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Wearing an Authentic Arab Body:
New Masculinities in Contemporary Photography

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in Art History

by

Alessandra Amin

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Wearing an Authentic Arab Body:

New Masculinities in Contemporary Photography

by

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Master of Arts in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Saloni Mathur, Chair

Representations of the veiled woman dominate Western collections of contemporary Middle Eastern art. They are also, however, symbolically inextricable from power structures that propagate derogatory tropes of Arab culture, and their proliferation hinders more incisive inquiries into issues of gender in the Middle East. This paper examines how two Middle Eastern photographers, responding to this predicament, have begun to posit new ways of representing resistant bodies, departing from the tired trope of the veil and, in fact, from the female body altogether. An alternative framework for contesting gender relations in the Middle East and associated Western stereotypes can be found in photographic explorations of masculinity, such as Tanya Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* (2009) and Tamara Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009). I argue that these works represent a potential for new and productive inquiries, and innovative means of articulating gendered bodies as resistant to imperialist categories of gender and sexuality.

The thesis of Alessandra Amin is approved.

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2015

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For many interested in the nexus of gender, imperialism and photography in the Middle East, Malek Alloula's *The Colonial Harem* serves as an important point of departure. Alloula's influential text identifies early twentieth-century postcard photography as underwritten by imperial ideology and as enacting an attendant, collective sexual fantasy. Central to his inquiry is the figure of the veiled woman, a source of infinite frustration for the colonial photographer. Present but obscured, her inaccessibility renders the photographer-voyeur obsessed with her unveiling, driving him, in Alloula's terms, to "force that which disappoints him by its escape."¹ Indeed, the body of the Arab woman is a site of endless fixation for Alloula's colonial photographers and for the author himself. Histories of colonial suppression and reactionary nationalist discourses have, in many ways, overdetermined the symbol of this othered and obscured body, and the Muslim woman as a photographic and cultural trope remains ubiquitous in popular media today. Representations of the veiled woman are symbolically inextricable from power structures that propagate derogatory tropes of Arab culture, and the proliferation of this trope hinders more incisive inquiries into issues of gender in the Middle East. This paper examines how two Middle Eastern photographers, in response to this predicament, have begun to posit new ways of representing resistant bodies, using methods that depart from the tired trope of the veil and, in fact, from the female body altogether. An alternative framework for contesting gender relations in the Middle East and associated Western stereotypes can be found in photographic explorations of masculinity, such as those by photographers Tanya Habjouqa (b. 1975) and Tamara Abdul Hadi (b.1980). This paper begins with a brief

¹ Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 7.

historical overview to illustrate the deeply rooted field of connotations underlying the veil as a symbol, and the implications of this trope for contemporary photography, before examining two photographic series, Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* (2009) and Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009)

I. Introduction: Representing the Veil

From the beginning, so-called feminist discourse in the Middle East has, as historian Leila Ahmed has stated, borne “the taint of having served as an instrument of colonial domination,” especially in matters concerning the veil.² Contemporary discussion of the links between veiling, culture and imperialism finds its historical origins in late-nineteenth-century Egypt, with the 1899 publication of Qassim Amin's *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (The Liberation of Woman). This work agitated for the education of women and the reform of marriage laws, as well as for the abolition of the veil, and has traditionally, if problematically, been regarded as marking the introduction of feminism to Arab culture. A French-educated lawyer, Amin saw his country as a backwards nation whose progress was hindered by its traditions, and essentially equated the modernization of Egyptian society with the emulation of European examples. Indeed, despite the seemingly progressive claims of *Tahrir al-Mar'a*, its concerns were less with the liberation of women for its own sake than with the development of Egypt as a modern, Europeanized nation – concerns that emerged with particular clarity through Amin's discussion of the veil.

² Leila Ahmed, “The Discourse of the Veil,” in *Veil: Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art*, ed. David A. Bailey et al. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 43.

While the work's publication sparked debate about many issues related to women's rights and gender roles in the greater Middle East, it was Amin's assertion about the veil that provoked the most vitriol. As Ahmed has pointed out, Muslim intellectuals had previously argued for women's education and called for reforms in marriage law without inciting heated dispute, but Amin's work, which considered the veil the essential emblem of women's oppression as well as a major obstacle to modernized society, caused tremendous uproar. Critics were quick to malign the author as a European sympathizer, and to attribute his stance on the veil to a misplaced reverence for the culture of the colonizer. Ultimately, *Tahrir al-Mar'a* triggered the first "battle of the veil" in the Arab press, sparking a barrage of related books and articles and inaugurating a new era of discourse, in which the *hijab* came to signify a broad field of social tensions. From this point forward, as Ahmed notes, "its connotations encompassed... the widening cultural gulf between the different classes in society and the interconnected conflict between the culture of the colonizers and that of the colonized."³

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), the Martinican intellectual and anti-colonial thinker, foregrounded this problem in the context of the Algerian revolution by situating the veil directly within a network of political narratives that resonate beyond Algeria to the broader Arab world. In his seminal essay *L'Algérie se dévoile* (Algeria Unveils Itself) (1959), he observed that the French strategy for eroding Algerian resistance followed a specific formula: "*ayons les femmes et le reste suivra.*"⁴ Early French feminism,

³ Ibid., 43.

⁴ Frantz Fanon, "L'Algérie Se Dévoile," in *L'An V de La Révolution Algérienne* (Paris: Éditions François Maspero, 1959), 19. "When we have the women, the rest will follow" (translations mine unless otherwise noted).

according to Fanon, played a major role in mobilizing this strategy; by suggesting that Algerian patriarchy was to blame for the disenfranchisement of Algerian society, rather than French colonialism, French women's groups served both to sow unrest within the family and to pacify the resistance occurring among Algerian women. Central to the allegedly liberatory discourse espoused by such groups were questions of dress; the veil became a primary – and highly visible – symbol of oppression, whereas Western dress was encouraged alongside a sense of French citizenship as a vehicle for women's liberation.

Fanon's account of the Arab woman identifies her, primarily, as a key to the conquest of men. She is implicated, first and foremost, as a pawn through which French colonial forces can undermine the structure of Algerian society: "*chaque voile qui tombe,*" writes Fanon, "*chaque visage qui s'offre au regard hardi et impatient de l'occupant experiment en négatif que l'Algérie commence à se renier et accepte le viol du colonisateur.*"⁵ Here, the exposure of the Algerian woman's body directly signifies cultural surrender to colonial ideology. However, Fanon *does* discuss the role of women in the revolution from a standpoint that was progressive for its moment. As literary scholar Anne McClintock has noted, "the problem of women's agency" is "brilliantly raised as a question" by Fanon where it had not been by others, albeit as a question that is ultimately and "abruptly foreclosed."⁶ Algerian women, Fanon insists, were not all ignorant of the political motives beneath the discourse of dress, and many manipulated it to the benefit of the revolution. The unveiled Algerian woman "*évolue comme un*

⁵ Fanon 25. "Each veil that falls, each face that offers itself to the occupier's bold and impatient gaze, expresses in the negative that Algeria has begun to abandon its convictions, to accept the rape of the colonizer."

⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 366.

poisson dans l'eau occidentale,” gaining the trust and admiration of the colonizers only to smuggle guns, bombs or false ID cards for the resistance.⁷ Conversely, notes Fanon, other Algerian women veiled themselves with renewed devotion in the service of nationalism; in either case, the women Fanon describes were active members of the resistance, and their clothing was not only implicated in the articulation of their political identities, but had direct, tangible consequences within the context of the revolution. And yet, as McClintock incisively notes, theirs was “a *designated* agency – an agency by invitation,” articulated not as an independent struggle against imperialism but as a response to the needs of Algerian men.⁸ Fanon’s vision of female militancy, per McClintock, was “simply a passive offspring of male agency and the structural necessity of the war.”⁹ Thus, despite Fanon’s initial, groundbreaking evocation of female agency, the possibility of this agency as distinctively feminist is denied by its implication as part of a larger masculine schema.

Returning to Alloula’s 1986 text, one encounters a less nuanced approach to the patriarchal framework of Algerian nationalism from within which the author writes. As literary scholar Winifred Woodhull notes, Alloula’s analysis is “haunted by a sort of spectral presence, that of an undivided Algeria – an emerging nation in which the conflicting interests of men and women appear only as the product of the conqueror’s sexual fantasies and administrative policies.”¹⁰ In this work, the Algerian woman, veiled or unveiled, is presented less as an individual than as a site for the enactment of male conquest. Alloula makes extensive use of rape metaphors in a way that paradoxically

⁷ Fanon 40. “Maneuvers like a fish in Western water.”

⁸ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 366.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Winifred Woodhull, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 45.

denies – or at least ignores – the violation of actual Algerian women, and time and time again, he refers to the "real" Algerian woman as the elusive foil to those depicted on the postcards. These “complacent counterparts to... inaccessible Algerian women” are paid models, recruited, Alloula hastens to note, “on the margins of a society in which loss of social position in the wake of conquest” has invariably “propelled” women “towards prostitution.”¹¹ The model, to Alloula, “is simultaneously the epiphany of this absent woman and her imaginary takeover,”¹² but never an Algerian woman herself; she has forsaken her authentic womanhood in the process of posing for the photograph. Alloula’s vision of Algerian womanhood is thus defined negatively, by what these models are *not*, and as the exclusive purview of those who refuse to be seen. The "real" Algerian woman – obscure and elite – is essentially the property and the construct of nationalist rhetoric rather than representative of a group of actual women. Ultimately, the Arab female body is articulated in explicitly symbolic terms, as a vehicle for masculine ideology, be it colonialist or nationalist.

For the purposes of the present paper, Amin, Fanon and Alloula represent key historical and thematic anchors in the broader and immensely complex discussion surrounding representations of the veil. Taken together, they present the veiled body as a *resistant* body within the logic of a patriarchal order, one that refuses the imperial gaze, resists assimilation and aligns itself politically against colonial ideologies. Additionally, however, they sketch the veil – and the body of the woman beneath it – as an acutely overdetermined signifier in imperialist, nationalist and Western feminist discourses. Whether the object of orientalist fixation or the tool of indigenous nation-

¹¹ Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 17.

¹² *Ibid.*

building, the figure of the Arab woman has limited agency, and her physical appearance is of central importance to her political significance. Fanon elucidated the political stakes of *hijab* in an anti-colonial context – stakes that continue to be relevant today, as Muslim women articulate new, anti-imperialist feminisms, and diverse Muslim populations continue to define their communities in contexts such as post-9/11 America, occupied Palestine and a French republic plagued by anti-Muslim legislature and Islamophobic violence. Complimentarily, Alloula introduced a key element in the reduction of the veiled woman to a cultural trope: photography. Drawing from Fanon, Alloula illuminated the central role of photography in the discourse of the veil, as a medium that not only facilitated the representation and circulation of the veiled subject to and among a broad audience, but that also embodied the colonial gaze, defining the relationship between the imperialist corpus and the body of the colonial subject.

Though his text is highly problematic from a feminist standpoint, Alloula accurately observed an important phenomenon. From the moment of the camera's introduction to French and British colonies in the Middle East, photography has played a pivotal role in defining the Arab body to viewers in the West. Through popular ethnographic forms like Alloula's infamous postcards, but also through the genre of photojournalism, the image of the veiled woman especially has proven instrumental in propagating myths about the inherent backwardness of Middle Eastern societies throughout the twentieth century. This trope has been ubiquitous in Western media for decades, from news-related portraits of militancy, such as Eddie Adams' iconic 1969 photo of Leila Khaled (Figure 1), taken after her hijacking of TWA flight 840, to Steve

McCurry's famous *National Geographic* portrait of Sharbat Gula, "the Afghan girl" (Figure 2) whose green eyes captivated so many viewers that she later became the subject of a documentary film.

Contemporary photography, too, continues to be saturated by imagery of the Muslim woman and its attendant mythology, as seen in the example of MFA Boston's 2013 exhibition, *She Who Tells a Story*. This exhibition of "women photographers from Iran and the Arab World" was the first major exhibition of its kind in the United States, and took its name from Rawiya ("Storyteller" in Arabic), a newly established collective of female photographers working in the Middle East.¹³ Despite its name, the exhibition showcased the work of only one Rawiya member, Tanya Habjouqa, alongside works from better-known artists such as Shirin Neshat and Shadi Ghadirian.¹⁴ In the forward to the exhibition catalogue, curator Michket Krifa characterizes "women's creativity" in the Middle East as running "counter to gender prejudices in the Arab world and Iran," and celebrates the photographers in the exhibition for adopting "a variety of expressive forms" that "invite us to exercise restraint in characterizing" their work.¹⁵ The scope of the photographs, however, was not necessarily as expansive as Krifa suggests: of the twelve photographers showcased, more than half dealt with the image of the Muslim woman as primary subject matter, their works largely dominated by the figures of women in varying forms of *hijab*. Alternately, in some works, the bodies of Arab or

¹³ The Rawiya Collective (f. 2011) is the first all-female photography collective in the Middle East, and is dedicated to providing, per its website's description, "an insider's view of a region in flux." Members include Tamara Abdul Hadi and Tanya Habjouqa, as well as Myriam Abdelaziz, Laura Boushnak, and Boushra Alumutawakel. www.rawiya.net

¹⁴ *She Who Tells A Story* also included work by Boushra Alumutawakel, who joined the Rawiya collective one year after the opening of the exhibition.

¹⁵ Michket Krifa, "Foreword: Women of Images," in *She Who Tells a Story*, ed. Kristen Gresh et al. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2013), 9.

Iranian women in Western dress were used to contest stereotypes of gender relations in predominantly Muslim countries.

Indeed, images such as Neshat's *Women of Allah* series (1993-1997) have come to define Western expectations of art – and especially art produced by women – coming out of the Islamic world today. Neshat's success in the global art market points to the enduring potency of this imagery, but also elucidates some of its limitations. For example Britta Schmitz, curator at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum of Contemporary Art, Berlin, has celebrated Neshat's *Women of Allah* for pointing “towards the complex paradox of a society founded on traditional values and an archaic religion and... that simultaneously cannot turn its back on modernity altogether and must observe the dissolution of the contours behind the laws governing dress.”¹⁶ Disappointingly, what Schmitz and others often find appealing about Neshat's work is not its ambiguity, but rather the ease with which it can be interpreted to corroborate Western assumptions about Iran as the crucible of conflict between (internal) archaic customs and the inevitable, externally-driven forces of modernity. As Iraqi artist Jananne Al-Ani observes, the “debate around the veil is one of the remaining subjects which persistently invokes the tired and clichéd binaries of East/West, black/white, male/female.”¹⁷

If the veil, in contemporary artistic representation, persistently conjures tired binaries, how do contemporary photographers in the Middle East negotiate its deeply rooted dilemmas? Can an artist investigate, in visual terms, the structure of gender

¹⁶ Britta Schmitz, “Your ‘True Land’ Is the Place Where You Are Going, Not the Place Where You Are Now,” in *Shirin Neshat*, ed. Britta Schmitz and Beatrice E. Stammer (Berlin: Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, 2005), 97.

¹⁷ Jananne Al-Ani, “Acting Out,” in *Veil: Veiling, Representation and Contemporary Art*, ed. David A. Bailey et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 90.

relations in the Arab world and the politics of visibility therein without the use of *hijab*?

What can be recuperated of the legacy of the veil's aesthetic resistance to the imperialist gaze, and how can it be reimagined?

In what follows, I will turn to two contemporary photographers working in the Arab world in an effort to formulate potential responses to these questions. The experiences of these artists diverge greatly from one another, yet they share personal histories marked by intercultural upbringings. Tanya Habjouqa, a Circassian Jordanian, was born in Amman and educated in Texas, and now lives and works in East Jerusalem; Tamara Abdul Hadi was born to Iraqi parents in the UAE, and spent her early life in Montreal before returning to Dubai, where she is currently based. Both of these artists are members of the Rawiya collective featured in MFA Boston's *She Who Tells a Story*. Nevertheless, as I will discuss, their work expands far beyond the confines of the feminine imagery privileged in that show; indeed, Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* (2009) and Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009) both position the male body as a central point of inquiry. Their images of the nearly nude male body evoke liminal, multidimensional spaces between vulnerability and strength, and challenge the binary conception of masculinity and femininity central to Arab patriarchal cultures. What is more, they also challenge imperialistically determined categories of Arab maleness by positing modes of gender and sexual expression that encapsulate multiple and conflicting identities. This is radical considering that categories of masculinity and sexual desire have also been traditionally understood in binary terms: firstly, the masculinity of the colonial subject as defined by the paradox of savage lust and effeminate impotency, and secondly, sexual desire as delineated by the Western

categories of gay and straight. Furthermore, unlike examples of what might be termed “the Neshat paradigm,” these photographs do not rely directly on a fixed iconography of Islamic or Arab identity. Instead, they work with nuanced theoretical frameworks informed by tropes such as that of the harem and that of the veil, breathing new life and a contemporary feminist consciousness into photographic considerations of Arab identity.

II. Tanya Habjouqa, *Fragile Monsters* (2009)

Tanya Habjouqa’s *Fragile Monsters* approaches a subject in seemingly polar opposition to that of the veiled woman: the nearly nude male bodybuilder. This series documents the Gaza Martyr’s Tournament, a bodybuilding competition held in Amman, Jordan in honor of those who died during Israel’s assault on the Gaza strip in winter of 2008-2009. From the outset, the framework is disorienting to the Western viewer: here, an activity so deeply culturally associated with the West, embodied by figures like Arnold Schwarzenegger, is performed by people who are all too often associated with conservative dress and a certain disdain for all things Western. Furthermore, bodybuilding, a seemingly superficial, self-centered and unproductive activity, seems curiously at odds with the collective commemoration of fallen civilians through the shared memorialization of martyrs. These photos thus mark a moment during which the activity of bodybuilding takes on political and cultural connotations far removed from its original Western context. As such, they pose a series of questions: How does this seemingly individual struggle for self-improvement, enacted through the body, relate to collective processes of mourning for the martyred bodies who themselves represent

loss to an Arab collective? How does the queerness of these images challenge notions of “authentic” masculinity, and what are the implications of such a challenge for representations of gender in the postcolonial Middle East? Furthermore, how does Habjouqa’s incursion into the homosocial space of a bodybuilding competition call attention to the relationship between photographer and her/his gendered subject in a postcolonial context?

In one photo (Figure 3) from Habjouqa’s series, a competitor stands nervously in the center of the frame. His upper body is motionless, his chest, abdomen and shoulders frozen as if carved from stone, but his forearms are tense, and his hands flutter nervously, a delicate motion at odds with his imposing musculature. He stares directly into the camera, his brow furrowed, his mouth suspended in a hesitant smile that does little to mask his anxiety. He seems nervous, perhaps about his prospects, yet he is photographed against a whitewashed wall, framed by a flat stillness away from the apparent hubbub of the competition; in such a staged environment, one is left to wonder whether the camera itself is the cause of his apprehension.

The unsettling nature of this photograph comes partially from its implication of the viewer in the subject’s discomfort. The bodybuilder’s nervous grimace is directed towards the camera, and his worried eyes meet the spectator’s: He is acutely aware of being watched. In a second photograph (Figure 4) however, the viewer is positioned voyeuristically, having stumbled across a scene in which she does not participate, but that unfolds within her immediate physical proximity. Indeed, the unease of this image comes partly from this intrusion, the sense of existing within private space without permission to do so. This photograph features two men in a locker room, surrounded by

the detritus of their sport: plastic bags and energy drink cans litter the room, bronzing lotion smeared across the tile walls. One man flexes, presumably in front of a mirror, while his competitor looks on. The flexing figure is covered from ankle to jaw in a shimmering coat of bronzing lotion, his arms held behind his back and his legs bent at the knee and crossed slightly. Simultaneously, he is the embodiment of ideal masculine strength, his coppery body evocative of classical sculpture, and a man, covered in makeup, smiling at himself as he curtsies in a mirror. The brow of his opponent is creased with concern as he stares unabashedly; it is unclear whether the tension is competitive or homoerotic, but whatever the relationship between the two men, the aesthetics of the photograph can be termed queer in its disavowal of a stable, “authentic” reading of gender or sexuality.

Bodybuilders perform gender on a level akin to drag. The exaggerated musculature and deliberate self-fashioning of the competitors, and the pure artifice of their sport, parody ideals of gender and lend themselves, more broadly, to a camp aesthetic. Moreover, this over-the-top aesthetic, like that of drag, destabilizes the notion of the body as the immediate extension of a natural self, positing it instead as a codified vehicle inextricably shaped by exterior forces. Indeed, as theorist Marcia Ian notes, bodybuilding not only embodies “all the clichés of masculinism from the sublime to the barbarous” but also enacts the ambivalence with which humans negotiate their relationships to bodies themselves.¹⁸ Bodybuilding, according to Ian, “both depends on and tries to minimize or camouflage the Cartesian dualism which has historically structured our relation to our ‘own,’ owned bodies, the sense that we are subjectivities

¹⁸ Marcia Ian, “How Do You Wear Your Body?” in *Negotiating Lesbian & Gay Subjects*, ed. Monica Dorenkamp et al. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 77.

surreally wearing our bodies, that our bodies conform to and play variations on types and styles just as our clothes, our hairdos, our gestures do.”¹⁹ Furthermore, and most importantly, these aesthetics of bodybuilding challenge the notion of authentic masculinity in the same way that drag does: by invoking the spectral threat of imitation. Drag, notes queer theorist J. Halberstam, comments on “the layered effect of all masculinities to the extent that the male body cannot and does not guarantee authenticity, legitimacy and reality without subordinating other bodies to the realm of ‘imitation.’”²⁰ In its hyper-performativity, bodybuilding makes visible the construction of gender, and blurs distinctions between “real” or “legitimate” masculinity and mere imitations of such. Muscles that might ordinarily be coded as signs of masculine virility become, in their exaggerated form, a sort of costume, a signifier with too obvious a referent.

Scholars such as Halberstam have remarked upon the history of queer representation in photography as primarily engaging various “underworlds.” Starting with Brassai’s foray into the lesbian nightclubs of 1930s Paris (and further exemplified in the corpus of Diane Arbus) the photographic fascination with queer bodies has long been accompanied by an equivalent fascination with the spaces in which they circulate. The dyke bar, the drag show and other such iconic spaces of queer subculture have historically served photographers as new and mysterious frontiers, spaces that transgress, implicitly or explicitly, sociosexual taboos. The harem played a similar role in colonial photography, construed as a space for the reckless abandon of “civilized” sexual morality and, consequently, as a space for the reassertion of cultural hegemony.

¹⁹ Ibid., 78.

²⁰ Jack Halberstam, “Queer Faces: Photography and Subcultural Lives,” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, 3rd ed., ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 104.

As Brassai entered the Parisian nightclub, the colonial photographer entered – or, at least, reconstructed – the harem: the intent, in both cases, was to cast judgment but also to titillate, to reaffirm dominance and to stake claims to spaces forcibly entered. While Brassai seems superficially to differ from the photographers of the colonial harem in their desire to expose artifice, further consideration shows complex and strikingly dialogic approaches to authenticating the Other.

In the 1930s, Brassai and his camera frequented *Le Monocle*, then a popular lesbian bar in Paris. Here, Brassai notes, “all the women were dressed like men, and so totally masculine in appearance that at first glance one thought they were men.” He hastily continues: “Obsessed by their unattainable goal to be men, they wore the most somber uniforms; black tuxedos, as though in mourning for their ideal masculinity.”²¹ Brassai’s text appears alongside his photographs of *Le Monocle* (Figure 5-7) in *The Secret Paris of the 1930s*, as if to qualify them or even preemptively correct the viewer’s potential interpretation. His first statement is hyperbolic – indeed, as is plainly seen in figures 5 and 7, not *all* of the women in the bar are dressed in masculine attire – but suggests, quite reasonably, that an uninformed viewer might mistake the butches in the photographs for “real” men. He goes on to forcefully eliminate this interpretive possibility, suggesting that these photographs bear witness to an (implicitly pathological) “obsession” with the “unattainable goal” of masculinity, and asserting his subjects’ pitiable status as pretenders to the throne of true maleness. Here, Brassai’s method of understanding the Other relies both on assigning authenticity and refusing it. His text ignores the femmes of the club, despite their appearance in his photographs, and positions their masculine counterparts as the “authentic” lesbians whom he has traveled

²¹ Brassai, *The Secret Paris of the 30’s* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 162.

here to photograph. In the context of a heteronormative, patriarchal social structure, their aspirational masculinity authenticates their desire for women; this masculinity, however, can only be *inauthentic*, an imitative shell of a quality that only true men (such as the photographer himself) can possess. Of course, Brassai's eagerness to discount female masculinity as purely derivative is not only a product of his historical moment, but is also rooted in broader anxieties of sexual primacy. Per Halberstam, to code this masculinity as imitative is to legitimize that of the cisgendered male; it is also to render the former impotent and nonthreatening. For our purposes, it is important to note that this formulation posits a framework of sexuality that is both exotic and able to be possessed by the male interlocutor. If the "authentic" lesbian is articulated first as butch, and then as a poor substitute for a man, the femmes she seduces remain safely within the realm of heterosexual practice and thus within the scope of male sexual conquest.

Thus, we return to the harem, where the colonial photographer, drawing upon ethnographic objectivity and orientalist fantasy, similarly portrayed the femininity of the indigenous woman as "authentic" to uphold dominant cultural paradigms. In figure 8, labeled simply "*Femmes arabes prenant leur café*," we see two women lounging on heaps of textiles while a third serves them coffee. The women are in varying states of dress, with one partially veiled and draped in a cloak, another in a dress that reveals part of her chest, neck, wrists and ankles, and the third fully clothed except for the conspicuous display of her breasts and midriff. The Turkish coffee is both culturally specific and banal, and as a prop it serves unimaginatively to verify that the scene is authentically and unremarkably Arab. The figures, according to Alloula, signify both "the new intimacy achieved by the photographer, by virtue of which he finds himself in the

center of this privileged locus” and “converge to evoke the idle and voluptuous daily regimen of the harem.”²² Indeed, the sense of boredom in this scene is palpable, and serves a key role in Alloula’s interpretation. The photograph, as Alloula sees it, implies that these women are “welcoming and without reserve,” and will yield to “various states of self-abandonment and lasciviousness” not simply because of their exotic sexual mores but because of the tedium of their lives in the harem.²³ Taken alongside the proliferation of photographs of Arab women “imprisoned” in their own quarters (see figure 9), the coffee scene can be said to evoke sexual frustration as a key component of Arab femininity. According to the logic of ethnographic photography, a woman’s presence in the harem authenticates her as Arab, yet it is also dependent upon her marriage to a polygamist, who is invariably evoked not only as sexually deviant but as sexually inadequate and morally inferior to the colonist-voyeur for whom the photos are taken. Where Brassai’s rejection of authentic female masculinity neutralizes the lesbian as a sexual threat, the formulation of authentic Arab femininity as inherently dissatisfied relegates Arab men to a similarly impotent position, out of reach of the “unattainable goal” of “ideal masculinity.” In both the harem and the dyke bar, a female homosocial space is inscribed with hegemonic masculinity through evocations of authenticity.

While gesturing formally towards these histories of photography that sought to expose a hidden truth, Habjouqa ultimately suggests the futility of the camera as a means of either affirming or denying an authentic subject. Though her photographs are, at first glance, documentary in nature, they quickly unravel into a series of questions about embodiment and performance, rather than making statements about the people

²² Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, 72.

²³ *Ibid.*, 74.

they represent. Habjouqa's photographs of the bodybuilders' locker room recall the underworlds of the harem and the drag show in order to highlight the power structures associated with similarly homosocial scenes in the Middle East and beyond. In the historical examples cited above, women's spaces were appropriated by men and have become sites for the assertion and formation of masculine hegemonies, acting as tools by which to define the self through the debasement of the Other. In Habjouqa's practice, by contrast, a woman enters an all-male environment and creates a series of images that refuse any hierarchical ordering of gender or sexuality.

Take, for example, figure 10, in which a bodybuilder lies prone on a carpeted floor, his head resting on his forearms in such a way that obscures his face. The back of his shorn head is at the center of the frame, his body extending diagonally into the bottom left corner of the composition where it is cropped just below his green velour speedo. It is impossible to tell whether the enormous, bronzed dorsal muscles that emerge from the oriental rugs are actively tensed or only exaggerated from years of body building; from our aerial perspective, it is not clear whether the man has collapsed or is simply taking a rest. Spectators surround the figure, but their reactions offer no information; Habjouqa has framed the photo in such a way that only their legs and feet are visible. In fact, we can deduce precious little about this crowd – it is unclear whether they are concerned or nonplussed, or whether they are even looking at the person on the ground. What we can tell is their gender: they are all men. Habjouqa, quite possibly the only woman in the room when this photograph was taken, handles the subject by refusing a stable relationship to the authoritative power of photography. The composition, in its play of partial information, immediately draws one's attention to

photography's capacity for omission as well as to the photographer's unique agency in crafting an image. Emphasizing this is the unusual angle from which the photograph was taken, which suggests height, evoking visions of a looming and omniscient camera. Yet the bodybuilder pictured here does not affirm the author's power in the way a Brassai or a colonial photograph might. Instead, he occupies a position of equal ambiguity, his body prostrate yet strong, neither assenting nor dissenting to act as the subject of an image.

Habjouqa's incursion into the space of a bodybuilding competition is not only unexpected of a woman in the Arab world, it also revisits and reframes questions of authenticity that have been central to both queer and imperial photography since their respective inceptions. In the latter context, of course, authenticity has been mobilized by both imperialists and anti-imperial nationalists; recall that, for Alloula, a prostitute could not be an authentic Algerian woman, but merely a "complacent counterpart" to one.²⁴ Indeed, images of Arab women have historically circulated on terms of authenticity – whether as "authentic" ethnographic subjects, bare-breasted and implicitly promiscuous, or as Alloula's "true" *Algérienne*, veiled and impenetrable by the colonial eye. In this context, categories of sexual deviance and conformity have been inextricable from questions of authenticity and have shaped representations of Arab women in all shades of the political spectrum. By reframing these questions of authenticity according to masculine paradigms of strength, and by highlighting moments of ambivalence in the relationships of bodybuilders to themselves, to their competitors and to the photographer, Habjouqa casts a critical eye on the photographic constitution of Arab subjecthood itself.

²⁴ Ibid., 17.

III. Tamara Abdul Hadi, *Picture an Arab Man* (2009)

From Habjouqa's depictions of hypermasculine bodybuilders, we move to a portrait of a man from the shoulders up, his head inclined slightly to his left, resting delicately against his gently curled hand (Figure 11). His face is a study in color contrast: bright, natural light illuminates his pale skin, which glows ethereally against his thick black hair, eyebrows, and beard. His eyes are closed, his long eyelashes casting subtle shadows onto his cheeks, and his mouth forms a slight, serene smile. A fringe of frizz frames his beard, which together with stray wisps of his hair add to the image's overall effect of softness; there are no hard lines here, no firm borders, only the organic and fluid forms of light and shadow.

This photograph is of a Lebanese man named Hisham, and is one of a series of similar portraits by Tamara Abdul Hadi entitled *Picture an Arab Man*. According to Abdul Hadi, the conceptual aim of this portrait series is two-fold:

Trying to uncover and break the stereotypes placed upon the Arab male, and providing an alternative visual representation of that identity. Secondly, it is a celebration of their sensual beauty, an unexplored aspect of the identity of the contemporary Arab man, on the cusp of change in a society that reveres an outdated form of hyper-masculinity.²⁵

Picture an Arab Man is thus a direct and pointed attempt to dispel stereotypes of Arab men as fundamentally violent and hypermasculine, a clear response by a self-identified photojournalist to the dearth of positive representations of Arab masculinity in the media. Accordingly, it is clear that photography is here envisioned as a documentary medium, a truth-telling device. *This* is what an Arab man looks like, claim the photographs; they are testimonial, evidence against the stereotypical images that have

²⁵ "Picture an Arab Man." Tamara Abdul Hadi. Accessed March 17, 2015.

historically dominated representations of the Middle East. The reception of these photographs has proceeded along these lines, and has been overwhelmingly positive. Cultural critic Nada Akl, writing for *Illume*, a Muslim lifestyle magazine, states that, in a world where the Arab man is “too often... just the nameless oppressor,” or “a statistic on the evening news,” Abdul Hadi’s series is “an essential reality check.”²⁶ The enthusiastic reception of these photographs marks a difference from Habjouqa’s disavowal of photography’s ability to identify an authentic subject. Authenticity, here, is the theoretical basis upon which these photographs came into existence as well as the discursive framework in which they circulate: these portraits are presented as truthful, substantive, real, representing authentic Arab subjects rather than ethnographic types.

The photographs themselves follow the same formula of portraiture, closely framed to depict only the head and shoulders of their subjects. Their subjects, however, are far from a homogenous group, and do speak in some sense to the diversity of Arab identity. Abdul Hadi’s models are pensive, inviting, quiet, dream-like. In soft focus, their fragility is palpable; these men are captured in moments of intimacy, in which their seemingly strong and healthy bodies display mental or emotional openness, even weakness. In one photo (figure 12), a Syrian man named Omar laughs as if to himself, his white skin, bright smile and delicate collarbone at odds with the image of olive-skinned machismo that dominates non-Western perceptions of Arab maleness. In another (figure 13), a Kuwaiti named Daffy holds his head in his hands, pensive and perhaps upset; he is black, and like Omar the physical reality of his body contests the commonly-understood physiognomy of “Arabness.” Together, the series presents a

²⁶ Nada Akl, "Collection of Portraits Shatters Stereotypes of Arab Men." *Illume Magazine*. April 5, 2012. Accessed March 18, 2015.

spectrum of faces, nationalities, ethnicities and emotions, linked by common geographical and gender identities. Another crucial characteristic linking these figures is what Abdul Hadi calls their “sensual beauty,” a pervasive and multifaceted sense of vulnerability. It is helpful here to consider the terms of this vulnerability, which I will ultimately argue situates these photographs within a broader sociohistorical discourse surrounding representations of Arab bodies.

One striking element of these images is that they embody a number of visual standards typically reserved for Western femininity. In the popular imaginary – reflected everywhere from advertising and fashion photography to the Euro-American art museum – Western femininity is naked, young, sexualized and vulnerable. Hisham’s delicate lashes, Omar’s fragile collarbone and bashful smile all recall emblematic features of women’s fashion photography; their “sensual beauty” draws upon a feminized vocabulary of submission rather than a masculinized paradigm of strength. Significantly, the sexuality of these images is inextricable from vulnerability, but the photographs do not render their subjects emasculated. On the contrary, masculinity in these images is empowered by these feminine terms to occupy a space beyond the damaging categories of imperialist discourse. Masculine potency, especially in an Arab context, has traditionally been articulated as linked to physical power and to violence – consider, again, the domineering husband implied by images such as figure 9. In *Picture an Arab Man*, however, the alternative to the domineering overlord of a vast harem of women is not the emasculated colonial subject, but a deeply humanist portrayal of an individual, whose sexuality is articulated as sensitive and complex. These photographs refuse the imperialistic binary of sexual deviance: rejecting a model

based, on the one hand, on the notion of the Arab man as savagely lustful and, on the other, on the idea of him as impotent and effeminate, these photographs arrive at nuanced categories of masculine sexuality and subjectivity. Abdul Hadi's photographs redefine male sexual agency and attach it not to dominance but to mutuality and respect, simultaneously liberating their masculinity from burdensome stereotypes about Arab men as well as from misogynistic categories of desire. The privilege of power in sexual vulnerability is a particularly male privilege, and in its articulation we are also drawn to understand the gendered specificity of this kind of image. These photographs are effective because the people they depict are those whose sexuality has traditionally been articulated as controlling rather than controlled. The model is giving something up in order to be photographed in this way, abandoning to the extent that he can his gendered position of power relative to the Arab woman who photographs him. In turn, Abdul Hadi's photographs are respectful of this vulnerability, rather than exploitative of it.

An image from Israeli photographer Natan Dvir's 2014 series *Eighteen* (figure 15) can serve as a useful counterexample to Abdul Hadi's work. *Eighteen* documents teenage Palestinian citizens of Israel in and around their homes. Dvir's expressed intentions in shooting the series were not so different from Abdul Hadi's: the photographer stated that he hoped to embark "on a personal journey" to challenge "the widespread misconceptions and stereotypes of the people... who [he] was brought up to consider as foes rather than as allies."²⁷ Despite this outlook, however, Dvir's "personal journey" appears to have led him to some very stereotypical images indeed

²⁷ Jordan Teicher, "A Jewish Photographer's Portrait of Arab Israeli Teenagers." *Slate*. April 22, 2014. Accessed March 19, 2015.

(Figure 15). One photograph, for example, depicts a young Palestinian man, Jihad Nassar, and a group of teenagers identified by Dvir as his fellow gang members. Their environment is ambiguous but dystopic; surrounded by architectural detritus and seemingly incomplete buildings, it is unclear whether the young men are congregating in a construction site or a disaster zone. Five figures perch on a concrete fence, while Nassar stands before them in the center of the photograph. His hands are balled into fists, tense and nervous if not directly combative; a cigarette pokes out from behind his ear and a chain hangs low onto his black T-shirt. He looks directly into the camera, and his gaze is searching and defiant, echoed by two skeptical friends from behind his right shoulder. To his left, one man glances hesitantly at his neighbor, who seems to studiously avoid meeting the gaze of the photographer.

Compare Nassar's gaze with that represented in Abdul Hadi's *Ghazwan, Iraqi* (Figure 14). Jihad Nassar embodies a stereotype of Arab youth: hostile and angry, he confronts the photographer with a penetrating and accusatory glare. His clothing and his surroundings denote low socioeconomic status, and his identification as a gang member aligns him with a subculture of violence and positions him as an aggressor, supporting widely held prejudices that equate Arabs with militancy. Ghazwan, on the other hand, looks into the camera with gentle, slate-blue eyes that are entirely devoid of resentment or hostility, meeting the gaze of the viewer in a way that is engaging without contestation. This is not a gaze that asserts power over us, nor is it a gaze that defies us; it respects the primacy of our look and in return is inviting, comforting, soft. Certainly, the subject position of the photographer cannot be ignored in this context, as in relation to Nassar, Dvir is a colonizer, a usurper of Palestinian land and resources

and, synecdochically, the root cause of the photograph's dystopian landscape. Abdul Hadi, on the other hand, has no explicit authority over Ghazwan except for that which accompanies her station as his photographer. Together, these images put the identity of the photographer into sharp relief; while Abdul Hadi does not occupy the same conspicuous role as her Israeli counterpart, her images do not eclipse the complexities of the photographer-subject relationship.

In approaching these complexities, Abdul Hadi's portraits recall the twinned histories of unveiling and photography, the coalescence of which is embodied perhaps most notoriously in Marc Garanger's 1960 ID photographs of Algerian women. Garanger took these photographs while conscripted in the French army during the War of Algerian Independence, as part of a campaign by the colonial government to issue identification cards to Algerians. Most of the civilians photographed were women, the majority of whom had never sat for a photograph before. These photographs were mandatory; significantly, so too was the removal of one's veil for the portrait, an order which was met with substantial resistance by the indigenous population. Given the political stakes of veiling during the revolution, the role of these identification cards in the surveillance and control of the Algerian population, and the obvious violation inflicted upon those who had been forcibly stripped of their *haiks*, the photographs stirred a great deal of controversy when they reemerged in the 1980s under the banner of fine art.²⁸ First published as a book of photographs entitled *Femmes algériennes* in 1982, the images have continued to circulate in American, European and even Algerian museums as recently as 2013, raising questions about the ethics of exhibiting such

²⁸ See Marc Garanger, *Femmes Algériennes 1960* (Biarritz: Atlantica, 2002).

images.²⁹ For our purposes, Garanger's photographs provide a means of situating Abdul Hadi's practice as one that actively engages not only with contemporary stereotypes of Arab men but with the history of subject/photographer relationships in the greater Middle East.

Cultural theorist and art historian Kaja Silverman interprets Garanger's images as exacerbating Roland Barthes' notion of the photograph's "cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity."³⁰ These photographs, according to Silverman, actively repress "the corporeal and psychic 'reality' of being a woman and Algerian in a French colony," instead replacing this reality with connotations of "'exoticism,' 'primitivism,' 'subordinated race,' and a European notion of femininity ('woman as spectacle')."³¹ Consider Figure 16: a young Algerian woman with long dark hair looks into the camera, and her facial expression communicates a complex and ambiguous combination of fury, frustration, hurt and resignation. She wears a modest, long-sleeved garment and a dense collection of necklaces, but the emotional vulnerability of her gaze draws attention to her bare face, exposed against the whitewashed wall of a stucco building. Silverman might interpret this photograph as effacing the subjectivity of the woman pictured, rendering both her body and her pain as a spectacle for public consumption. Per this interpretation, this image speaks to Ariella Azoulay's argument that the "threat of violation always hangs over the photographic act," and that photography's particular

²⁹ *Femmes Algériennes* first appeared as an exhibition in 1970 at the Maison de la Culture du Havre. It did not re-emerge in the museum circuit until the 1982 publication of *Femmes algériennes 1960*, at which point it was shown at the Fondation nationale de la photographie, Lyon. Later exhibitions moved throughout Europe and the United States and included the 1995 Venice Biennale. Most recently, the photographs were exhibited from 20 April to 30 August, 2013 at the Musée d'Art moderne d'Alger.

³⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 10.

³¹ Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 157, 149.

violence is the ability to “exploit the photographed individual, aggravate his or her injury, publicly expose it, and rob the individual of intimacy.”³² This young woman’s “injury,” here, is that of living under occupation, an injury that is given visual form in an ID photograph to which she did not consent. If, as Azoulay contends, the evocation of violation “is the precise moment in which the contract between photographer, photographed, and spectator is put to the test,”³³ Garanger’s *Femmes algériennes* may exemplify one way in which such a contract has been repeatedly abused in the context of the Middle East.

Garanger’s images represent one instance in a long history of colonial intrusions into the representation of indigenous women. Like the postcards Alloula scrutinizes, the identification photographs recast Algerian women according to Western standards of visibility, engaging both the fantasy of the unveiled woman and the pursuit of Western models of citizenship. However, while the exploitative qualities of these photographs cannot be ignored, neither should one overlook the ways in which, as Woodhull notes, these photographs “bespeak contempt and defiance as much as discouragement and defeat.”³⁴ These are powerful testimonies to an encounter, and indeed to read them as mere colonial explications of “‘exoticism,’ ‘primitivism,’ ‘subordinated race,’ and a European notion of femininity” is to further deny the agency of an already compromised subject.³⁵ The women in these photographs register their discomfort, their recalcitrance, their hurt and their anger; the photographs do not mask the suspicion and

³² Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by the MIT Press, 2008), 118.

³³ *Ibid.*, 119

³⁴ Woodhull, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb*, 43.

³⁵ Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 157, 149.

disdain they harbor for the photographer and, perhaps, for the administration he represents.

Ultimately, the works of Garanger, Dvir and Abdul Hadi speak to anthropologists Lutz and Collin's formulation of the gaze in photography. The gaze, they assert, "is the root of much of the photograph's dynamism as a cultural object, and the place where the analyst can perhaps most productively begin to trace its connections to the wider social world of which it is a part."³⁶ A photograph, according to Lutz and Collins, is essentially an intersection of multiple gazes – those of the spectators, those of the subjects, that of the photographer, etc. – and indeed the play of gazes can be seen to differentiate the three works examined here. *Picture an Arab Man, Eighteen*, and *Femmes algériennes* identify individuals from a generalized whole, and whether their goal is the dissolution of stereotypes or the regulation of a suppressed population, they succeed, to varying extents, in communicating individual likenesses. Yet they are ultimately about encounters, rather than simple representations, as is underscored by the provocative gazes of their subjects. Figures 15 and 16 show interactions between a colonial subject and her or his colonizer, who in these cases is also the photographer, and in both images, the subject's gaze identifies this relationship. The subjects' looks are defiant, and by extension, the photographer is defied; the power dynamics of the scenario are immediately apparent, and the gaze of the subject provides a critical tether to social reality. Figure 14, however, situates itself in a different kind of interaction, one devoid of hostility, rooted not in a broad political circumstance but in emotional and physical intimacy. Ghazwan's gaze is both deferential and relaxed, and manifests a

³⁶ Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic," *Visual Anthropology Review* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 146.

vulnerability that is vastly different than that displayed in the photographs of Nassar and the Algerian woman.

Indeed, the question of vulnerability also links Abdul Hadi's work to Garanger's and Dvir's, and to the history of photography in the Middle East more broadly. The vulnerability implicit in *Femmes algériennes* and *Eighteen* is, first and foremost, a political vulnerability. The subjects of these photographs are vulnerable because they are effectively powerless as citizens, barred from the systems of representation in which their colonist-photographers circulate. Vulnerability, in these photographs, works to alert the viewer to the problem of power relations within a colonial state, and in this way, even complex and highly individualized portraits become symbolic of civic injustice. This is symptomatic of photographic depictions of Arabs since the beginning of the 20th century; people have long stood as synecdoche for places, political structures and societal mores, be they the sexual ethics of the harem or the civic ethics of colonialism. Rarely, however, are Arab subjects depicted as Abdul Hadi depicts them, as deriving their complexity from personal rather than political circumstances.

IV. Conclusion: Towards a New Vocabulary

Tanya Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* and Tamara Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* represent important interventions in the field of contemporary Arab photography. In a global market that demands formulaic depictions of Muslim women, while taking maleness for granted, images of Arab men are rarely as nuanced as those I have considered here. In both projects, the subtle power of documentary photography emerges as an important framework through which to consider Arab masculinities.

Fragile Monsters appears at first as a superficial treatment of an untraditional subject, and *Picture an Arab Man* as a simplistic series of socially-minded portraits made accessible by the formal language of fashion photography. In form and in content, they are accessible to a mainstream audience, and indeed have both found comfortable contexts in social media platforms and online magazines, but they also complicate the notion of photo-as-document in their evocations of historical precedent. In recuperating a narrative, documentary style, however, both artists critically and successfully interrogate subject/photographer relationships in regards to recent histories of imperialism, and ultimately imply the expansive possibilities of representative photography in an Arab context.

Through their engagement with the history of photography in the Middle East, Habjouqa and Abdul Hadi mobilize male bodies to reconsider imperialistic depictions of women. Creating an inverse analog of the harem through the bodybuilder's locker room, Habjouqa suggests the camera's colonial legacy as a means of claiming space, of inscribing women's quarters with gendered and racialized hegemonies. In raising the specter of identification photographs and their historical legacy of colonial control, Abdul Hadi brings questions of violence and violation to the fore, highlighting the notion of a photograph as an encounter of gazes and reframing the subject/photographer relationships that have historically shaped images of Arab women. Both artists address the issues of visibility, authenticity and vulnerability that have heretofore been associated with representations of the veil, but in approaching them through masculinity both open new fields of critical inquiry and distance themselves from overdetermined visual tropes.

Ultimately, the work of Habjouqa and Abdul Hadi heralds an exciting turn in the field. *She Who Tells a Story*, MFA Boston's 2013 exhibition of Middle Eastern women photographers, can be seen as an important coordinate in this turn. This exhibition was the first of its kind in the United States, and as I have mentioned, the majority of the work in the show dealt with images of women, most whom wore various forms of *hijab*. Its name also played on that of the women's photography collective to which Habjouqa and Abdul Hadi belong: "Rawiya" means "storyteller" in Arabic. Yet it is telling that several of the artists in Rawiya – Habjouqa and Abdul Hadi foremost among them – had begun to explore questions of masculinity by the time of the exhibition's opening.³⁷ Thus, *She Who Tells A Story* was not only a significant step towards greater visibility for Arab women photographers, but also demonstrated the growing dissonance between Middle Eastern photographers and Western art markets. Series such as Myriam Abdelaziz's *Men Dreaming* (2012), and George Awde's *His Passing Cover* (2011) and *Windows* (2014) are but a few examples of efforts by Arab photographers to restate questions of identity and sexuality through visual vocabularies of masculinity. Together with the works considered in this paper, these series may point towards a growing trend in contemporary Arab photography. In its infancy, this trend represents a potential for new and productive inquiries, and innovative means of articulating gendered bodies as resistant to imperialist categories of gender and sexuality.

³⁷ See Myriam Abdelaziz's *Men Dreaming* (2012) and Laura Boushnak's *LGBT in Beirut* (2010)



Figure 1: *Leila Khaled*, Eddie Adams, 1969



Figure 2: *Afghan Girl*, Steve McCurry, 1985



Copyright Tanya Habjouqa

Figure 3: From Tanya Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* (2009)



Copyright Habjouqa

Figure 4: From Tanya Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* (2009)



Figure 5: Brassai, "Lesbian Couple at Le Monocle," 1932



Figure 6: Brassai, *Female Patron at Le Monocle*, 1932



Figure 7: Brassäi, *Inside le Monocle*, 1932



Figure 8: *Women Drinking Their Coffee*, postcard from colonial Algeria, c. 1900-1930



Figure 9: *Moorish Woman*, postcard from colonial Algeria, c. 1900-1930



Figure 10: from Tanya Habjouqa's *Fragile Monsters* (2009)



Figure 11: *Hisham, Lebanese* from Tamara Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009)



Figure 12: Omar, Syrian from Tamara Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009)



Figure 13: Daffy, Kuwaiti, from Tamara Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009)



Figure 14: Ghazwan, Iraqi, from Tamara Abdul Hadi's *Picture an Arab Man* (2009)



Figure 15: Natan Dvir, from *Eighteen*, 2014



Figure 16: From Marc Garanger's *Femmes algériennes* (1960)

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