translating it into equalizing regulations when it is not. If one group adheres to such interpretations others remain literal to the text and no one can blame them; in fact most ruling Islamic doctrines today are literal to the text not apologetic or defensive looking for frantic re-interpretations.

The discourse of women rights is always linked to the West even in religious channels that claim to be moderate and emancipating. Suwaidan takes an interesting approach in the following excerpt.

Dr. Suwaidan: The subject of woman rights is not only the issue of the Arab world; in the whole world women are mistreated. This world is the world of macho men. The United States did statistics on salaries. It took two samples that are equal in number and efficiency, which means men and women who are at the same level, the same number, the same grades and diplomas, the same experiences, the same tasks, and found that 71% of women have an average yearly salary below that of men's. Even in the West, the woman is "*Mazluma*" (subject to unfairness). In The United States, the percentage of women who have reached the ranks of leadership – here I'm talking about a minister position, a member of the congress, president of a company or president of a bank, you know what I mean? – They didn't reach 10%; less than 5% did not arrive to 1% the ratio is 0.5%. Women are generally facing unfairness in the world. Of course, is this because of them or because of men? We will talk about that by the end of the show. But let me give you this statistic, out of 555 Nobel Prize given since 1898 until 2000, women only got 11 Awards; from 555. This has nothing to do with Islam; this issue is in the West too. Women live in a man's world, facing a lot of problems and many challenges.

Al Suwaidan attempts here to turn the table of women rights abuse on the West. Needless to say that such inclusion of the West should not be necessary when discussing women in Islam but if this proves anything it shows that the West is continuously perceived as this big "Other" that exercises a power internalized by the Middle Eastern thinkers' defensive arguments. The use of statistics here is trivial, not only because the West does not claim perfectness when it comes to women rights and is constantly lobbying for more rights acknowledging its own pitfalls, but because such statistics are useless in the Middle East. Feminism in the Middle East faced a backlash since its first wave that championed education and the right to work since the 19th century. Today, women not only struggle for education forming one of the highest demographics when it comes to illiteracy but moving forward towards more rights is hindered by

this embodied illiteracy that has no roots in religion and is certainly bypassed by this West that Al Suwaidan contrasts. So if he wants to compare a West to the Middle East he should start with the basics. Women in the Middle East, certainly, cannot compete in the job market if they are still facing illiteracy; they can only survive as dependents. The comparison here alienates and does not serve the talk about women rights in the region but puts the region in an equal status with the West in this regard in defense of Islam rather than women.

After equalizing between the Western woman and the Middle Eastern one and between the Western patriarchy and that of the Middle East biasedly Dr. Al Suwaidan moves to define the super powers of the Arab woman that he calls skills of leadership.

Dr. Suwaidan: Let's talk about women in leadership roles. Unlike men who can only focus on one task, a woman can multitask and focus on many things at the same time. She has an extraordinary ability to allocate her time and divide it between many matters, especially when it comes to her family. So you can see her working at home, talking on the phone, and paying attention to her son. I mean, *Subhan Allah* (God is Glorious) the woman is really incredible. In another study, they showed how the woman can be cooking in the kitchen, while talking on the phone, and paying attention to her son who is talking on the phone too. And the man does not have this capacity. This is only specific to women. Also, leading men in business tend to develop a large network of connections. Women, on the other hand, have the ability to develop these connections inside and outside the organization (where they work). So this is one of her attributes (the fact that she is sociable).

The quote above tried to show women's superiority in the kitchen, use of phone and watching children as a leadership sign. Such statements that pretend to define women categories into a specific social creature whereby evolution made each one of them cook, talk on the phone and keep an eye on the child at the same time just by virtue of being woman are indeed problematic and discriminatory. Certainly, not every woman can do that and not every man is bypassed by such marvelous capacities as presented by Suwaidan. Men too can cook and talk on the phone keeping an eye on the child if they have to or want to. Saying they cannot should be translated to "they do not want to?" Such discourse is a discourse of violence against the true value of woman as a human being. Adopting a women rights coat it re-initiates the very reason women were kept subject to serious human rights abuse. Embellishing inequality and lack of opportunity as a skill or leadership attribute using children and family as a token is one of the serious discourses that keep women judged and regulated within the institution of marriage with man at the absolute and woman as 'Other' in De Beauvoir's sense to date. Selling such ideas to women who follow the

show make them feel superior and special based on these specific chores and thus they, themselves, reproduce such rhetoric and internalize them and using them against the females they raise.

Suwaidan goes on defining the value of women and stressing their worth. He goes outside the kitchen and speaks about their rights and worth in society as follow

Dr. Suwaidan: I am talking about the woman as an active contributor in building the civilization. We are a nation that lagged behind, and thanks to God our nation is starting to get up on its foot again. What I learned and will never forget is what Dr. Hassan Hathout, may he rest in peace, said: “A civilization cannot be built on a guy who jumps on one foot, you need both feet to build a civilization. Without women, we can’t build a civilization”. I personally say more than this. Who will build the Islamic civilization? The current generation is not going to build anything; it is the next one that will, if you raise it well. And who will educate this generation? It is women who will take upon this role. So when we take care of the woman, we don’t just take care of half the society, but of the next generation that she is to be raised. So the woman has more than a leadership role in building the civilization and rebirth of our society.

From this quote Suwaidan takes the value of women beyond the kitchen work and acknowledge their role in building a civilization outside the household yet by placing it back inside it. This discourse is not new it. It started at the end of the 19th century via the work of Mohammad Abduh, Riffa Al Tahtawi, Rashid Redah, and Qassim Amine etc. The fact that it is still repeated today testifies for an attempt to return from a regression or a backlash that stripped women from an established right of education and work during the Islamic wave of the 1990s. Preparing children who will build civilization, especially an ‘Islamic one’, is sought as the dignified and glorious role of women in the Middle East but hardly anything is done to prepare them for such an ostentatious role. Such discourse is but a counter argument to women rights in their universal form. In reality, it does not only keep women in the household while adding more value to it to lure them into staying in the domestic space, but limits women to this role only. This is not only a gender bias whereby men do not need such definitions at all, but expecting that every woman will be wed to have an offspring that she raise up to build a civilization if she is to have a meaningful *being* is another act of violence within this Islamist discourse.

Al Suwaidan is talking to fellow men in the studio, without a single woman around. He is talking from a position of power and showing a gender division whereby the use of “we” in the following quote only creates more gender biases. “So when **we** take care of the woman, **we** don’t just take care of half of society, but **we** take care of the next generation that she is to raise.” By

‘we’ here he means ‘we men’; bestowing a role on women that these men regulate or in his words “take care of”. Thus if we follow the logic of this rhetoric, a woman is expected to raise a generation that builds a civilization but it is still rational that she depends on such a generation to regulate her in the public sphere. The discourse out of this show has no place for women outside the household despite the fact that it is taking a progressive/different stance bestowing a level of equality on women as a sign of the Islamic gender balance. It defends Islam not women and answers the West’s challenges not the Middle Eastern women necessitates.

While the show has been about women not a single female was present in the audience to discuss their own right and *being*. Thus Al Suwaidan and his male audience took care of this task presenting it to the entire Middle East as a progressive, educational conversation. After all, if women are supposed to be sought after by men of course talking on their behalf in the public sphere is a “generous act” of these “caring/moderate” men. There is no information about the background of the males present at the studio to understand why they are qualified to talk about women and their role in society except from the apparent fact that they are men. The apparent qualification of these men is that they are potential husbands who have the responsibility of taking a woman on-board to build a civilization. Thus they are learning from Al Suwaidan about the “misconceptions” of how to treat and value a woman for the sake of the Islamic civilization. Male guardianship in this show is dressed up with an Islamist feminist approach that returns to square zero by the mere fact that no woman is present to converse with these males.

After the long monologue Al Suwaidan turned to this his male audience to further discuss women’s matters. The following is an excerpt from their interventions:

Member of the Audience 1: there is no doubt that Islam valued women as a whole and guaranteed her rights in all spheres of life. However, the issue or rather God’s mercy on women lies in the way He created them. Women use their emotions more than their mind when it comes to decisions, unlike men who use reason and logic. So personally I think that women should focus on their family, raise generations and should let men carry out life.

Dr. Suwaidan: You see that the role of women is limited to staying at home raising children, letting men build society and civilization... I don’t think you will find a woman that will accept to marry you.

The statement by this member of the audience is mocked in light sarcasm without highlighting the irrationality of his claims. Al Suwaidan chose to highlight that no woman will accept a limiting belief about her tasks and duties and stopped there; without stressing the right and

wrong as taken by his authority since the beginning of the show. The old time idea that women are emotional and less productive because of their period, pregnancy and all the mood swings that accompany ovulation or any hormonal processes is never challenged by the equal opposite of men's more frequent sexual arousal and sperm production. In contrast men are protected by requiring from women to cover not to avoid such arousals in the public space. This has never proven to be a successful measure since the dawn of Islam. Men are still sexually aroused in the most covered countries of the Middle East and segregation only worsens their state. If women have fixed periods during the month where their hormones might cause mood swings men encounter these mood swings daily. The other alarming point is that women are delegated to raise the children as if the fathers have much more important issues to tackle outside the house. In all circumstances there is no equality in parenting while children certainly need both parents in the household not only a woman. More than that women are already out in the job market. It is not clear if this a call for them to go back to the household and be fully independent on men. What will happen to women who have no husbands? Al Suwaidan's answer is certainly not doing justice to women but rather biased and lacks seriousness. This is not even a progressive talk that open rooms for more critics but a regulating one that is old and consumed intellectually yet new in the talk show space.

Further audience interventions highlight some key issues that are met with almost the same reaction.

- 1- **Member of the Audience 2:** Women play an important role in life, leadership roles as well. However, their role as leaders in the society is limited because of four factors. The first is a societal one because both Muslim and non-Muslim societies are patriarchal so men are the symbol...
- 2- **Dr. Suwaidan** (interrupting): societies are controlled and dominated by men. In short, the whole world is masculine.
- 3- **Member of the Audience 2:** The second point deals with the nature of Muslim societies. Islam as a religion is wrongly understood.
- 4- **Dr. Suwaidan:** This is correct. This is a fundamental factor in Muslim societies. They used Islam wrongly to chain women and give them this image.
- 5- **Member of the Audience 3:** The third point concerns the woman herself, who does not understand her real role in life, apart from her social role in the family
- 6- **Dr. Suwaidan:** Indeed. The woman accepted this understanding and busied herself with this role. The real problem of women is women.
- 7- **Member of the Audience 4:** The last point concerns the history and who writes it. Most if not all history is written by men and hence has this masculine feature of it. That is why men dominate in international and Islamic history.

This interaction between the young man in the audience and that of Al Suwaidan reintiates the main arguments of the Islamist feminist school. It recognizes some important facts but states them as opinions and does not further discuss them so they lack clarity; they even contradict the lecture of Al Suwaidan. It seems that what is constant is the defense of Islam, of men, the blame of women and comparison to the West. The statements of opinions here come as an expression of sympathy and understanding but without challenging the patriarchal ideas in the talk space or showing if they are endorsed or objected. The men saying these iterations, while confirmed by Al Suwaidan, expose a modern/educated image of men based on understating the world as a male dominated place yet they state this as fact not a wrong or a right state. They also defend religion from what has become of women historically and blame women for the inability to take other roles in society except the social ones. It is like saying “we have power; we wrote history so it is only normal that it is written with masculine narratives women are incapable of taking these roles because they are their own problem”. The West is constantly used as a reference negatively. “Not only the Middle East is masculine but so is the West” kind of statements are absurd because Arab women suffer from the Middle Eastern masculinity not that of the West. If the West is always perceived negatively in religious channels it is hypocritical to use it as a reference in support of a state in the Middle East when convenient and suitable for the interest of its powers. After all, if the West is indeed patriarchal by the logic of things the Middle East should be different not proud to be similar.

Conclusion:

The ideas raised in this chapter based on two key case studies from Al Waleed’s Media Empire point to four distinct conclusions. First in the case of Wafaa Kilani and *Bidun Raqabah* where a supposedly charismatic female presenter hosted leading feminist Nawal Al Saadawi the show turned to ad-absurdum where the intellect of Saadawi suffered from the gossip and sensual format mastered by Kilani. What could have been a strong and critical debate turned into an attempt to create a show by demonizing a women rights novelist. The host used Islamic values to attack her guest while Kilani herself does not expose any capital of it. Being unveiled, pretty, charismatic and successful gives Kilani the fake image of the modern, liberated woman; especially that she married out of her faith. However, her discourse as a cultural agent is

problematic at all levels; she exposes an Islamic capital in her discourse that contradicts her own acts. Saadawi on the other hand highlighted some very important ideas in the discourse of women rights and patriarchy; including sexualizing the female's body and regulating it discriminately. She tried to de-territorialize the discourse when Kilani tried to corner her in a West/East comparison and she pointed to the children as the continuous victims of discrimination against women.

In the case of Dr. Tariq Al Suwaidan and *'Allamatni Al-Ḥayat* the show promised to correct religious ideas in favor of women rights from an Islamist view. While this is a step forward from other religious shows *'Allamatni Al-Ḥayat* remained trapped in the Islamist feminism of the 19th century concerned with women rights within the family institution. Such discourse is not even close to the modern wave of feminism although this later is close to what Al Suwaidan is doing; defends Islam not women. *'Allamatni Al-Ḥayat* prides itself in recognizing and blaming patriarchy while the talk is happening in a studio full of men only. The real concern, seems to be to free religion from the blame of being patriarchal; a task shared by Asma Barlas (2009) and such feminist scholars who argue for cultural specificity but end up providing arguments for more religious control than freedoms. The show, indeed, adopted a different line compared to most religious shows in the region that put far more ridiculous and irrational restrictions on women than Al Suwaidan's *'Allamatni Al-Ḥayat*. Thus in a sense it is a progressive speech then dialogue; because even if the target is to defend Islam women still receive a space for talk. However, it is regressive too as it revisits old discourses in a defensive tone and avoid new ones by eliminating women for the space. Unfortunately without serious engagement with women's matters and the gut to tackle critical issues related to work, *being*, sexuality and all the freedoms such shows remain an exhibition of their owners' cultural hegemony. In contrast, by adopting modern wordings such as equality, rights, patriarchy, and worth the show pretends to initiate a discourse of change while it is re-initiating the same system of powers by flattening words of power using masculine tones and Islamic counterarguments. The purpose is to show an equality or even a superiority to the West, faking an image of modernism and high morality based on women as subjects.

Third, The West seems to be a big challenge or the big Other as it is quoted and referenced in biased defensive ways despite the fact that no Western individual is present in the

show or watches it. It is obvious that the discourse of women rights is perceived as western and that all these Arab women activists are perceived as brainwashed by the West. Countering Western arguments is a message sent to the Arab audience. Religious men seem to feel threatened by the development of ideas beyond their Islamic borders.

The two cases selected for this chapter are key to understand the different powers governing the current debate about women rights in the Middle East. While activists spent years trying to change the status of woman from the object of the household to a right holder and active member of civil society equal to men; modern media discourses takes these efforts to square zero; at least culturally. One, the caliber of the presenters employed in channels such as Rotana is based on good looks and charisma not intellect. Second the moderate religious personalities employed by the channel lack a modern rational and keep resonating based on a past that they call miss-interpreted and miss-quoted; a position borrowed from the Islamic feminism that emerged as a counter argument to international feminism.

Rotana Cinema:

Gender Rights & Creative Space of Possibilities

“The historical fact is that cinema was constituted as such by becoming narrative, by presenting a story, and by rejecting its other possible directions. The approximation which follows is that, from that point, the sequences of images and even each image, a single shot, are assimilated to propositions or rather oral utterances [...].”

— Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*

Prince Al-Waleed’s Media Empire established its label “Rotana” based on music and cinema. The Prince not only monopolized both industries but bought a well-established Pan Arab audience in the process. This research can only stand short in covering both industries and all cinema genres while searching for gender content. Since the Rotana Group strategically purchased the classical library of Egyptian cinema to dedicate it to Rotana Classic against austere Egyptian discontent perhaps it is worth looking at the significance of such library to the new Media Empire. Such cinema is overly popular at a Pan Arab scale to date and is famous for its rich gender narratives; thus a selection of case studies is apt to expose the weight of such medium within and beyond Al Waleed’s hands. Similarly, the inauguration of Rotana Cinema was a revolutionary step since it played premieres of new movies in exclusives jeopardizing Egyptian cinema houses and engraving the name Rotana label distinctively. Thus, a selection of films financed by Rotana and a highlight of key movies that marked a shift in gender related laws or cultural conceptions not only help to understand the value of Arab cinema within Al Waleed’s empire but reveals sides of its power in the Middle East too. Using triangulation, this chapter looks at these acquisitions and analyses a selection of movies as a space of gender narratives to explain Al Waleed’s introduction of the first Saudi movies with women rights content and broadcast movies with homo-narrative scenes without censorship. To understand the political economy of cinema acquisition in Al Waleed’s Media Empire this chapter uses online archive research and the fieldwork in Egypt (2009) where the deputy head of the Rotana group, the planning and schedule manager, and key film directors who worked with Rotana were interviewed. At the same time, the chapter looks at gender narratives in a corpus of Arabic movies revisiting the approach to Arabic movies and their significance in creating or changing a

culture of gender rights. It looks at cinema as a “creative act” as a different approach from Shafik’s (2003) realist analysis and Abu Lughod’s politics of knowledge and representation (2008). For this purpose the semiotics and critics of Barthes (1970), Shlovsky (1970, 1981), Strauss (1949), Todorov (1939), Propp (1928) and the philosophy of Deluze (1985, 1986) were appropriated as a methodology that helps read the power of movies as creative entertainment mediums not a real depiction of the everyday life. The chapter reads the image and time movement of women stories as well as the plots of homosexuality taking into consideration that the screen is the canvas of the director and the writer as executed by the artists and commercialized by media firms. The story might seem realist since it uses images from the everyday but the narratives and plots turn it into a simulation and a possibility rather than “a reality”. It seems that it is the creation of such possibilities based on alterity that gives cinema its power. Focusing on the short, sometimes concealed plots and scenes in movies that addressed homosexuality, this chapter re-reads the homo-narratives in Arab Cinema outside of the homo-politics advanced by Gary Meniccuci (1998) and developed forward. At the same time, looking into the Saudi movies produced by the Rotana group and placed with the scheduled Egyptian movies causing the re-opening of cinema houses in Saudi Arabia this chapter highlights the significance of cinema as a liminal space for gender rights and a tool in Al Waleed’s grand hegemonic project. The chapter exposes the medium focusing on gender rights while placing it within its specific political economy to fathom its powers in creating cultural shifts towards a gender rights culture or a gender ‘wrongs’ one.

I- Cinema monopoly within the Rotana Media Group: The classical library

1- Relevance and Importance:

Cinema found its way to the Middle East as early as the end of the 19th century; soon after Lumière Brothers launched their first attempts in filmmaking (1895). Storytelling, however, is well rooted in the Middle Eastern culture for innumerable centuries.¹²⁹ The imaginations created thanks to old stories constitute a strong base for the modern popular culture and the everyday rationale in the region. No scientific method was able to depict the memory of images that humans built and upheld based on narratives and depending on habitus in the Middle East.

¹²⁹ Within the oral tradition of Saudi Arabia, even the revelations of religion took a form of stories and remained so after the subsequent writing of the Quran to date. Most stories that narrate the life and miracles of prophets make a completely different sense when translated into movies (a narrative analysis of these movies will prove useful to understanding cinema as a different genre of feeding imaginations and shaping rationales).

While we are short of understanding the power of images and imaginations built thanks to cinema in the Middle East, it seems that new imaginations evolved thanks to the development of all form of transnational communications and narratives creating a new ‘Glocal culture’. Such a ‘Glocal’ culture as developed in the work of Bhabha (1995) and Appadurai (1989, 1996, 2001), takes and resists content according to its own taste, needs and desires beyond Stuart Hall’s and Adorno and Horkheimer’s determinations. Content might be produced with specific intentions, but its meanings depend on the imaginations, interests, taste, and rationale of heterogeneous Arab audiences in a much more autonomous way than argued by conspiracy or determination theorists. To look at the culture of gender rights and wrongs in Arabic cinema is to look at the politics of possibilities that such medium opens within culture not universal and predefined gender rights content.

Although a movie uses images of real people, events, objects, and places, the story itself depends on plots in a surreal time and a creative camera-movement, which manufactures causes and effects not to close meanings but to keep them open. Reading and classifying movies within the school of realism was a good exercise in Shafik’s (2007) work whereby she analyzed most movies of the golden period. Looking from a realist window alone, however, strips the genre as a piece of art from its creative-act and adds to it subjective political values that are not necessarily true or wrong. Perhaps, studying the different narratives in movie genres as creative-acts that open a door for possibilities can reveal a different side to what constitutes popular culture in the Middle East.

2- Al Waleed’s cinematic acquisitions: another maximization of power

As argued in chapter four Al Waleed deploys every strategy and effort to maximize power for his own ends. In the cinema industry too, after launching Rotana as a music company monopolizing the industry by signing most of the Arab singers to the Rotana label the Prince acquired 70% of the Egyptian library of cinema from the Golden Period steering austere critiques. The deal was secret until an EFG Hermes¹³⁰ statement announced that the company “sold its shares for LE 15 million (about \$2.3 million) thus enduring a loss of LE 41 million (about \$6.4 million) as it had bought the movies in 2001 for LE 56 million”¹³¹. In March 2004,

¹³⁰ EFG Hermes is one of the leading Investment banks and Market analysis in the MENA region offering banking services to retail and institutional clients. It is the backing firm of Founoon

¹³¹ Shahine, A., (2004). Acquiring Egypt's movie heritage. Al Jazeera: Cairo. [Online] 24 May 2004. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/05/2008410132117461767.html> Last accessed 12 June 2012

Rotana bought 800 negatives of classic movies dating as back as 1935 from Founoon Film Distribution.¹³² Founoon, and its primary backer EFG Hermes, stirred a controversy when they first bought the negatives of the movies in 2001; then steered another controversy when they decided to sell them to a Saudi Prince. The concern back then was that “private sector ownership of such material would put the nation’s cinematic heritage in jeopardy, especially if Founoon decided to sell the movies to foreign investors.”¹³³ The fact that the second owner of a large share of Egyptian movies is the ART media group owner who is the Saudi Sheikh Salah Kamel created a heated debate against and resistance to what became known as Saudi hegemony of creative cinematic art in Egypt. Sheikh Kamel censored most romantic scenes that developed to a kiss or more in his own cinema library. For \$50000 he bought off the market the negative of the movie ‘Amasha Fi Al Adghal (Amasha in the Jungle - 1962) where his Egyptian wife Safaa Abu Al Saud appears repeatedly in a swimsuit.¹³⁴ Such actions prompted journalists to warn against Al Waleed’s danger to the Egyptian cinema industry and its heritage.

This Saudi Monopoly angered the Egyptian press but split public opinion between supporters and opponents of Al Waleed’s acquisitions. His partnership with Murdoch specifically resulted in hostile reactions in different newspapers where journalists spoke about an Israeli plot against Egypt and its popular culture in partnership with Saudi elites¹³⁵. One of the leading movie critics, Ahmed Yussef, told Al Jazeera that Al Waleed did not just buy movies but bought the possibility to “prevent ordinary Egyptians who cannot afford access to satellite channels - about 80% of the population - from watching Ismail Yasin¹³⁶ again should Rotana decide to limit the airing of such movies to its own channel.” He stressed that “any country should have copies of its own cinematic heritage...You cannot just sell the only copies you own for these movies.”¹³⁷

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Shahine A. (2004b). Saudi Billionaire Buys Films, Stirs Controversy. American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt. [Online]

http://www.amcham.org.eg/resources_publications/publications/business_monthly/issue.asp?sec=17&subsec=Saudi+billionaire+buys+films,+stirs+controversy&im=5&iy=2004 last accessed 12 June 2012

¹³⁴ Hamdi M. (2010). The Way the Cultural Heritage of Egypt Ended up in the Hands of the Jew Murdoch: Selling the Egyptian Memory to the Sheikhs of the Gulf and their Partners. [Online]

<http://www.dar.akhbarelyom.com/issuse/detailze.asp?mag=akh&akhbarelyom=&field=news&id=31618> last accessed 12 June 2012

¹³⁵ Hamdi M. (2010). The Way the Cultural Heritage of Egypt Ended up in the Hands of the Jew Murdoch: Selling the Egyptian Memory to the Sheikhs of the Gulf and their Partners. [Online]

<http://www.dar.akhbarelyom.com/issuse/detailze.asp?mag=akh&akhbarelyom=&field=news&id=31618> last accessed 12 June 2012

¹³⁶ The leading comedy star of the black and white cinema

¹³⁷ Ibid

The main concern of these critics is that Egypt has no anti-monopoly laws. Worst, an anti-monopoly law draft is reportedly set to be passed by the parliament in vain. For Yussef, if the draft ever passes, “it will not feature an article covering arts and if it does it will be retroactive.”¹³⁸ Actor and main film producer Sami al-Adl stressed that Rotana will not and cannot control the market. He said,

“We won’t allow anybody, whether Prince Al Waleed or anyone else, to monopolize the market. We know that he came into the market as a distributor of our movies and that we welcomed him because the Egyptian cinema has been depending on foreign distributors for a long time.”¹³⁹

Positions like Yussef’s and Al Adl’s were opposed by those who believed that such acquisitions would help the cinema industry. The Egyptian government sold the copies to Fonoun, in the first place, to be relieved “from the expensive costs of maintaining and restoring the movies.”¹⁴⁰

Prince Al Waleed allocated a two million dollars fund to restore 1,650 films stating that his company will bring together “the best expertise and the latest technology from around the world in order to preserve them.” Turki Al Shabanah, President of Rotana’s TV Business Unit, added that “this project is of national importance for Egypt.”¹⁴¹ The costly restoration project started by Founoun in 2004 to recover movies damaged overtime because of their storage conditions when they were in the hands of the Egyptian government. Rotana carried on the process by June of the same year over two phases; restoring 1000 movies first then 650. The company signed a contract with the leading Indian company Prasar insisting to bring the experts and the restoration equipment to Rotana in the Egyptian Media Production City.¹⁴² “It is the procedure followed across the world,” said Tarek Al-Gabali, the head of Rotana Film Library and its technical director. “The film prints don’t leave the country; restoration takes place in-house.” Figure (1) shows the before and after of the 1962 decayed print of *Imra’a Fi Dawwāma* (A Woman in a Spiral). Directed by Mahmoud Zolfakar and starring Shadia, Ahmed Ramzi, Layla Taher and Fouad al-Mohandes *Imra’a Fi Dawwāma* is a classic that plots the psychology,

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Shahine, A., (2004). Acquiring Egypt's movie heritage. Al Jazeera: Cairo. [Online] 24 May 2004. last accessed 12 June 2012 Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/05/2008410132117461767.html>

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Rotana uses Dft’s Scanity to Restore Egyptian Classics. <http://www.dft-film.com/news-releases/rotana.html>

¹⁴² Rotana uses Dft’s Scanity to Restore Egyptian Classics. <http://www.dft-film.com/news-releases/rotana.html>

social conditions, cultural constraints and tactics of a single mother who self-blame then self-sacrifice to be with her daughter.



Figure 1. Frames from *Imra'a Fi Dawwāma* (1962) before & after restoration

Acquiring the 20th century Egyptian films created a political debate indeed, but the economic value of the acquisition is uncertain since most of these movies are already available online for free. Although the costly restoration process will put new movies in the market they will soon circulate illegally as well. Al Gabali said “these types of projects are important in light of the media market’s demand for HD films for broadcast, digital discs and internet streaming.” He explained that Rotana would put few Blu-ray discs in the market, at the time, to see if people will buy them and probably consider a Netflix deal; none of these materialised to date. Against what the critics feared and unlike ART, Rotana had no intention to broadcast the movies based on subscriptions for a fee; the whole point of acquiring this specific library is to attract its pan Arab audience. With the launch of RotanaCinema.com website Andreas Roell, CEO of EGM Worldwide said

“It is our belief that Arabs from around the world should have the ability to connect not only with Rotana’s vast entertainment library but also with greatest ease to its heritage...We are extremely excited about this launch as we are showing footage that has never been available online.”¹⁴³

The website is not operating today but Rotana broadcasts teasers and advertising for movies on its official YouTube channels referring to the uplink code to tune into the specific television channel where the content is broadcasted.

3- Rotana Classic & the significance of the Black and White Golden Period:

Under the slogan, “*Jawaher Khalida*” (Immortal Jewels) Rotana Classic started using a set of advertisements that branded it as a pearl. Figure (2) shows an ad whereby a woman swims down into the ocean picks up a pearl and swims up to open it. The pearl shines and comes out into the middle of the screen with the letter R (for Rotana in Arabic) engraved in the kernel pearl then the slogan “*Jawaher Khalida*” appears underneath it. The slogan and the pearl highlight the glamour and excellence of Rotana as a company, but address a feminine audience too. The model’s shining dress, her hair floating inside the water, the pearl she brings, her sexy figure rising from the ocean flawlessly while seeking air gently are signs that speak to and of women. Such use of the female body in the Rotana space is what angers the conservative powers in Saudi Arabia who call for Al Waleed’s prosecution. Ironically, these conservatives sound in consensus with the logic of feminism that opposes objectifying women’s body for advertising despite the ideological difference between the two poles.

¹⁴³ Refaat, K., (2013) RotanaCinema.com Launches with Largest Free Arabic Movie Platform. [online] July 09, 2013. Available at <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20130708006337/en/RotanaCinema.com-Launches-Largest-Free-Arabic-Movie-Platform#.Uw3sXGKSx34>



Figure 2. Rotana Classic Advert: “Jawaher Khalida” – Immortal Jewels

The use of these women images around the Rotana Media Group is itself a narrative and discourse that causes shift and resistance in women images in the public space. Such approach is consistent and repeated across the channels starting from music to cinema, advertising and talk shows.

In the interview with the programs' scheduler, she confirmed that classical movies attract both men and women thus they are scheduled based on the time where each gender is likely to be watching. Rotana classic is highly watched thus it attracts advertisers constantly. She said all Rotana channels have a very large audience. Even for classical cinema "the target is the whole family not only women, but women are likely to be home in the morning and men as well as working women are targeted in the evenings. In the morning light romance movies are scheduled and the evening novel based and the best classics are aired." (Interview with author, Egypt, 2009)

II- Women Rights Narratives: rights, wrongs and possibilities

Following the Formalist and French schools of narrative analysis, this section analyses a selection of important movies that were directly linked to the discourse of women rights in the Middle East and played continuously by Rotana within a specific schedule. The first set of cases is from the black and white cinema purchased by Al Waleed. The second group of cases is focused on key movies accredited for changing women status in the Middle East. The last set is highlighting modern movies that were produced by Rotana and contain gender rights related plots. It seems that the black and white phase was heavily influenced by the thoughts of Qassim Amine (2000), Mohammad Abdu (Amir et al, 2012), and Huda Sharawi (Badran, 1988) whereby women rights related to education, work and even sexuality were addressed in different scenarios as should be exposed here. The modern productions on the other hand are heavily dependent on Saudi money and Saudi Pan Arab satellite televisions which affected content and thus women representation significantly. The new productions of Rotana combine old and new methods of narrating stories as produced in Egypt of the 1960s and with international techniques of using signs and symbols while focusing on women rights and religious extremism in Saudi Arabia intentionally.

1- Arabic classical movies: gender rights narratives that defy time to live in the imaginary

A- Case one on work: Comedy Genre - The Lawyer Fatimah - *Al-Ustadhah Fatimah* (1952):



Figure 3. Official poster of *Ustadha Fatimah* (1952)

- **The story line:**

Starring Faten Hamama and Kamal Al-Shennawi, the movie *Ustadhah Fatimah* (1952) is an Egyptian comedy genre directed by Fattin Abdel Wahab and written by Ali El Zorkani. Both Fattin and Faten presented content promoting women rights throughout their career. The movie characters¹⁴⁴ follow Propp's (1928) classical categorization; **female protagonist Fatimah**, **male**

¹⁴⁴ **Male Protagonist Adel:** Adel is not against women work when needed but over protective of his own fiancée. He represents the modern man of the fifties who is caring and loving but protective, modern yet holding to his cultural upbringings. He won his assistant's case against Fatimah's assistant to prove to her that she cannot win a case so that she accepts to stay home. He tried to win her consent by defying her, which made her more stubborn and committed to prove him wrong even at the expense of marrying him. He kept a soft attitude towards Fatimah all the way until the end she is the one who broke up with him each time he challenged her.

Fatimah's father: The character that Fattin used as a base for his comedy genre movie. An illiterate man who decided to beat his illiteracy that his neighbor uses against him in every argument.

protagonist Adel, Fatimah's father, Adel's Father, antagonist Kawthar, the victim who is Kawthar's husband, and the antagonist banker who is Kawthar's partner. Faten Hamama is a strong lead character accredited for overtaking the screen from her male counterparts. The story line of *Ustadhah Fatimah* is focused on the protagonist, Fatimah (Faten Hamama), who is a law graduate student with distinction. The movie follows Todorove's (1939) *Equilibrium*, *Disequilibrium*, and *New Equilibrium*. **The equilibrium** started with an opening shot introducing a young couple in love, about to finish university and thus getting closer to wedlock. The following plots introduced us to an existing competition/fight between the fathers of the protagonists in a comedy style while showing how the young couple transcended their parents' quarrel by falling in love and communicating via their rooms' windows. **The disequilibrium** escalated from the male protagonist's definition of a marriage union, which is not shared by the female protagonist. Fatimah's secret boyfriend and competitor Adel refuses the idea of his future wife working outside the household, spending her time in courthouses, under endless pressures, sexual harassment, and around criminals while she is not in financial hardship especially that he is ready to provide for her. This was fueled by Fatimah's father who wants to prove that his daughter's literacy and success outdo those of Adel's; the son of the man who bullies him using his illiteracy. This disequilibrium resulted in an egocentric competition and a light conflict presented in a humorous way. Then the scenario escalates the conflict by introducing a crime where the protagonist is innocently accused of killing his friend and client allegedly out of love for his wife Kawthar; as staged by this later.

The new equilibrium starts when Fatimah who was dead jealous from the antagonist Kawthar, whom Adel considered as a client only, accepted to defend Adel in court. While she feared to take the case not trusting her abilities Adel insisted that she takes his defense to save

Adel's Father: He teases Fatimah's father each time because he is educated while this later is not. He approves of Adel and Fatimah's relationship and irritates Fatimah's father teasing him in a calm and eloquent style showing the difference between literacy and illiteracy.

Antagonist Kawthar: She breaks the letter R while talking (a sign that she is upper class who studied French) and acts in an elitist way. She walks in a seductive manner and flirts while talking. She smocks and drinks, cheats on her husband with a banker and commits the crime of killing her husband as orchestrated by her secret lover.

Kawthar's Husband: He is introduced sitting on wheelchair thankful to his wife's years of sacrifice in taking care of him. He still decides to leave all his wealth to charities, leaving his wife the main house and a piece of land, which angers her after all the care she showed for him.

Banker: Introduced in mediums behind the banker's bars at the heart of a bank where he is surrounded by money but plans for the killing of Kawthar's husband to access his money.

Fatimah's father assistant: a big man with a rough look but a relatively innocent character.

Adel's assistant: A small size man with a kind look but slightly sly at the beginning.

him from capital punishment; although she lacks experience and lost the few cases she defended. She was forced to accept as no other lawyer saw a glimpse of light in winning what was carefully tailored as a crime of jealousy. Her father as well visited Adel's father to support him morally and financially as if the disagreements established through the previous narratives were never there. Fatimah eventually wins the case by the help of the fathers and their assistant as orchestrated by herself this time. Once acquitted, Adel is convinced of women's intellectual abilities and equality with men, and of their important role as active citizens in society. He gives his consent for her work and when she reaffirms that he agrees that women are fully capable of conducting any kind of jobs she rewards him by accepting to stay at home; a classical gesture that is not alienated today but encouraged.

Through her struggle as a female lawyer, the movie sheds light on the difficulties faced by working women in the Egyptian society within a light humorous love story; complicated by a crime scene. Some of the major struggles in the movie revolve around women's right to work, sexual harassment and the social mistrust in women's capacities in the job market. Shafik (2003) saw the fact that Fatemah is encouraged to study and work as part of a father plan to take revenge from his neighbor as not really empowering. In fact, the father encourages his daughter to defend Adil at the end and forgets his humorous quarrels with his neighbor and goes further to support him during his son's trial. In other words, as Shafik based her analysis on realism, it does not seem very realistic that an illiterate man from a poor neighborhood would encourage a daughter to study and engage in legal work based on feminist values; yet he still encouraged her. The way Fattin plotted such drive makes more sense to the audience then but at the same time his use of humor made the drive irrational, especially that at the end the daughter was trusted as the only one in Egypt capable of saving Adil's life by both fathers despite her failure at all cases and the social mistrust of her abilities.

- **From Story to Narrative conflict: Time Image**

Levi Strauss (1949) developed a binary opposition in identifying narratives. For him all narratives are caused by conflict and this conflict is imposed by opposing forces. The opposing forces in this movie are traditional and modernist, literate and illiterate, good and evil, shrewdness and naivety, men and women, loyalty and betrayal, jealousy and trust. The conflict in this movie started based on gender roles then escalated to a crime scene to re-establish a new equilibrium in the gender roles. Thus applying narrative analysis gives an open meaning to the

story that defies time. This probably explains the reason these movies are still loved and thus the reason they ended up in Al Waleed's hands.

To narrate his story Faṭṭīn used a number of symbols in this movie. They are all introduced in close ups to enhance the focus on their subtle meanings. The ones that are closely related to gender are Fatimah's big glasses, the comb left in her empty legal case folder, the less feminine lawyer's handbag, and the expensive bracelet that Adel bought for her after their first reconciliation trying to prove that he can provide for her perfectly well. The Chanel style of dressing adopted for the protagonist is considered more masculine than feminine back then while to the modern eye, it is considered of an extreme elegance not matched and missed in the Egyptian public sphere today. Fatimah accepts the diamond bracelet gifted to her by Adel happily at first but after the conversation quoted below with Kawthar, she throws the bracelet off her window and into Adel's room once she returns home from their night out. The bracelet is later taken to Adel's office. The crime weapon is an open letter knife with Adel's name engraved on it; which Fatimah gifted to him on his birthday although they were not on good terms. It was this gift that reconciled them and made Adel buy the bracelet. It is introduced as a symbol inferring that Fatimah gave the antagonist the way to seal her crime. The knife was with the bracelet on Adel's desk at his office as the camera introduced them to us while Kawthar visited him, noticed both symbols and stole the knife when Adel was hiding the bracelet away from her. In the way Fattin set up the two symbols together Kawthar was introduced as messing with the symbols of the protagonists' love discreetly. Adel protected what belonged to Fatimah while he did not anticipate that he is the one in danger.

Without reading these symbols, camera movements in most readings of the black and white cinema remain flat and stuck at the story level. The use of these symbols was delicate and staged smoothly. For example while Fatimah was in her night date with Adel for the first time at a casino she took off her glasses struggling to see the belly dancing but conforming to the image of women around her. She was pressurized by all the women in the place who are introduced as chic and without so much education to need glasses. She is presented as a strong personality and does stand up for her right to practice her profession but in a public space full of others and competition she shows small signs of vulnerabilities. A conversation about the glasses followed with the antagonist that made Fatimah further hide them. These glasses are used again as a **time image**. Breaking the glasses of Fatimah just before the trial while she was trying to look at

important documents in a decisive time created suspense as Adel might end up dead if she cannot read the documents quickly.

- **The Verbal Code:**

The language used throughout the movie is humorous. Mocking via humor is one of the strongest methods to open topics that cannot be addressed seriously without direct censorship. After the antagonist Kawthar invited herself to Fatimah and Adel's table in the casino bragging about how she booked the table for Adel while flirting with him in front of Fatimah, the following dialogue happened.

- **Dialogue: 1h39 min a plot about femininity:**

Kawthar: Oh, can you hear the tango music Adel? Do you want to dance?

Adel: Yes... I mean, Fatimah can't dance (realizing he said yes to Kawthar and remembering out loud that Fatimah cannot dance).

Kawthar: Really? You don't know how to dance!?! (In a demeaning tone)

Fatimah: (she shakes her head "no" with a demeaning look back)

Kawthar: You have to learn!

Fatimah: I don't have time

Kawthar: Why? Do you still go to school? (Using the term *Madrassa* which is pre- or primary school not university)

Kamal: No, no Fatimah graduated long time ago and she is working as a lawyer now (Trying to defend her)

Kawthar: Nooo! You must be kidding me Adel, she looks so young! And are you planning to work forever?

Fatimah: (she nods yes with the same demeaning look towards Kawthar)

Kawthar: I am against women's work

Fatimah: and why is that?

Kawthar: The woman who works loses her femininity and becomes like a man. I have a female friend who is a teacher. A hilarious story, first, she started wearing flat shoes and glasses (here Fatimah removes her glasses) then she started dressing up in a skirt, a shirt and a tie. And little by little, her voice started to sound like that of a man. And at the end, do you know what happened to her? She grew a moustache. Hahahahaha!

It is this movement from story to narratives based on these codes that make a movie a space of possibilities. An audience then engages with the story according to their understanding of the signs. Such light entertainment does not invite the audience to be feminist or activist but engages each viewer's imagination in a way that celebrates Fatimah and her success in proving herself right and keeping her love story against the antagonist's plans. These imaginations depend on the audience's desires but since Fatin Hamama and her movies are still loved to date

there is something in common in the classical library that makes it keep a large audience and thus gives it enough value to be monopolized by Al Waleed.

Many other movies addressed women's access to the job market in the Egyptian classic library. *My Wife, the Director General - Merati, Mudir 'Aam* (1966) for example came fourteen years after *Ustadha Fatimah* yet it highlighted a similar narrative under the same genre adding to it male insecurities when the balance of power - i.e. who has a higher position - changes in the household. As Fattin Abdel Wahab directs this movie as well, one might think that the director is repeating himself. Yet looking at other movies during the same period Fattin was not repeating himself but rather being persistent in presenting a genre that tackles an important issue in an artistic way that no other director copied. His use of the little symbols made these stories immortal. Fattin is not the only director who addressed women access to work in the classic phase of cinema. Other examples include *Lirejal Faqaṭ* "For Men Only" (1946), *Bint Al Basha Al Mudir* "Daughter of the Director Pasha" (1938) and *Bint El Akaber* "Daughter of Elites" (1953).

B- Case two on Freedom: I am Free-*Ana Hurra* (1958): plotting concepts of freedom and equality:

- **The Story Line**

"*Ana Hurra*" or "I am free" is an Egyptian movie that was based on a feminist theme during the 1960s. The movie is based on a masterpiece novel written by Ihssan Abdel Quddus and adapted for cinema by Nobel Prize laureate Najib Mahfuz. Filmed six years after the military coup and the revolution of 1952 in Egypt "*Ana Hurra*" was part of a series of films directed by Salah Abu Seif's with an overt political and cultural agenda to empower women. The film depicts the story of Amina (Lubna Abdel Aziz), a teenage girl with divorced parents who lives with her aunt and cousin in a society colonized by patriarchy. Amina rebels against the traditional role of women in the Egyptian society embodied in the character of her aunt; an uneducated and housebound mother who lives under the whims of her husband and reproduces the symbolic violence exercised on her by controlling Amina. As a result, Amina seeks her freedom in the small things of life; presenting herself as a rebellious character. Since she never finds satisfaction in her actions the movie becomes a journey where she grows and evolves looking for freedom and meanings. After fulfilling her dream of being free, emancipated, Western educated, she discovers that freedom means more than being a slave to a job that

controls her time and makes her dependent. As argued by Shafik (2003), Salah Abu Seif seems to be setting a political agenda for the new feminists of Egypt, whereby freedom is by no means limited to personal liberties and individual rights, it goes beyond to encompass the political rights and nationalist ideas of the new government put in place by the revolution. Looking closely at the way the narratives evolved is another proof that the creative act of a movie keeps it an open space of possibilities not a closed political idea; otherwise it will not survive as a classic for decades.

The movie starts with a **disequilibrium** introduced at the beginning via the main Protagonist Amina who is in a state of rebellion against the traditional and conservative Egyptian society that confines women in the role of the submissive housewife¹⁴⁵. The first scene opens with the feet of Amina dancing to Western piano music. A sound fadeout to a local Egyptian chanting a folk song (Mawwal) in the street moves the camera away from the balcony of the apartment where Amina is standing towards a street filled with guys. This first portrayal of the patriarchal Egyptian society introduces the main theme of the movie using Strauss's (1949) binaries; the traditional versus the modern/liberal, the West versus the East, and women versus men, women in the private space and men in the public etc.

Salah Abu Seif contrasts here the gender roles as defined by society and as accepted and embraced by the Arab woman cultural specificity; an Islamist feminist theme par excellence. The liberal woman is depicted through Vicky, a French girl. Vicky's freedom is shown via her open dating habits that she shares with her family at ease, and nights' outings to clubs that she does not have to hide because her family respects her freedom. Here, the director focuses on the feminine side of Vicky to convey that freedom as defined by a liberal woman is corrupt and evil. He shows her walking out of her bedroom with her boyfriend, putting on lipstick, drinking alcohol, French kissing, mixing with guys and strangers, Western dancing, night outings, etc. When Amina wishes for the same freedoms, she repeats word by word the argument advanced by Vicky. Later on, Amina realizes such words are empty when she discovers that Vicky and her entourage do not share the same cultural and ethical values that she respects. Here, Abu Seif

¹⁴⁵ A major scene translating Amina's rebellion against the patriarchal male dominant society focuses on an Arabic tradition where the woman (in this case her aunt) helps the man (in this case the aunt's husband) put shoes on. The husband is sitting on the chair while the wife is kneeling down on the floor holding his feet and putting the shoes on for him. Even then, the husband is frustrated with her inability to perform correctly and snatches the shoes to wear them himself expressing discontent and disappointment. Amina, looks cynically in disgust at the scene. Two hours later, the movie closes with the same scene where Amina performs gladly and voluntarily this traditional role of putting the shoes for her husband when she understands the true meaning of freedom.

hints that when Easterners seek freedom, their first path is to imitate the West even if the Western subject does not necessarily share the same moral values.

A **new disequilibrium** is reached when the protagonist gets her desire and finally takes matters into her hands. When Amina is given the permission to be free and be her own master, she uses her freedom wisely. She stops going out and focuses on her studies. She graduates and decides to go to university only to be stopped again by society and her family who believe that girls do not need to go to universities. Under the pressure of her father, her aunt and her husband, she agrees to marry a suitor who shares her love for literature and modernity (music, dancing, etc.). She finds out that although he is educated and modern, his ideas of woman equality are based on Qassim Amine's (1899) thoughts whereby women are encouraged to be enlightened but remain confined to the role of the perfect housewives. She revolts against his attempts to influence her decisions regarding education, desire to work, the way she dresses up, and her lipstick choices etc. She rebels against this last attempt of control by another man and breaks off the engagement to go to university. Amina explains that as an Arab woman, to be free, she needs to study, go to university, and get her degree and work to be independent and financially free from any male authority. Ultimately she fulfils her dream and graduates from the American University of Cairo. She finds a job in an important company where she is paid a salary higher than that of her father and her aunt's husband, the two male figures in the movie that represent the traditional male guardian. Once achieved professionally and financially, Amina becomes restless. She is overwhelmed with the workload but also by the many rules that curtailed her freedom at her job to question herself again. When her father explains to her that to be a fulfilled woman, she needed to marry and have children, she disagrees yet seeks emotional support from Abbas, the modern educated neighbor who considers freedom as a duty not a right, a means to achieve greater things, not an objective in itself. For Amina, to be free is to be equal to men. For Abbas, to be free is to do what you want and believe in, and if you love someone or something, you gladly give up your freedom to serve them; your country, your work, your principles, your husband, etc.

The **new equilibrium** is reached when Amina falls in love with Abbas. When the relationship evolves between the two protagonists, Amina gladly gives up her freedom for him and ceases to see marriage as a slave/master relationship. Love becomes her purpose in life and she starts longing for a family too. She espouses his principles and nationalist fight, hence

defining her role through his. The camera moves onto Abbas and Amina who are both putting an apron and cooking dinner in the kitchen together. The scene is a clear indication that finally Amina met in Abbas, the equal peer. The director shows Amina and Abbas, sitting side by side reading poetry. After confessing their love and passion, they move to the bedroom where she picks up his clothes and helps him dress up. She gets down on the floor and gladly helps Abbas put his shoes on, just like her aunt did at the beginning of the movie and Amina objected. Amina and Abbas are jailed because of their dissident activities against the government, yet they are happy to be imprisoned for a noble cause. They agree to marry inside the jail while serving their five years sentence. The movie closes on Amina who fought for her freedom walking up the stairs in a jail house fulfilled and happier than before. **The morale of the story** according to Ihsan Abdul Quddus, Najib Mahfuz, Salah Abu Seif and Lubna Abdel Aziz is that freedom is a means to an end, not a purpose. Freedom here started with a gender angle and finished by erasing the line between men/women differences in seeking a purpose in life.



Figure 4. DVD cover and Official Poster of *Ana Hurra* (1958)

- **From Story to Narrative:**

Ana Hurra opens with a quote from the writer Ihsan Abdel Qeddous saying,

“There is not such a thing called freedom. And the freest person is a slave to his principles and objectives he wants to achieve in life. We demand freedom to serve our needs. And before you demand your freedom, ask yourself; for what purpose?”

From opening to the end scene depicted in the DVD cover in figure 4 above the story unfolded using Strauss's binary narratives abundantly. The major conflict seems to be between a liberal/modern societies versus a conservative/traditional one. These are depicted through specific binary codes such as Western music/Mawwal and Belly dance, Music as a profession/music as entertainment for women at home, French/Arab, freedom/imperialism, democracy/autocracy, liberalism/conservatism, Western/Eastern, men/women, mother/father etc. The key voice that guides the narratives is the voice of reason, a male voice, which Amina dreams of as she progresses in her quest for freedom. After each major scene the voice comes to ask Amina if she found freedom to challenge her if she lies. Amina follows the voice, which seems to be her subconscious, and does not rest until it is satisfied and silenced.

Music is very central in this film. It depicts the positive side of liberalism/Western culture. It is presented as a valuable art for the youth via Amina's cousin love for violin. At the same time it is depicted as not masculine enough in the eyes of the cousin's father who breaks the violin angry at his son's lack of masculinity. Western dancing is presented as indecent, immoral and contradicts Eastern values (stranger bodies touching) while belly dance is depicted as the business of bored women gathered at home to gossip and dance. Technical codes such as a wife putting her husband's shoes, cleaning his shoes, obeying his words were used negatively then turned positive with free will. The choice of the characters,¹⁴⁶ as analyzed earlier, is indicative as well.

¹⁴⁶ **Protagonist Lubna Abdel Aziz:** Amina and the main character of the movie.

Protagonist's male cousin (Hassan Yousef): Ali, liberal and modern male, loves music but this is opposed by his parents as music is considered a waste of time and an evil that corrupts the conservative society.

Amina's Aunt: Portrayed by Zouzou Nabil, this character depicts the traditional role of the Egyptian woman: conservative, submissive, housebound, housewife,

The Husband of Amina's Aunt embodies the archetype of the traditional male in Egypt. He is an authoritarian conservative patriarch.

Amina's father portrays the loving father who does not stand in the way of his daughter's happiness. Although he is neither conservative nor traditional, he is still bound by the traditional values of the Egyptian society.

Protagonist Abbas: the leading male character played by Shukri Sarhan, a political activist and journalist. He embodies the perfect man for Amina but only crosses her road while she is searching for freedom until they met towards the end. He is modern yet has conservative values. He doesn't value freedom until it serves a purpose.

Vicky: French friend of Amina (*khawaga*), she embodies the liberal Western girl.

Zaki: French character (*khawaga*), liberal male in Egyptian society, dance teacher and Vicky's brother.

- The verbal code:

When Amina reaches her aims of being financially independent she jumps at an opportunity to visit Abbas in his newspaper to negotiate an advertising deal on behalf of her company. The following dialogue is an excerpt of their exchange.

Amina: It seems as if a hundred years passed by since we were in Al Abassiya (their old neighborhood) and a hundred years that I am working hard to reach where I stand today.

Abbass: What did you reach?

Amina: Freedom, the freedom that Al Abassiya considers ill manners. I am free today and I do not think I am ill mannered.

Abbass: I do not think you are free.

Amina: Why I am not free? I freed myself from everything; from Al Abbassiya and traditions. I am free from marriage. Today we are equal. You have a degree; I have a degree. You are working; I am working. Why am I not free? What else do I need to be free?

Abbass: You still need to be free. Do not be upset. Let me ask you a question; why do you want to be free?

Amina: I need a reason to be free now!

Abbass: Freedom is a tool not an end; for example I want to be free to be able to write all my views honestly.

Amina: and I want freedom to do all that I want.

Abbass: and what do you want?

Amina: I make my own living like any man

Abbass: Men gave up their income for freedom so it is not rational that they will ask for freedom to secure an income...

The conversation carries on until she is convinced that freedom is a tool not an end. As soon as she leaves Abbas's office the voice of her subconscious starts a conversation with her to lead her to charity work. Although the lead protagonist is not present in all the scenes like Amina his place in the movie is superior when it comes to the concept of freedom. Abbass is presented as a gentleman, educated, patient and older than Amina thus has more experience than her. Amina struggled but succeeded to reach a good status in the job market by revolting against everyone. Yet as the conversation excerpt displays Abbass not only has the true definition of the concept that preoccupies Amina's conscious and subconscious but wins a conversation against her each time that she ends falling in love with him and believing in his ideas of freedom. Written, adapted and directed by three men the movie tries to hold a corrective to the concept of women liberties and equalities by this "tool" and "end" differentiation. Such corrective is applauded by

some, criticized by others but in all cases engages to register this movie as one of the most important classics.

C- Case Three: Rape, Honor and Poverty, The Sin - Al Haram (1965)

The Sin is another masterpiece by the successful duet of Egyptian cinema, prominent film director Henry Barakat and leading actress Faten Hamama. The film was nominated to receive the Golden Palm at the Cannes festival in 1965 and is considered to be one of the most influential Arab films of all times. Based on the novel by Youssef Idriss, the film is set in Upper Egypt and considered one of the early cinema of realism by Shafik (2003). The story of Aziza (played by Faten Hamama), a poor peasant who experiences a brutal rape by a guard while getting potatoes from his fields for her sick and starving husband is narrated in a flashback style. The film opens with a dead new born and the village notables investigating the crime in shock. The events start to unveil to show how Aziza went from a criminal to a victim to a martyr and a symbol of fertility in a matter of hours. Although a victim, pregnant, Aziza could not disclose her “sin”, if not for the sake of her ill and loving husband then to be able to work in the fields to feed her family. She tries to terminate the pregnancy by jumping and carrying heavy weights, in vain. Thus, she hides her shame, conceals her pregnancy, carries on working in the fields and gives birth to her secret baby in total solitude from within the fields where she works. She gives birth under a tree without a single scream out of fear but the baby comes out screaming loudly. In an attempt to keep him quite, she puts her hand on his mouth but ends up strangling him accidentally from exhaustion. She leaves the body under the tree and goes back in the morning to work under the hot sun. Soon after, her temperature raises; she hallucinates then shows signs of postnatal depression. In her critical condition, Aziza was put under a tree to be supervised by a farmer and medicated by a barber.

The strength of Aziza’s story is that while the lead actor was unconscious all the time through the movie, stuck under a tree, Henry introduced her story to us in a flashback time movement. Her story, then, unfolded to us differently than what those surrounding her believed. She was the subject of gossips and without defending herself and went from a despised child killer and grave sinner to a worshiped martyr in a glance. Years later her tree becomes a legend and women made it a shrine to visit and ask for babies for their own; ignoring the truth of her story. At the same time, although she was unconscious and poor under a tree she affected the way the host village treated all the other workers from her village. At first they were all labeled

immoral then they all received support when Aziza was declared married and thus innocent. In this process her health, the dead baby, and the criminal who raped her were not a social issue as much as her innocence from “sin” or sex outside the wedlock is confirmed.



Figure 5. *Al Haram - The Sin* (1965)



Figure 6. Aziza the source of all time and image-movement idle under the tree

Starring Faten Hamama and directed by Coptic moviemaker Henry Barakat, the Prayer of the Curlew (*Du'a Al Karawan*) is a drama film produced in 1959, based on a novel by celebrated Egyptian author Taha Hussein. The movie entered many prestigious international film festivals including the 32nd Academy Awards. The story takes place in rural Egypt in the 1950s where young Amina lives alone with her mother and older sister Hanadi. Their father, an infamous adulterous man, dies and leaves his women with a tainted reputation. Dishonored and forced out of the village, they live in shame, secluded and in very poor conditions. The uncle kills Hanadi, who works as a house cleaner for a rich and handsome bachelor after he discovers her love affair. Amina, who witnesses the killing, considers her sister a victim of both her lover and her uncle and swears to avenge her death. Once she locates her sister's lover, she starts working for him as a house cleaner and tries to poison him several times but her conscience does not let her carry out her mission. Meanwhile, and just like her sister, Amina develops feelings for the handsome engineer who tries to seduce her. Cognizant of this impossible love, she decides to leave after she confronts him with his shameful act against her sister.

By looking at the way the story is narrated and analyzing the approach, signs and possible meanings a movie becomes an open space rather than a closed one. There are hundreds of good titles that dealt with women matters using different techniques and angles. Sorry, I reject the divorce – *Assefah Arfudu Al Talaq* (1980) for example was pioneer in bringing up the case of a woman who refused her husband's absolute power to divorce her without her consent. In a symbolic gesture she took her case to court to reject his divorce knowing that she would lose. No Condolences for Ladies – *Wa La 'Aza'a Li Sayidat* (1979) is a case of the social, economic and cultural dilemmas that face a divorced woman in an Arab society as opposed to their male counterparts. I need a solution – *Orido Hallan* (1975) is a case highlighting the legal problems facing women seeking divorce and one of the leading movies by Faten Hamama that was accredited for pushing for law reforms regarding divorce. The list can go on but this space does not allow a thorough analysis for all movies. The idea here is to give a picture about the diverse gender narratives in the classical library of the Egyptian cinema and how Al Waleed used it for audience reach as well as to produce Saudi movies.

2- Rotana Productions: Saudi money for Egyptian cinematic thoughts

Amr Mandour stated that Rotana is ready to finance any movie judged popular enough to attract enough audiences. He insisted that there are no restrictions when it comes to topics.

(Interview with author, Egypt, 2009) Director Amr Salama who was thankful to Rotana for financing his first movie *Zayyi Nahar Dah* (On a Day Like Today) which won 'best director 2008' was worried about Saudi monopoly over filmmaking in Egypt (Interview with the author 2009). His film *Asmae* (2011), another Rotana Production was the first movie to tell the story of an HIV positive woman. The movie is not about the virus itself as much as it addresses the social prejudices and psychological torture that surrounds it in Egypt. Amr rose to fame with Rotana but depending on a monopoly does not help creativity as he says (Interview with author, Egypt, 2009). "In the nineties Saudi money was the only source for directors to keep producing. They used to intervene even in the directing approach. If a man and a woman were to be filmed in a room alone the camera had to be set so that an open door is in the background; a man and woman who are not married could not be filmed behind closed doors" (Ibid). He added that today, with Rotana, he has more autonomy. However, "as you noticed in the late nineties comedy genres became the trend in Egyptian cinema so actors like Mohamad Henedy for example first raised to fame thanks to Saudi Money then was used in other shows with Saudi stars to take advantage of his fame and reach his Pan Arab audience." (Interview with author, Egypt, 2009) Amr Salama is not alone in thinking this way Director Khalid Youssef goes further to warn from this monopoly and ask for action against it. (Interview with author, Egypt, 2009)

III- Saudi Cinema a Rotana Media Group Productions and the opening of Saudi Cinemas

From broadcasting Egyptian movies Rotana moved to produce the first Saudi Movies that resulted in the re-opening of Saudi cinema houses during the reign of King Abdualh Ben Abdel Aziz (2005-2015) and caused serious disputes to shut them down afterwards. It is important to recall that it is during this period that Al Waleed focused on Saudi Arabia and launched his news channel taking advantage from his close relationship with the King; a privilege he lost as soon as this later passed away. Several news reports explained this by the King's and the Prince's common interest to reduce extremism from within the country. *Keef Al Hal* "How is it Going?" (2005), *Menahi* (2009) and *Wadjda* (2012) are the three movies produced by Rotana. The first movie exposed the irrationality of religious extremism using women conditions and the prohibition of art. The second movie was a comedy that focused on business and Bedouin life without any gender related content. It seems that as Al Waleed planned to ask for the reopening of cinemas in Saudi Arabia content this time should be pure humor and money related. The third movie however is a direct exposition of women conditions in Saudi Arabia via a light drama and

the first to have a full Saudi cast. Between 2005 and 2012 Al Waleed indeed made important steps in bringing such change in Saudi Arabia. Although the new rule is fiercely fighting such changes of new opinion art and cultural development became more heard in Saudi Arabia.

1- **Case one: *Keef Al Hal?* (2005)**

Keef al Hal (2005) is the first feature movie from Saudi Arabia, a country with not a single legal movie theatre at the time. This is the first movie financed by Prince Al Waleed through his Rotana Group. Thanks to its Hollywood-like budget, the film is set in Dubai, starring a diverse range of Arab actors, directed by a Canadian and written by an Egyptian. The movie also features the first Saudi cinema actress, Hind Muhammad. Saudi Arabia at the time had no movie theatres to show “*Keef Al Hal?*” According to Middle East Intelligence, Prince Al Waleed wanted “to face the vice police”. He stated “there is nothing in Islam—and I’ve researched this thoroughly—not one Ayah that says you cannot have movies. So what I am doing right now is causing change.¹⁴⁷” Post the opposition against “*Keef Al Hal?*” the Prince promised to produce more movies. In a New York Times piece, the Saudi Prince declared, “I want to tell Arab youth: You deserve to be entertained, you have the right to watch movies, and you have the right to listen to music.¹⁴⁸”

Set to raise critical questions about social and religious oppression in Saudi Arabia, “*Keef Al Hal?*” revolves around a family who is torn between modernity and tradition, portrayed by clashes between Sahar and her brother Khaled. Upon her graduation, Sahar is keen to join the workforce and become independent; her conservative brother however objects to that. When he suspects his sister is developing a romance with her cousin Sultan, the tensions grow in the family. The movie includes themes linking extremism to terrorism and opposing both to art and singing; the tool of Al Waleed’s resistance against the religious powers in his country.

¹⁴⁷ BI-ME staff, *Saudi Public Opinion Getting Ready For Cinemas*. December, 15, 2008 [last accessed: 09-07-2015] available at <http://www.bi-me.com/main.php?id=28694&t=1&c=35&cg=4&mset=1011>

¹⁴⁸http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/28/world/middleeast/28saudi.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0



Figure7. Keef Al Hal? (2005)

It is worth noting that while plotting women access to the work place while adding a romance story was the business of black and white Egyptian cinema as portrayed above via Ustazah Fatimah this Saudi movie of 2005 is barely stepping towards that same direction for the conservative kingdom.

2- Case two: *Menahi* (2009)

Menahi, is the second Saudi movie produced by Rotana Group. In a comedy genre, a Bedouin from Saudi Arabia becomes rich suddenly; thus, he moves to the city to enjoy this new wealth. However, fitting in in the high urban society becomes the disequilibrium of the movie and the material its humorous style. Thanks to this light humor and the absence of religious political narratives, the movie managed to be the first to be screened in Saudi Movie theatres

since the 1970s. Only men and girls under age 12 were allowed to go to the screening.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the opening of the cinemas was a triumph for Al Waleed.



Figure 8. Menahi (2009)

3- Case three: Wadjda (2012)

Wadjda is a production of Rotana Studios and the German production company Razor Film, which had previously produced successful films such as Waltz with Bashir (2008) and Paradise Now (2005). Written and directed by the young Saudi filmmaker Haifa El Mansour, Wadjda entered and won many awards in various international film festivals.

¹⁴⁹<http://www.bestarabic.com/mall/en/menahi-movie-3>

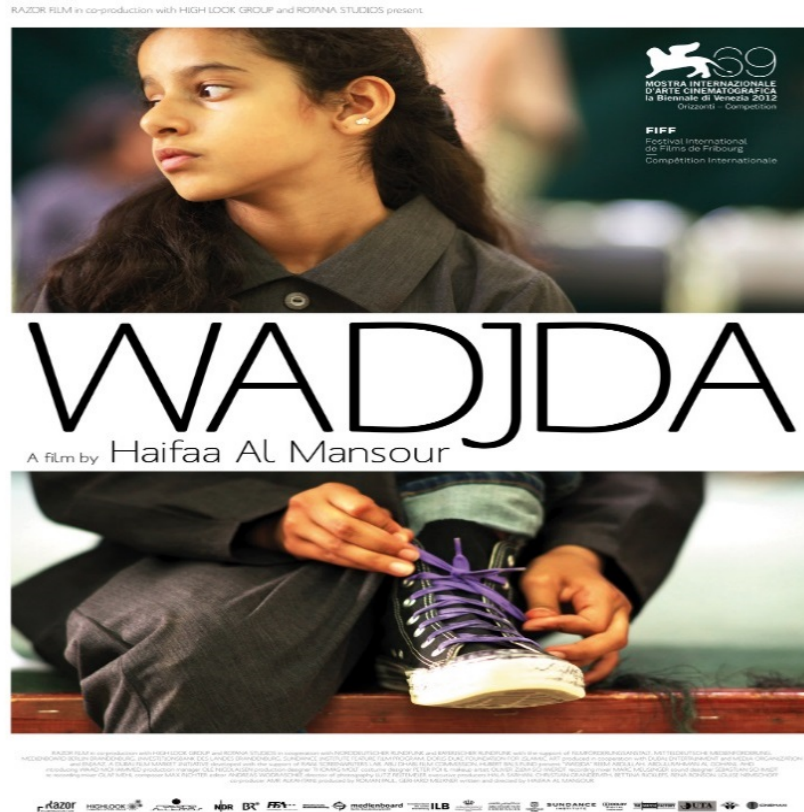


Figure 9. Wadjda (2012)

The Story Line:

The story revolves around young Wadjda, an eleven years old Saudi girl who lives with her mother in a suburb in Riyadh. The movie introduces us to its main character through her shoes and those of her classmates in the primary girls' school. They all wear the same black shoes except her; she wears a converse. The school's principle makes a note about her shoes and asks her to wear plain black ones like everyone. She is later shown painting her converse trainers black with a pen to conceal their "identity" as part of these constant acts of resistance to all regulatory measures around her skillfully plotted in the movie. Her father travels for extended periods of time because of his job in the oil industry, she hardly sees him. Although she lives in a conservative society, Wadjda is fun, loving, witty and entrepreneurial. She spends most of her time in an all-girl school where she studies, but also sells mixed tapes and hand-braided bracelets to earn some pocket money. When a boy from her neighborhood challenges her to a bike race, Wadjda is desperate to get her beautiful green bicycle from the store she passes by everyday on her way to school. Wadjda's mother will not allow it, though, because bicycles are considered dangerous to a girl's virtue (read virginity) in the Saudi society; only males ride them. For

Wadjda however, the bike means freedom and challenge hence she refuses to give in and the movie becomes a quest to buy the green bicycle. Determined to fight for her dreams, she tries to raise the funds herself. Meanwhile, her mother is occupied convincing her husband not to marry a second wife as advised by his mother in order to have a male heir.

In a plot where Wadjda stares at the family tree of her father, the mother tells her “What are you looking at? Your name is not and will never be there”. Wadjda gives it a deep thought and acts by writing her name on a piece of paper and pinning with a hair clip to her father’s name as an extension of his roots. In a subsequent plot when she comes back home disappointed by her loss of the money she earned for her bike to Palestine as decided by the school’s principle, she found the piece of paper with her name unpinned and crumpled on the table. Symbolically Wadjda’s efforts were erased by the school’s principle using a big cause to divert her money and prevent her from reaching the object of her desire and the symbol of her equality with her male friend. At the same time the value as a daughter was crushed because of her gender. The movie plays these little symbols artistically and links them cunningly to general politics by using a little girl.

IV- Plotting homosexuality in cinema: Rotana cinema’s approach to homo-narratives

Between Massad’s (2007) opposition of homo-categories and the analyses of homo-scenes in cinema by scholars like Gary Menicucci (1998) as well as the religious and legal solutions proposed by Whitaker (2006) homosexuality are not only obscure in cinema but undefined theoretically. This, probably, explains the homo plots and their misinterpretation in movies that date back to the 1930s. As exposed in chapter two plotting homosexuality to serve the narratives of a story in Arabic cinema has been a practice since the black and white classics of the 1960s. However, unlike what Menicucci (1998) reads and scholars quoted afterwards the cross dressing prevalent in some movies did not mean or went close from any queer content; in contrast it was very binary. The first examples that literature referenced are *Sukkar Hanim* (1960), *Li Rejal Faqaṭ* (1946) and *Bent Al Basha Al Mudeer* (1938) as being an early narrative of Arab homosexuality. It accredited *Hammam Al Malalite* (1973) for being the first close image of an Arab gay. Lately it applauded the Yaaqobian Building (2006) for the shift in narrative to adequately portray a “real” Arab gay. The following section is based on the fieldwork in Egypt (2009) and archive research.

1- Alleged homo-plots in the classical library and real ones:

The story line of *Sukkar Hanim* (1960) is about two young men who loved their neighbor's daughter and niece at first sight in a party, so they started looking for a way to see them again despite all the cultural difficulties. The plot is not too complicated. The two men are single (*'uzab*) and live alone, which means their apartment is known as the apartment of single men; any girl entering such space risks a bad reputation and social rejection. The girls live with the guardian; a father to one and an uncle to the other. He is a traditional, conservative man, wealthy and involved in the business of building and construction. To be able to invite the girls without risking harming their reputation the two young men had to have a female presence in the house; but not any female a mother or an aunt or a grandmother to turn the house from that of *'uzab's* to a family house. For this purpose the story, included Farid's aunt, *Fatafeet Al Sukkar* (Sugar Crumbs)¹⁵⁰, who lived for over twenty years in Brazil. Farid had never seen his millionaire aunt. He receives a fax that she is coming to visit him therefore the two young men invited their neighbor young ladies to meet the aunt and welcome her; a courteousness social practice between neighbors in the Middle East. Informed by the aunt's presence the two girls who loved the men back accepted to visit despite the father/uncle strict commands that they do not leave the house while he is away on a business day trip. When the aunt postponed her trip last minute the protagonists forced their unwanted male friend Sukkar (sugar) who works as extra in cinema to pretend to be the aunt (Figure 10).

¹⁵⁰ Denoting sweetness and cuteness



Figure 10. Male actor, in the middle dressed as female protagonist “Sukkar Hanim”

Sukkar comes into the story as a poor, unlucky, and unsuccessful actor who does small roles as a woman in movies from time to time for a living. Acting as a woman here is not a gay identity. It is portrayed as degradation to his masculine identity because he is unable to make a decent living like his friends. He turned to acting after he failed in high school because he helped the lead character Hassan by exchanging the exam papers to write his answers, but when he tried to write his own the time was up so he failed. Hassan, who is a successful engineer, does not seem to be thankful as Sukkar constantly turns to him for money. In their continuous humoristic fights, Sukkar uses his female dress to kiss the girls in front of the guys. The plot escalates and the fake aunt is loved and praised by the fathers especially that she is known for being a millionaire. Although not attractive, her millions made all men fight for her driving the protagonists crazy; especially when she was invited to spend the night with the girls in their rooms. Against what Menicucci read in these movies, there is no trace of homosexuality in any of the plots but rather a different gender struggle. In most of these, the struggle is heterosexual concerning women rather than homosexuals.

The cross-dressing and scenes of men playing women's role and women playing men's role were abundant in the early black and white Egyptian movies. Menicucci says the plots of scenes were comic; not shocking to the conservative Arab audiences, and conforming to the inevitable censorship than if otherwise directed indeed (1998, 32). Indeed they were not shocking because there was no homosexual intention in the movie not because something was concealed. Menicucci gives the example of movies with an entire plot constructed around cross-dressing, which includes *Bint al-basha al-Mudir* (The Pasha Director's Daughter, 1938), *Sukkar Hanim* (Miss Sugar, 1960), and *Lil-Rigal Faqat* (For Men Only, 1964) where his main argument revolves around directors' intention to convey homosexual content masked in a comic plot. None of these movies invites to think of homosexuality but rather women's inability to access work or restrictions enforced on women discriminately; a theme that was common at the time.

Midaq Alley (*Zuqaq El Midaq* 1963), a masterpiece by Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfuz, is probably a good example that can speak for the cinematic approach to plotting homosexuality in the Middle East. Kirsha is a character in the novel who is obsessed with young men; which creates scandals in the alley. The theme of *Midaq Alley* cuts to the heart of Arab society, "namely, it shows how a group of characters living in the same slum neighborhood responds to the combined promise and threat of Western-influenced modernization" (Proyect, 2003). When the novel was adapted for cinema by Hassan Al-Imam 1963 Kirsha's character was left out of the movie, but a *khawal* in the brothel where the main character started to work to escape poverty was kept as it is in order to depict social and moral decadence (Menicucci, 1998, 34). It is worth noting that the brothel in the movie was acquainted by British and American soldiers as its plot happens during World War Two. Accordingly, and from a writer committed to social justice and national redemption, Naguib Mahfouz's novel depicted the homosexual "Kirsha" and the prostitute *khawal* as two different characters. The first one has an identity for which he fights all day long, and the second one is under exploitation because he would not be accepted somewhere else.

Case 2- *Hamam Al-Malalilti* (the Malalithi Bath), 1973

By 1973, Salah Abu Seif's *Hamam Al-Malalilti* (The Malalithi Bath) was the closest of Arab Movies that came to depict homosexuality. Indeed, the concept was hidden throughout the movie but the plots inferred it directly. The character was not funny nor was he a prostitute, but a homosexual struggling with his sexual orientation. "Youssef Shaaban delivered a memorable

performance playing Raouf, a gay painter who tries to drag the protagonist, Ahmed (Mohamed El-Araby), into a sexual relationship” (Awad, 2006). Menicucci describes the main scene of this homosexual content as follow:

“A gay man who comes often to the bath to sketch the nude men, is attracted to the youth and brings him to seduce him by playing him with wine, cigarettes and the music of James’ brown’s “like a sex machine”... The artist bares his chest and gyrates in frenzy to the music before falling in erotic exhaustion on a cushion next to the youth who is also bare-chested” (1998, 35)

The description of the scene sounds more erotic than the scene itself.



Figure 11. Raouf (Youssef Shaaban) and Ahmed (Mohamed El-Araby) in Hammam el Malaliti

Case 3- *Al-Iskandariya Layh?* (Alexandria Why?, 1979), *Haduta Misriya* (An Egyptian Story, 1982) and *Al-Iskandariya Kaman We Kaman* (Alexandria Once Again, 1989),

Egyptian director and icon Youssef Shahine, is arguably the only director who had been able to portray a different image of homosexuality in his movies so far. In his autobiographical trilogy *Al-Iskandariya Layh?* (Alexandria Why?, 1979), *Haduta Misriya* (An Egyptian Story, 1982) and *Al-Iskandariya Kaman We Kaman* (Alexandria Once Again, 1989), Shahine depicts homosexuality as a matter-of-fact. In general, he constantly includes gay or bisexual themes in

his work; and in these films, the homosexual nature of some scenes is unmistakable (Menicucci, 1998, 35-36).

2- The new production of the Arab gay and its lack of censorship in Rotana:

Case 4- The Yaacobian Building

It is not until Marwan Hamed adopted Alaa Al-Aswany's 2002 bestselling novel, the Yaacobian Building (Arabic: *Imarat Yaqubian*), and turned it into a movie that the Arab gay came close to his universal identity. The film blatantly encloses sexual and violent material among which a male rape by police officials to a young protagonist accused of religious extremism - the scene happens all against President's Husni Mubarak's picture. The second scene is "a homosexual seduction...between Hatem and a young married policeman" (Daniels, 2006, 108). Hatem is a French-speaking newspaper director. According to the movie, he is a homosexual because in his childhood his "black/Sudanese" servant raped him (Daniels, 2006, 109) when his French mother was busy cheating on his busy father.



Figure 12. Hatem (Khaled el Sawy) luring his heterosexual guest to engage in homosexual sex with him

A male prostitute whom he picked from the street kills him at the end of the movie. The male thief apparently pretended to be willing to exchange sex just to steal Hatem's house. Daniels notes that the majority of Western reviewers focused on "gay rights" and "women rights" issues in the movie; the director had a Western audience in mind and succeeded to attract such audience. Arab audiences, on the other hand, were more concerned with the political, economic

and social corruption narratives. Interestingly, *Imarat Yaqubian* was among the few movies that escaped censorship (2006, p. 110). Even more so, the film received Arab critics' applauses and audiences alike.



Figure 13: Hatem's applauded fate, killed by a thief

Case 5: Caramel - Sukkar Banat (2007)

Rotana played *Sukkar Banat* (Caramel) without censoring the gay character. Starred and directed by Nadine Labaki, *Caramel* is the most acclaimed Lebanese movie. Centered on five Lebanese women living in Beirut, it depicts the usual issues facing women in Arab society. The movie squeezes the question of virginity and repressed sexuality, spinsterhood and binding traditions, extramarital relationships, forbidden love/homosexuality, aging and beauty, etc. It exposes homosexuality as an undeniable reality in Arab countries. *Caramel* or *Sukkar Banat* refers to a traditional Middle Eastern practice to remove body hair using caramelized sugar, referring to the sweet and sour image of women but at the same time their subjection to pain to look pretty in a tough society. Al Waleed's channels were the only satellite space that presented the movie to the large Pan Arab audience.

Case 6- Hena Mayssara

In the same year (2007), he presented his Movie "*Heena Mysara*" which sparked controversy not only in Egypt, but also worldwide as it was widely successful with both the critics and

audiences. The movie received many prizes at the National Festival of Egyptian Cinema including the Award for best movie, best director, best decoration and best drama.



Figure 14. Female to Female harassment scene by Controversial Egyptian actresses Ghada Abdel Razek and Soumaya el Khashab in *Heena Maysara*

Khalid Youssef explains that homosexual content finds place in his movie because it depicts decadence. His choice to include explicit lesbian scenes between two of the main protagonists (Figure 14) was not a human rights approach but rather a way to represent the debauchery of the society at large. Only 'irregular' sex could be found besides other irregular practices in irregular sites (Interview with the author, 2009). Thus political corruption, moral decadence, environmental imbalances and homosexual sexual acts occur in slums and irregular places. Similar to *Imarat Yaacobian*, *Heena Maysara* spoke to large audiences in the Arab world because of the political, economic and social corruption narratives in the movie, and homosexuality was part of this corruption. That being said, both actresses came under fire for

being too explicit and agreeing to play such roles, especially that both were already controversial for performing overtly sexual content on other movies.

Conclusion

Unlike talk shows, movies in the Arab world provide a space where women and LGBTQ content can be addressed without forcing the viewer to think about them. Since they are art, they engage the imagination of the audience taking significations to a mythological level. Consequently, established norms of rights and wrongs are not directly challenged but tackled within a more prevalent story: a romance, a political scandal, corruption, a social phenomenon, etc. Women rights are always presented through a romantic plot; which explains the popularity of this cinematic genre and the black and white movies of the 1950s, 60s and 70s excelled in this. Referred to as *Aflam Al Zaman Al Jamil* (movies of the beautiful time) these films are watched today with nostalgic sighs. They provide an entertainment space for leisure time. Not everyone is forced to think politically when they watch a film *engagé* in questions of women rights. Rather, viewers get to select what they like and what they dislike. Fatin Hamama's fight for her right to work as a female lawyer or Lubna Abdel Aziz's search for freedom and independence from a male patriarch were entertaining because they were stories of two beautiful women who were in love with male protagonists and who faced a series of events then ended up happily married after overcoming them. Those who watch Fatin Hamama do not necessarily enjoy her films because they are feminist or because they share and advocate women rights. They might like them for different reasons including the character's fashion and style in the movie, the plot with the male protagonist, the space where the plot took place, not just human rights content. Even when she deals with questions of rape and honor, Fatin Hamama's work is not blatant. It is enjoyed because it is art and as such, it does not force the viewer to think whether it is wrong or right. Unlike in talk shows, the audience of a movie follows the story and dreams it.

The presence of LGBTQ content on Rotana movies is a cinematic choice that serves the movie not the gender identities. It has no human rights intention but rather a depiction of a decadent, corrupt or even complex social structure. In the case of *Heena Mayssara* for example the lesbian scene is a representation of the rough irregularities in the slams. The buildings are irregular so is the rest. In the case of *'Imarat Yaacoubian* the overall theme is deterioration; deterioration of the building, the government and even sexual life. Khalid Youssef and Marwan Hamed included more explicit gay scenes in order to be applauded for their courage and be

recognized as the directors of taboos. When Youssef plotted a gay scene between the two female protagonists in *Heena Mayssara*, he did not do so because he believed in gay rights and wanted to advocate for them through his movies. He put LGTBQ content because he aimed at representing chaos and decadence on all levels: social, political, environmental and sexual. Hence only 'pervert' and 'irregular' sex made sense to him in the movie. This explains why Rotana does not censor such content; it shares Youssef's targets. If the channel was committed to gay rights movies like Abdellah Taia's *Salvation Army* (2011) would easily be dubbed and included in schedule.

Through his acquisition of old Egyptian movies, Alwaleed acquired an audience of loyal viewers who gladly tuned in to Rotana channels to watch and reminisce about *Al Zaman Al Jamil*. Hence he used this already existent cinema to introduce his Saudi movies to the Arab world. The first film Al Waleed would produce focused on women right and gender roles in Saudi Arabia which created a heated debate in the country. This explains his choice to produce a purely commercial film with a comedic theme and no gender rights content so he could lobby King Abdullah for the re-opening of movie theatres in Saudi Arabia. In no way could he could finance gender rights movies and ask the kingdom to open movie theatres to be a space for discussion directly. When King Abdullah accepted the initiative post the comic movie *Menahi*, Alwaleed resumed his gender rights agenda and produced *Wajda* in the style of black and white movies. The Film borrowed a lot from Fattin Abdelwahhab's style with a simple story and binaries. It put most of the narrative on a little girl and her quest to buy a bike to race her friend (male), her resistance to wear a converse trainer at school and her dream to be her father's pride. Although he promised to produce more, the death of King Abdullah halted Alwaleed's plan and shut the movie theatres down.

Arab Media Moguldum: Islamic Capital, Power & Gender Rights as Entertainment

This interdisciplinary research tried to answer the question of how and why gender rights find place on Prince Al Waleed Ben Talal Al Saud's Media Empire by focusing on two different types of analysis. First, I attempted to show the complexity of gender rights at the discursive level based on Western and Middle Eastern scholarships. Second, I focused on the institutionalised systems of powers, strategies and tactics to expose how different levels of power relations, competitions and even wars in the Arab satellite realms delay, advance, render impotent or push forward a discourse such as that of women or LGBTQ rights. It emerged that contents of LGBTQ and women's rights are discourses and narratives of power at three distinct levels. One is purely Middle Eastern specific to the culture of the region and influenced by the process of capital accumulation specific to the Arab media mogul and the cultural intermediaries in his empire. The second is rooted in the Western tradition that exercises the power of the big Other by the simple virtue that its gender related concepts developed beyond the binary male/female to constantly progress towards laws of rights which are lacking in the Middle East. The third is that these discourses go together as a result of and an influence to the system of powers within the cultural field of media and communication. Using triangulation it was helpful to use the work of political economists to understand the power structure within which content is created, managed, limited or even pushed forward. It emerged that Prince Al Waleed pushed forward a discourse of women rights and highlighted the existence of LGBTQ individuals in a Middle Eastern life in a way that challenges the Saudi political and religious powers. Yet, the mere fact of opening such a discourse and narratives in his big institutions of power and across different media genres opened a space for shift and change. Such change is not necessarily positive or negative but rather inviting for action and address.

I- The Uneven Network of Power of Media Moguldom & Cultural Intermediaries in the Middle East: Creates Spaces for Possibilities in the cultural field

1- Hegemony and Islamic Capital:

By using Al Waleed as a case to theorise the power of media Moguldom in the Middle East it emerged that even a Prince with his *Habitus*, power networks and Media Empire struggles to maintain an absolute power in the Middle Eastern cultural field. Bourdieu's (1984, 1993, 1996) toolbox proved helpful to explore the portfolio of the Prince as a media mogul adding significance to his accumulation of capital that aims at representing him as a universal actor. His class struggle within his own class of elites exposed a different dimension of Gramsci's (1971) "war of attack" and "war of position". To challenge and fit within his own network of power the Prince has to constantly challenge his peers via an international and distinguished maximization of power. Yet, at the same time he is challenged by his own workforce; his media Barons who operate at a different power level. Lukes' (2005 [1975]) third face of power derived from Gramsci's 'hegemony' and 'manufacturing consent' and later tailored based on Foucault's and Bourdieu's theories maintained that domination does not only occur via coercive means but via unconscious mechanisms. Processes of 'naturalization' and 'misrecognition' that make compliance an internalised disposition are constantly sought via the cultural agents who seek maximum power. Lukes described the elites as not having "unitary or dual, but multiple and conflicting interests" (2005, p.145). However, the power struggle follows the same structure of coercion and consent.

Via examining the Prince's different discourses, joint with his actions and reactions in the different fields of power including the field of media, it emerged that the Prince uses fixed strategies that he adjusts using tactics depending on the circumstances. However, he is constantly reaching to the same main target; presenting himself as a distinctive Prince. His constructed distinction, attained thanks to an aggressive public relations and marketing program, relies on his business success where he is presented as a "shrewd investor" with a sharp perception and distinctive decision-making skills without sharing credit with any of his employees and business advisers/experts. This constructed image relies on his philanthropic and acclaimed role of being a bridge between the West and the Middle East as well as his Media Empire that seeks to modernise and develop the Arab world. These distinctions in different

fields are all stressed using a religious discourse that needs to be added to Bourdieu's set of capitals when studying power and everyday life tactics in the Middle East. "Islamic capital" refers here to the accumulation of tools related to Islam to maximise one's Islamic status specifically. By repeating certain religious quotes and words, carrying beads, praying in front of camera's, giving alms in documentaries, sending donations to areas of disaster the Prince expands his audience reach to those who seek a distinguished Muslim leader.

As to why the Prince supports women rights, it seems as detailed in chapter four that using the universal discourse of women rights puts an international pressure on the religious power in Saudi Arabia. Using universalism and global power presence is the only way to compete with the strong local power elites. Al Waleed, like his father, is specifically critical of Majlis Al Shura that elects the kings of the kingdom and keep such kings within Al Sudari Clan. The discourse of women rights is used as a discourse of modernism against the patriarchal, traditional and rigid political system. Calling for a true democratic shift in allocating the kingdom's rulers does not necessarily invite for a total democratic system. The Prince is outspoken about the Middle Eastern specificity using the Islamic Capital again. His discourse of change and modernism based on universal values but with an Islamic specificity is a tactic and a ruse in unchanging quest of maintaining a distinctive Prince-Hood towards more power. The tactic as defined by De Certeau (1984) is not subordinate to the strategy but stands in opposition to it. In this sense, agents in the field use tactics when their strategies are challenged by other meta-powers. By meta-powers I mean those powers exercised by big others according to the agent's *illusio*.

The use of the Prince's wife as a public relations project that repeats his words, the way women are displayed in his courtyard and business empire, even the way he deals with his employees at times of conflict show that the Prince's cultural *habitus* is not that of a women's rights supporter in a feminist or universal sense. In fact, his discourse keeps him at the same place of his family despite all his attempts of accumulating capitals to stress his distinction. The rights of women he advocates are a mere tactful agility within a greater project of making the name 'Prince Al Waleed' distinctive, modern, shrewd distinguished by just leadership thanks to his Islamic Capital. However, such tactics and strategies deployed during the quest for a greater hegemonic power opened spaces for new discourses of women rights marking a shift in what Foucault (1976) called a "strategic battle field". Talk Shows and Cinema became a battle field

where gender rights are seeking to establish politics of possibilities but within another level of power struggle. Foucault did not limit the discursive power to utter reproduction of existing social relations; instead he characterised it using the spirit of war where both loss and victory are possible but nothing remains the same.

2- Islamic Capital: definition and importance

Islamic capital emerges as an everyday life practice that uses concepts from within Islam even if erroneously to maximize assets of honour and virtuosity in every single field. Honour and virtue is an exhibit that is much desired in Arab societies. In fact, the Islamic capital is so important that it influences the discourse of gender rights as well. As the philosophies that examine religious moralities are absent from the Arab intellectual scene, agents use religious gestures as a form of that high morality without necessarily being deeply rooted in goodness in its philosophical sense. Using prayer beads with a miniature symbol of the kingdom hanging at the edge, praying to camera in the sky from private jets while doing business, giving alms of thousands of dollars on television via private visits to the poor or in the traditional *Majlis* held by the royal family, are all symbolic signs manufactured together for the cultural agent maximum branding. The type of religious exhibitionism that places a Muslim distinctively in the West is applauded since it introduces Islam to the West using a successful story. The Islamic Capital here is not purely Islamic in the theologian or moral sense but rather a marketing strategy, a tactic that uses the power of Islam, using its symbols, to stress a distinctive identity; an act forbidden in Islam.

3- The Barons and Presenters: cultural intermediaries or pawns?

Mills (1959) assertion that power is centralised inside small circles of elites is true if one looks at the capital accumulated by such small groups but looking at their network of workforces proves that wherever power seems to be concentrated there are resistance tactics and strategies by the subordinate group surrounding it. The interesting highlight about the role of barons or the Prince's channels' leaders and executives is that while each one of them operated as an agent in their own media field trying to maximise their own powers as stars in their domain, the Prince deposed each one of them scandalously. Hala Sarhan, the former head of Rotana Studios, Pierre Al Daher, the former acting president of LBC and Rotana group, Tariq Al Suwaidan, the founder of religious Al Resalah TV channel were all deposed in a way that incites us to think about the state of media regulations and laws in the Middle East. Al Waleed switched to Saudi

management by delegating the management of the Rotana group and LBC Sat to Saudi director Turki Shabana and appointed Jamal Khashoggi as the head of his news channel the moment his focus started to concentrate on Saudi Politics. The supremacy of the Prince thanks to his economic capital put those working under his flagship at the mercy of his strategies and interests without any legal protection at least similar to that in the West. At the same time, the absence of these regulations influences the work ethics where the barons and cultural intermediaries can easily be lured by what the field of media represents to seek fame or advance their own interests at the expense of the content they produce.

II- LGBTQ Talk & LGBTQ act: Myths of the Blissful Erasure from Discourse & the Curse of Accessing the Discursive Space.

1- Social talk as a power space

Apart from the Prince, the infrastructure of the Arab satellite television does not help carrying a topic such as gender rights by a producer and an anchorman alone for the simple reason that they are not qualified to push the topic to “the changing” point. As seen in Maktabi’s case through his show Bold Red Line that addressed gender reassignment for the first time, Maktabi could not distance himself from the social attitude toward gays to be journalistically critical and thoughts provoking. Instead, he stayed safe socially by investigating homosexuality as a corrupt concept. He presented himself as liberal and used terms like *Mythliyya* instead of *Shudud* but as demonstrated; these terms were hardly researched and used only for his own maximization of capital as “the liberal, educated anchorman”. More than that, the terms remain synonymous view the way the talk was conducted. Competing in the media field as a liberal intellectual is a prestigious distinction in the Middle East. Most of those who try to acquire it following a shortcut end up adopting its aesthetics rather than researching and challenging their own conceptions of everyday life. Maktabi talked from an adapted format platform where more than one voice and power were heard but in mimicking society the studio space became a miniature of the social powers rather than a space of talk to challenge such powers. The use of what I called the power-halo guests is a regulating process to back up a show that opens a problematic topic. Coming up as “scientifically correct” is believed to be a safeguard in addressing taboo issues that conflict with beliefs and traditions. Yet, this “scientific correctness” is not based on production research and intellectual challenge but on manufacturing the taboo for popular consumption while being backed up by the social power representative.

Arabic talk shows that rely on case guests do not feel they have a moral obligation to protect their guests. The show is usually aware that the content is problematic so it does protect itself to protect the channel while doing its best to maximize the fame of its stars by having power backups. However, it does not do the same with the case guests who come forward for the first time in the Arabic talk show history to narrate their gendered stories for public discussions. When Arab televisions adapt talk-show formats, they are usually lured by the success of the shows they choose. The producers/presenters then try to imitate the journalistic professionalism of their western counterparts by dressing up, talking and choosing topics like them. However, they hardly respect their case guests or research their topics to inform or criticise. What they do instead is display a superiority magnified by the fact that they trust their content is successful elsewhere. At the same time, they exercise the same violence witnessed in society against the case guests but in a produced manner, show style. The failure of such poorly produced content can be disastrous as seen in the case of Mazen Abdel Jawad as a case guest jailed and defamed after narrating his story and Maktabi as a presenter who lost access to the satellite space without any real backup from the real powers such as Al Waleed.

While talking the talk during the episode on gender transfer, Maktabi could not distance himself from the social attitudes towards gays, yet the fact that discontinuous gender identities were given the opportunity to speak in this public space made them expose an impotent language, value-laden and unable to address their humanity. The produced words created for the purpose of the show took the form of dichotomies such as *Tahweel* versus *Tassheeh* keeping gender into its binary notion and adding value of wrong and right depending on the case guests' sexuality. To the average public eye the topic is human rights content however, using new terms conveying the same discriminating meaning ends up being a positive credit in the editing skills of the show but a bad score for the value of its content.

2- LGBTQ content in the authoritative religious talk genre:

In the case of the religious channel Al Resalah TV, this research showed how the religious celebrity man has the authority of an idol more than just a loved famous star. Religious men have an extra authority based on religion. As Al Waleed presents himself as the modern Muslim man, what is presented in his religious channel under the emblem of modernity is the same content of other conservative channels but with an added smile and claim to moderation. As exposed via Al Suwaidan's one-man show and Al Othaybi's conversational program every

“ill” in the Arab society is blamed on the West. In the case of homosexuality, Al Othaybi and his guests presented it as an influence from the West that threatens the virtuosity of the Middle East. In the case of women’s rights, Suwaidan put the blame on “misinterpretation” for women’s rights and their problems in the Middle East. Without focusing on specific problems, he spoke in a general way presenting few reinterpretations of some of the Prophet’s sayings. Such practice is an exposition of authority and knowledge in the field of religion, which maximizes Suwaidan’s status as a religious leader/star but does not help women’s rights at all. He confined women to roles of the multitasking housewife and mother to showcase women’s special skills. This discussion about women’s rights was carried out with his audience of men without a single female presence.

III- Talking about Women Rights & Narrating Women Stories:

1- The Woman presenter/producer talking about women matters: Symbolic Violence

If LGBTQ is a “trouble” content lost in translation and hidden in a subculture considered pervert and deviant, women’s rights should have a better consideration in the Prince’s empire. However, anchor-woman Wafa Kilani, who praised the Prince for letting her host a show about homosexuality in her tabloid, music related talk show and who moved to replace Maktabi on LBC Sat after his show’s ban, presents herself as a liberal, pro women’s rights media personality. However, in her opening episode of the show *Bidun Raqaba* (without censorship) who invited the infamous feminist of the Middle East Nawal Saadawi, she asked the most irritating questions to her guest displeasing the audience who likes her work. Kilani bombarded Saadawi with the same masculine questions that minimize the value of a woman who seeks women’s rights and label her as immoral and deviant. Coming from a female journalist, this testifies for the symbolic violence that Kilani represents. The questions she asked show that she lacks the depth and criticism an anchorwoman should have in dealing with guests who are in Saadawi’s calibre. At the same time, these questions were aimed at teasing the religious structures at the expense of Saadawi rather than getting into the depth of the feminist points she made including the rights of children who are born outside wedlock and the stigmatization of the mother without any mention of the father. All rights related points were juggled and turned into a religious tease.

2- Arab Religious Talk Shows masculinities and feminism

The problem of talking about women matters on religious shows is the unqualified religious authority who talk about the “should, should not” of *being* woman in the absence of women. However, the presence of women might not be that helpful either as they are usually selected sharing the masculine ideas about their own being. No feminist will be a guest on a religious talk show, not even religious personality Malaka Azrara. The case criticised here not only talked about women’s rights and the wrong they do but it discussed the monologue presented by the authority of Dr. Tariq Al Suwaidan, a doctor in economics not women studies, with a young male audience as potential husbands to the subject of talk not expert in women matters. This structure of talk is definitely not apt to challenge or change anything in women matters. Only serious inquiries based on the everyday life of Arab women in the Middle East can influence the talk show space to incorporate more emancipating ideas and explore more possibilities of Muslim and being woman.

IV- Limitations and emerging inquiries:

1- Emerging inquiries:

As Henry Jenkins put it, the process of convergence makes it much harder for elites to impose their authority (2006, p. 278). In fact, convergence helped re-circulate the content of LGBTQ and women rights beyond TV platforms. It facilitated studying the different discourses and narratives flying from three different channels and two different entertainment formats to land on YouTube channels and blogs under specific snippets calling for clicks and traffic. The fact that Nour’s video exceeded the 4 million views and invited contradictory comments invite an investigation that theorises online reactions to content manufactured on mainstream media. One question the reason positive change is slow despite this existing dynamic of power struggle that opens rooms for possibilities. If there is room for a gender category to use discourse for power then their words need to be studied within their structure. Activists follow rigorous strategies to advance gender rights in the region but while they remain outcasts in the mainstream media platforms in the Middle East artists, filmmakers and media personalities have such access on a daily basis. These latter do not necessarily take defending gender rights as their career goal but if they are trained or approached to do so they might have a greater impact.

The fields of content, discourse and narrative studies are at the infancy stage in the Arab media studies. The attempt in this interdisciplinary research was a small step that needs further development if we are to fathom popular culture in the Middle East, the process of

manufacturing content, its different meanings, implications, ethical codes and the power structure of the media realms where it circulates. The talk show genres in Arab television need to be further explored as an institution with more critical discourse analysis for all different content. Focus on political talk shows alone does not give credit the different genres and misses interesting trends. The religious talk shows need to be visited at the micro and macro levels as the religious dignitary that hosts this genre bypasses the stardom realm to be idolised as a mentor in all aspects of everyday life. Calls to these shows deal with a single man's interrogations that are ranging from how to treat one's wife/husband, children, parents, siblings, etc. to how to live through life in general, including ways of worship and alms giving. Being public speakers does not qualify these men of giving such advises from an Islamic perspective. The fact that most of them are hardly specialised in any branch of *Fiqh* or *Shari'a*, and that they are mere worshipers themselves make them take subjective positions that substitute religious intellectual savvy to an authoritative speech creating problematic content on air. It emerged from this research that every religious star takes troubling positions towards the other faiths and the West when discussing issues that are happening inside the Middle East; which alienates the problems and demonizes the West. A proper study should address how other faiths are exposed on talk shows and movies alike.

It is highly important to look into the theories of critical discourse analysis and narratives to appropriate them to the specificities of Arabic and its different dialects in the Middle East. Text in the Arab talk show space can vary from Lebanese to Egyptian to Moroccan, to Saudi Arabian and even English and French in one platform; some of the talk is eloquent and uses classical Arabic and other is popular and uses mixtures appropriated to the satellite space. A suitable appropriation of content and discourse analysis using proper codes for the Arabic variety needs to be developed for an accurate methodological approach to study Arabic content.

Appendices

Appendix 1:



Bassem Feghali from Antika produced and broadcasted on LBC Sat

Appendix 2:

Al Resalah TV Grid Sample - September 17, 2009

علمتني الحياة	(بث أصلي)	00:00	د. طارق السويدان
بيني وبينكم	(إعادة أولى)	03:00	د. محمد العوضي
ورد اليوم	(بث أصلي)	03:55	الشيخ ناصر القطامي
روائع القصص	(إعادة أولى)	04:15	د. نبيل العوضي
حتى يكتمل المشوار	(إعادة أولى)	05:45	مجموعة علماء
قصص القرآن ج2	(إعادة أولى)	06:00	د. عمرو خالد
علمتني الحياة	(إعادة أولى)	07:00	د. طارق السويدان
في حب آل البيت	(إعادة أولى)	08:00	أ. نوار هاشم
ومضات قرآنية	(إعادة أولى)	08:30	مجموعة علماء
فواصل رسالة حب	(بث أصلي)	08:50	أ. حنان القطان
ورد اليوم	(إعادة أولى)	09:00	الشيخ ناصر القطامي
نداء الإيمان	(إعادة أولى)	09:30	مجموعة علماء
مذكرات سائح	(إعادة أولى)	10:00	د. علي العمري
حتى يكتمل المشوار	(بث أصلي)	10:20	مجموعة علماء
خواطر	(إعادة ثانية)	10:40	أ. أحمد الشقيري
أفي الله شك	(إعادة أولى)	11:00	د. عائض القرني
واحة القلوب	(إعادة أولى)	11:30	د. علي بادحدح
مذكرات سائح	(بث أصلي)	12:00	د. علي العمري
ومضات قرآنية	(بث أصلي)	12:25	مجموعة علماء
فواصل رسالة حب	(إعادة أولى)	12:55	أ. حنان القطان
علمتني الحياة	(إعادة ثانية)	13:00	د. طارق السويدان

د. عمرو خالد	14:00	(إعادة ثانية)	قصص القرآن ج2
د. نبيل العوضي	15:00	(بث أصلي)	روائع القصص
أ. أحمد الشقيري	15:30	(بث أصلي)	خواطر
الشيخ ناصر القطامي	15:50	(إعادة ثانية)	ورد اليوم
مجموعة علماء	16:10	(بث أصلي)	يستفتونك
مجموعة علماء	17:00	(بث أصلي)	نداء الايمان
د. عائض القرني	17:30	(بث أصلي)	أفي الله شك
أ. نورة هاشم	18:00	(بث أصلي)	في حب آل البيت
د. علي بادحدح	18:45	(بث أصلي)	واحة القلوب
د. محمد العوضي	19:20	(بث أصلي)	بيني وبينكم
أ. أحمد الشقيري	20:15	(إعادة أولى)	خواطر
د. لينا الحمصي	22:55	(بث أصلي)	فواصل يحكى ان
د. عمرو خالد	23:00	(بث أصلي)	قصص القرآن ج2

Appendix 3:

LBC SAT Grid Sample

Daily Programs:

LBC Sat - Friday, May 01, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
02:45	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	13:00	Up 2 Date
03:15	Nagham	14:00	Arabic Movie
04:00	LBCI News	16:00	flight 29 down II
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	16:30	Tele Auto
05:30	Bayt Bila Abwab (House without doors)	17:00	Star Academy VI
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:00	LbcSat News
08:30	Martin Yan Quick & Easy	18:30	Star Academy VI
09:00	Moussaferoun 3 (Travellers3)	21:00	Jad
09:30	Raguel we Set Sittat (A Man and 6 Women)	22:00	Alamna layla (our world today)
10:30	Makou Faka	22:30	Star Academy VI
11:30	Hadith Akhar (another discussion)	23:30	American Movie

LBC Sat - Saturday, May 02, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
02:45	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	12:00	Star Academy VI
03:15	Nagham	14:00	Aishou Mana(live with us)
04:00	LBCI News	16:00	Aaelatan (Two Families)
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	17:00	Star Academy VI
05:30	Al Akhrass	18:00	LbcSat News
06:30	Hilhoun Binhoum (Their deal is between them)	18:30	Worood Momazaka (torn flowers)

07:00	Banat Hawa (Daughters of Eve)	19:30	Hadith Akhar(AnotherTalk)
08:30	Tele Auto	21:00	Jad
09:00	Ahlam does not know tears	22:00	Star Academy VI
10:00	After the middle of fear	23:00	Arabic Movie
11:00	Ya Khouy (Brother)		

LBC Sat - Sunday, May 03, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
01:00	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	13:00	Kilmit haq (a rightful word)
02:00	Nagham	14:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)
04:00	LBCI News	16:00	Two families
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	17:00	Star Academy VI
05:30	Al Akhrass	18:00	LbcSat News
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:30	Woroud momaza9a (torn flowers)
08:30	Gillette World Sport	19:30	You and the event
09:00	Ahlam does not know tears	21:00	Jad
10:00	After the Middle of Fear	22:00	Star Academy VI
11:00	Brother	23:00	Star Academy VI
12:00	Juliana		

LBC Sat - Monday, May 04, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
01:00	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	13:00	A rightful word
02:00	Nagham	14:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)
04:00	LBCI News	16:00	two families
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	17:00	Star Academy VI
05:30	Al Akhrass	18:00	LbcSat News
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:30	Woroud momaza9a (torn flowers)

08:30	Darabat (hit)	19:30	The third round
09:00	Ahlam does not know tears	21:00	Jad
10:00	After the Middle of Fear	22:00	Star Academy VI
11:00	Brother (Ya khouy)	23:00	you and the event
12:00	Juliana		

LBC Sat - Tuesday, May 05, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
00:30	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	13:00	a rightful word (kilmit haq)
02:00	Nagham	14:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)
04:00	LBCI News	16:00	Two families
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	17:00	Star Academy VI
05:30	Al Akhrass	18:00	LbcSat News
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:30	Raguel we Set Sittat 3 (A Man and 6 Women)
08:30	Martin Yan Quick & Easy	19:00	Miss USA
09:00	Ahlam does not know tears	21:00	Jad
10:00	After the Middle of Fear	22:00	Star Academy VI
11:00	Brother	23:00	the third round
12:00	Juliana		

LBC Sat - Wednesday, May 06, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
00:30	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	12:00	Juliana
02:00	Nagham	13:00	a rightful word (kilmit haq)
04:00	LBCI News	14:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	16:00	two familes
05:30	Al Akhrass	17:00	Star Academy VI
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:00	LbcSat News
08:30	Martin Yan Quick & Easy	18:30	red with a thick line 2
09:00	Ahlam does not know tears	21:00	Jad
10:00	After the Middle of Fear	22:00	Star Academy VI

11:00 [an](#) the roots stay

23:00 (Daughters of Eve)

LBC Sat - Thursday, May 07, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
00:30	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	12:00	Juliana
02:00	Nagham	13:00	Kilmata Haq (A rightful word)
04:00	LBCI News	14:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	16:00	Up 2 Date
05:30	Akhrass	17:00	Star Academy VI
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:00	LbcSat News
08:30	Martin Yan Quick & Easy	18:30	Sharftouni (You are welcome)
09:00	Ahlam doesn't know tears	21:00	Jad
10:00	After the Middle of Fear	22:00	Star Academy VI
11:00	The roots stay	23:30	Red with w thick Line

LBC Sat - Friday, May 08, 2009

Time	Program	Time	Program
01:30	BAYT MIN WARAK (paper house)	13:00	Up 2 Date
02:30	Nagham	14:00	Arabic Movie
04:00	LBCI News	16:00	flight 29 down II
05:00	Hayer Tayer (Puzzled and Flying)	16:30	Tele Auto
05:30	Akhrass	17:00	Star Academy VI
07:00	Aishou Maana (Live with us)	18:00	LbcSat News
08:30	Martin Yan Quick & Easy	18:30	Star Academy VI
09:00	Moussaferoun (Travellers 3)	20:30	Meeting with the stars
09:30	Raguel we Set Sittat 2 (A Man and 6 Women)	21:00	Jad
10:30	Fakou Faka	22:00	Star Academy VI
11:30	Another discussion	23:00	American Movie

Appendix 4:

Al Resalah “Life Has Taught Me”

التاريخ	الحلقة
(17-04-2010)	الوقت
(17-04-2010)	ابتسم للحياة
(17-04-2010)	المرأة
(17-04-2010)	الطفل
(17-04-2010)	القرآن
(17-04-2010)	الرفائق
(17-04-2010)	الرزق
(17-04-2010)	الشريعة
(17-04-2010)	الأخلاق
(17-04-2010)	السنة
(17-04-2010)	القدوة
(17-04-2010)	السيرة
(17-04-2010)	السعادة
(17-04-2010)	الحوار
(17-04-2010)	القراءة
(17-04-2010)	العقل
(17-04-2010)	التحفيز
(17-04-2010)	الابداع

(17-04-2010)	الاستشارة
(17-04-2010)	التغيير
(17-04-2010)	القيادة
(17-04-2010)	الإنجاز والإتقان
(17-04-2010)	التجديد
(17-04-2010)	القدس
(17-04-2010)	الحرية
(17-04-2010)	الوحدة
(17-04-2010)	الوسطية
(17-04-2010)	العلم
(17-04-2010)	علو الهمة
(17-04-2010)	تمهيدية

Appendix 5:

Al Resalah: Bidun Ihraj¹⁵¹

قناة الرسالة برنامج بدون إحراج

التاريخ	الحلقة
(13-07-2010)	2010/07/13
(06-07-2010)	2010/07/06
(29-06-2010)	أبنائنا.. من يريهم؟
(22-06-2010)	زواج من خارج الحدود
(15-06-2010)	الإدمان ألوان وهوان
(08-06-2010)	فترة الملكة (الخطوبة)
(01-06-2010)	المعاكسات
(25-05-2010)	مسحورين
(18-05-2010)	أبرياء يدفعون الثمن
(11-05-2010)	2010-05-11
(04-05-2010)	2010-05-04
(27-04-2010)	زوجة الأب.. ملاك أم هلاك
(20-04-2010)	غرفة النوم
(13-04-2010)	تعليقات شبابية
(06-04-2010)	أبناؤنا والمدارس
(30-03-2010)	زنا الأقارب
(23-03-2010)	أبناؤنا والأقصى

¹⁵¹<http://www.alresalah.net/#!/programdetail.jsp?pid=148>

(16-03-2010)	فترة الملكة (الخطوبة)
(09-03-2010)	ضغوط نفسية
(09-09-2009)	الصراع
(17-08-2009)	البيت العابد
(10-08-2009)	الخدم جناة أم ضحايا
(03-08-2009)	صراع الأجيال
(27-07-2009)	حماتي حياتي
(20-07-2009)	الشذوذ الجنسي
(13-07-2009)	فقراء
(06-07-2009)	سنة اولى زواج
(29-06-2009)	الصيف أزمة أم فرصة
(22-06-2009)	الوحوش الالكترونية
(15-06-2009)	مجتمعنا والمرض
(08-06-2009)	في انتظار القطار
(05-01-2009)	غزة في بيوتنا
(12-01-2009)	لن تقيدني
(19-01-2009)	العنف الأسري
(26-01-2009)	الأقارب
(02-02-2009)	الأطفال والتحرش الجنسي بهم
(09-02-2009)	البراءة المحرجة
(16-02-2009)	الفتور و الاهمال

Appendix 6:

LBC SAT: Season one and Two from **Bold Red Line**

First Season:

2008/03/19 البطالة: Unemployment

2008/03/25 التمرد بالموسيقى: Rebel with Music

2008/04/02 الفتيات المستقلات: Independent Girls

2008/4/9 التعارف: Dating

2008/4/16 التحوّل الجنسي; Gender Transformation

2008/04/23 الهوس بالسيارات والسرعة: Obsession with cars and speed

2008/04/30 الهوس بالموضة: Obsession with Fashion

2008/05/07 الادمان: Addiction

2008/05/28 للرجال فقط... للنساء فقط: For men only...for women only

2008 11 حزيران: We don't disagree 11th of June

18.06.2008 الهوس بالمشاهير والفنانين: Obsession with celebrities and artists

25.06.2008 علاقة الاباء بالابناء: The Parents and Sons relationship

Second season:

2008/10/15: اعلاميون يقفون على الخط الاحمر; Media figures standing on the Red Line

2008/10/22: التربية الجنسية: Sexual Education

052008 : السحر والشعوذة: Magic and Sorcery

122008 : المس الشيطاني: Demonic Possession

2008/11/19 : العنوسة: Spinterhood

2008/12/03 : العنصرية والطائفية: Racism and Sectarianism

2008/12/10 : التضحية: Sacrifice

2009/01/08 : النجاة من الموت والعمر الجديد: Escape from death and the new life

2009/01/15 : الاطفال

2009/01/22: خطأ أو مستحيل طبي: Medical error or impossible

2009/01/27: المثليون: The homosexuals

2009/02/05: علاقة الإنسان بالحيوان: humans and animals relationship

2009/02/12: حلقة وهب الاعضاء: Organ Donation

2009/02/19: حلقة الزواج: Marriage

2009/02/25: الطلاق: Divorce

04:03.2009 - اهلي مطلقون: My family is divorced

12.03.2009: العنف ضد المرأة: Violence against women

19.03.2009 - العنف ضد الرجال: Violence against men

26.03.2009 - الحب: Love

01.04.2009 - هوايات خطيرة: Dangerous hobbies

09/04/08 - حلقة الخيانة: Treason

15.04.2009 حلقة العقم: Infertility

22.04.2009: التحرش الجنسي: sexual harassment

29.04.2009: الماضي الذي اصبح عائقاً: The past that has become an impediment

06.05.2009: اثر السجن على السجين ومحيطيه: The impact of Jail on inmates and their environment

13.05.2009: الوسواس القهري: Obsessive compulsive disorder

10.06.2009 حلقة الثأر: Revenge

17.06.2009: حلقة تعدد الازواج والزوجات: Multiplicity of husband and wives

24.06.2009 حلقة الندم: Remorse

01.07.2009: حلقة اللذة الجنسيّة: sexual Pleasure

08.07.2009: مهين ما بعد الموت: After death careers

15.07.2009: الصراع مع المرض: ولا بد ان يستجيب القدر: The cycle of conflict with a disease: Destiny

Appendix 7:

List of Interviewees

Fieldwork in Cairo, Egypt, June 2009:

- 1- Youssef Khalid, *film director*
- 2- Amr Salama, *film director*
- 3- Amr Mandour, *Planning and Schedule Manager at Rotana*
- 4- Luke Beerman, *Deputy head of Rotana Group*
- 5- Malaka Azrar, *religious dignitary banned from Al Resalah*
- 6- Haitham Al Bitar, *Director of Rotana news*
- 7- Gamal Nazi, *chairman of Global Media Productions that produces movies for Rotana*
- 8- Hassan El Shafei, *Music Producer and Arab Idol Judge*
- 9- Naglaa Abu Al Naga, *Journalist and Currently head of Rotana Programs*

Fieldwork Beirut, Lebanon, July 2011:

- 1- Malek Maktabi, *producer and presenter of Red Bold Line on LBC Sat*
- 2- Pierre Daher, *LBC int. Vice president*
- 3- Mouna Abu Sulaiman, *Presenter of Kalam Nawa'im and former director of Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation*
- 4- *Bold Red Line Producer*
- 5- Mirna Khayyat, *Freelance director and producer of music video clips*

Interviews in London, United Kingdom, 2012/2013

- 1- Nawal Al Saadawi, *feminist, author and activist (2012)*
- 2- Jamal Khashoggi, *Director of Al Arab TV (Rotana's News Channel)*
- 3- Bassam Al Brikan, *former director of Rotana records*
- 4- Ahmed Hindawi, *Associated Press TV's operations manager*
- 5- Nehro Shawo, *Producer at Associated Press*
- 6- Zaki Shehab,
- 7- Mona Abo Soleiman
- 8- Heba Jamal, *Presenter of Sayyidaty*

Appendix 8:

Semi-Structured Elite Interviews - Discussion Guidelines (sample)

- 1- **To the channel management, director and executives**
 - How do you identify your channel in the Middle Eastern market today?
 - Do you have any specific messages, goals, targets?
 - How do you advance women rights via your programs?

- 2- **To the celebrities: TV hosts/secular and religious, filmmakers, music producers**
 - How was your experience working with Rotana/Al waleed?
 - What is the purpose from your work?
 - Do you have any targets related to women rights?

- 3- **To the guests on the shows and former employees**
 - How was your experience being interviewed on LBC Sat?
 - How was your experience working for Al Waleed?

Appendix 9:

Al Waleed Bin Talal's Letter of Dismissal and Twitter Message to Dr. Tarek al Suweidan


سعادة الدكتور / طارق بن محمد السويديان
مدير عام قناة الرسالة الفضائية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

لقد ساءني ما اطلعت عليه من اراء نشرتموها أخيراً في مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي تعبر عن توجهات لكم تخالف توجهاتنا التي بنينا عليها (قناة الرسالة الفضائية) منذ إنطلاقها، حيث أردناها مندبراً للوسطية غير منتمية لأي حزب ولا متبينة لأفكار أي جماعة وحيث أن ما صدر عنكم لا يتفق مع منهجنا ومفاهيمنا للسياسة التي رسمتها اللجنة الإستشارية العليا للقناة المشكّلة من خبرة علماء المملكة العربية السعودية برئاسة معالي الأخ الشيخ عبدالله بن سليمان المنيع المستشار بالديوان الملكي وعضو هيئة كبار العلماء، بل لم تكفوا بذلك فقد أعلنتم خلال محاضرة لكم في اليمن بانكم "من قيادات الإخوان المسلمين"!

فإنه لا يسمعا إلا أن نستكرو بشدة ما ذكرتموه مرددين قول الله تعالى: "إنك لا تهدي من أحببت ولكن الله يهدي من يشاء"، مع إنه خير خلفٍ عليكم أنا سبق وأن نبهناكم عدة مرات انكم محسوبون على قناة الرسالة التي كنتم مديراً لها حتى تاريخ كتابة هذا الخطاب وطالبناكم بالحرص على لم الشمل وجمع الكلمة وعدم التفرق، كما حذرناكم مراراً بضرورة إيقاف تلك التوجهات المتطرفة والغير مقبولة لدينا نهائياً، ولكن (لا حياة لمن تنادي).

وحيث إننا لم نلمس لذلك أثراً خصوصاً عند الأحداث الأخيرة التي عصفت بمصر العزيزة، مع أمنياتنا بأن يحفظها الله من كل سوء ومكروه وأن يقيها ويقي بلاد المسلمين شر الفتن ما ظهر منها وما بطن، فإننا بناء على ذلك ولتكرار تلك المخالفات منكم نبلغكم بإنهاء خدماتكم كمدير لقناة الرسالة الفضائية إعتباراً من تاريخ اليوم عليكم تسليم إدارة القناة فوراً إلى الأستاذ تركي الشبانة رئيس القطاع التلفزيوني في مجموعتنا. سنألين الله أن يهدينا ويهديكم إلى سواء السبيل.

رئيس مجلس أمناء قناة الرسالة الفضائية

الوليد بن طلال بن عبدالعزيز آل سعود

صورة إلى الأستاذ تركي الشبانة رئيس القطاع التلفزيوني

 **الوليد بن طلال** @Ahwaleed_Talal Follow

لا مكان لأي إخواني في مجموعتنا. مرفق اقالة الإخواني (طارق السويديان) الذي إعترف بإنتمائه للحركة الإخوانية الإرهابية. pic.twitter.com/F28wPgCbHW

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سعادة الدكتور / طارق بن محمد السويديان
مدير عام قناة الرسالة الفضائية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

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رئيس مجلس أمناء قناة الرسالة الفضائية

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صورة إلى الأستاذ تركي الشبانة رئيس القطاع التلفزيوني

Appendix 10:

Cinematography

- 1- The Sin (*Al Haram*): Feature Film (1965). Director: Henri Barakat: Runtime: 105 minutes
- 2- The Nightingale's Prayer (*Do'aa al Karawan*): Feature Film (1959). Director: Henri Barakat. Runtime: 126 minutes.
- 3- Midaq Alley (*Zuqaq Al Midaq*) Feature Film (1963). Director: Hassan al-Imam. Time: 105 minutes.
- 4- The Yacoubian Building (*Imarat Ya'qubian*): Feature Film (2006). Director: Marwan Hamed. Runtime: 161 minutes.
- 5- Malatily Bathhouse (*Hammam Al Malality*): Feature Film (1973). Director: Salah Abu Seif. Runtime: 94 minutes
- 6- Alexandria... Why? (*Iskanderiya... lih?*): Feature Film (1979). Director: Youssef Chahine. Runtime: 133 minutes
- 7- Alexandria Again and Forever (*Iskanderiya Kamen ou Kamen*): Feature Film (1989). Director: Youssef Chahine. Runtime: 100 minutes
- 8- *Menahi*: Feature Film (2009). Director: Ayman Makram. Runtime: 140 minutes
- 9- How's It Going? (*Keif al-hal?*): Feature Film (2006). Director: Izidore K. Musallam. Runtime: 95 minutes
- 10- *Wadjda*: Feature Film (2012). Director: Haifa el Mansour. Runtime: 98
- 11- Caramel (*Sukkar Banat*): Feature Film (2007). Director: Nadine Labaki. Runtime: 95
- 12- My Wife, the Director General (*Mrati Mudir 'Aam*): Feature Film (1966). Director: Faten Abdel Wahab. Runtime: 100 minutes
- 13- I am Free (*Ana Hurra*): Feature Film (1958). Director: Salah Abu Seif. Runtime: 115 minutes
- 14- Without Censorship (*Bidoon Raqaba*): Feature Film (2009). Director: Hany Gerges Fawzi. Runtime: 118 minutes
- 15- Miss Sugar (*Sukkar Hanim*): Feature Film (1960). Director: Sayid Bedir. Runtime: 116 minutes
- 16- My Wife's Dignity (*Karamet Zawjati*): Feature Film (1967). Director: Faten Abdel Wahab. Runtime: 115 minutes
- 17- I need a Solution (*Orido Hallan*): Feature Film (1975). Director: Said Marzouk. Runtime: 130 minutes
- 18- The Lawyer Fatimah (*Al-Ustazah Fatimah*): Feature Film (1952) Director: Faten Abdel Wahab. Runtime: 105 minutes

Appendix 11:

Al Waleed Bin Talal's Pan-Arab Media Empire: Rotana Media Group

1. Rotana TV channels:

- Rotana Khalijia
- Rotana Masriya
- Rotana Classic (Classic Movies) previously Rotana Zaman
- Rotana Cinema (Movies Channel)
- Rotana Aflam (Films Channel)
- Rotana Clip (Music Clips Channel)
- Rotana Mousica (Music Channel)
- Al-Resala (Islamic Religious Channel)
- Fox
- FX TV
- Fox Movies

2. Rotana Studios: film production company

3. Rotana Magazine: a magazine in the Arabic language

4. Rotana Radio stations: Radio Rotana Delta (Lebanon), Radio Rotana Jordan, Radio Rotana FM Saudi Arabia, Radio Style FM (Syria)

5. Rotana Records: the Arab world's largest record label with more than 100 signed artists.

6. Rotana Media Services (RMS or rms): the media marketing and advertising wing of Rotana Group

7. Rotana Café: a series of trendy Rotana TV-themed cafés

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