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The Personal Is Political: Teaching Decolonial Connected Feminist Middle East Politics through Self-Reflexivity

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In the post–Cold War era, "Islamic terrorism" has taken the place of the Communist threat. The Middle East, a construct developed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European colonialism, is the region from which this threat is said to emanate. Teaching politics of the Middle East is therefore by definition a political endeavor: even if students arrive to the classroom with very little factual knowledge about this region, they will, through media portrayals, inevitably bring a certain image of the region and its inhabitants. In this essay, I examine ways educators can promote critical, self-reflective connected decolonial thinking. I argue for the importance of a critical theoretical toolkit, drawing on anticolonial pedagogy and self-reflective praxis. Teaching in universities of the Global North to a mostly white, non–Middle Eastern student body, I encourage students to embrace self-reflexivity and develop embodied and connected feminist learning skills through self-reflective journaling.

Self-reflective journaling is a powerful tool for enabling connected decolonial learning. It allows students to connect with the material deeply, not just on the level of the mind, but on the levels of body, soul, lived experiences, and emotions. Consider, for example, the following journal entry of a white British cisgender man enrolled in my Gendered Politics in the Arab World course at the University of Sheffield.[1]

> I read an article and watched a short news segment about a Palestinian man named Khaled Nabhan whose granddaughter was killed by an Israeli airstrike.[2] When reading the article and watching the piece, I was brought to tears in the library, encountering a complex combination of sadness, empathy and shame.…As Khaled Nabhan began to cry towards the end of the video, I began to cry too. This was the most visceral feeling of sadness and empathy that I have encountered throughout my entire degree. As the video concluded, I was sobbing uncontrollably in Weston Bank library.

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> To understand my reaction, it is important to analyze my experience in school. I remember on one occasion having to play rugby …when it was snowing. My hands were numb, and I couldn't hold the ball properly which meant I consistently dropped it. The punishment for dropping the ball, set by my P.E. teacher, was 10 press-ups. I entered into a cycle of dropping the ball and doing press-ups which made my hands progressively colder and colder.…By the end I began to shed tears, cause by the pain in my hands. I was met [with] the familiar maxim from my teacher: "boys don't cry." The teacher started laughing at me and drew attention to what was happening. I responded by forcing my reaction deep into my center, away from the glares and jeers of the other boys. The experience was one of the last times I cried.…My education was characterized by experiences and interactions such as this.… Connell suggests that masculinities are not ascribed through socialization but are embodied through dialectical interactions. Through countless interactions such as the one I have described, I accepted and spired to hegemonic forms of masculinity … [which] are centered around stoicism, control and emotional repression. Upon leaving school I had accepted the notion that crying and emotional expression were traits of weak men.
>
> In the video, Khaled Nabhan could be seen kissing his granddaughter's doll and crying.… By displaying his emotions, Khaled Nabhan subverted hegemonically masculine ideals. A window was created where emotional expressions of love and sympathy were momentarily acceptable. I embraced this and cried publicly for the first time in many years.

Starting with his emotional reaction to the course material, my student connected to a man thousands of miles away from him.[3] Drawing on his own experiences, he unpacked R. W. Connell's notions of hegemonic masculinity.[4] His life experience laid bare the violence directed at boys, ridiculing and beating emotions out of them, and addressed the state of gendered politics in Britain of the 2010s. The journal allowed my student to understand his own upbringing and the political context in which he was raised. My student did not just learn how to comprehend patriarchy. A man, much older, outwardly appearing patriarchal, taught my student how to break this cycle of stoic hegemonic masculinity.

To be able to engage in self-reflective journaling, students must first acquire a critical theoretical tool kit. Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* continues to be the most relevant theoretical framework to understand Middle Eastern politics.[5] Becoming aware of and unlearning the hegemonic Orientalist discourses that others the Middle East (especially the Arab and/or Muslim Middle East – often used interchangeably) and its inhabitants is a central component of being able to transcend it.[6] In this essay, I examine best practices in teaching politics of the Middle East in this inevitably politicized context, arguing for

the importance of centering critical and connected self-reflection, to enable engagement with the region that is aware of the political milieu, and assess its effects on the students' abilities to hear, understand, and learn the region.[7]

To be sure, this is not an exhaustive analysis of subversive decolonial learning tools. I offer only two examples: theoretical frameworks and self-reflective training.[8] I draw on my own practice developed in Jordan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, focusing mostly on writings from my students at the University of Sheffield.

Various theoretical assumptions inform my pedagogy. First, I see teaching as a potentially subversive force that can enable social and political liberation. Second, Said's understanding of the conceptualization of the Orient (modern-day Middle East) as the Other to the European/Western Self and the role this understanding has and continues to play in shaping the region today serve as dual touchstones. Third, I ground lessons in the feminist standpoint notions that the personal is political and international. And fourth, I center the importance of emotional, embodied, connected learning, which necessitates engaging theory and practice on the level of the soul, body, and emotions.

Paulo Freire saw education as a "subversive force" that allows students to find themselves, to "awaken their critical consciousness" while transforming their societies.[9] In my teaching, I follow this transformative pedagogical vision by facilitating personal transformation and inviting learning communities to contemplate how they can act as engines to transform society.[10] I encourage students to study, not to pass exams, but to find themselves and their individual ethics.

One barrier to teaching critical thinking and learning about injustice is "moral paralysis," which makes students feel there is nothing they can do in light of the scale of injustice in the world.[11] Moral paralysis is common among students in critical international relations courses.[12] The Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and ongoing Palestinian Nakba have been particularly challenging in this regard. Teaching hope is a key element of decolonization.[13] It is important that students do not lose hope and realize that injustice is humanmade and, therefore, can be *unmade* by humans too, emphasizing students' role in constructing a better world.[14] I draw on decolonial thinkers and material examples of communities of resisters around the world, like many Indigenous communities, who have survived despite all efforts to exterminate them, to highlight the potential for change and successful examples of creating a more just world.[15]

Giving students theoretical tools with which they can understand the working of power/knowledge structures is a key component of a subversive pedagogy. Said's concept of Orientalism provides a powerful perspective from which to understand the relationship between the Middle East and the Colonial West that gave rise to the region.[16] For Said, Orientalism refers to

the manner in which the Orient is studied and represented, mostly as a negative entity.[17] In Orientalist discourse, the so-called Orient is constructed as a place of violence and brutality, a place with no civilization, where men are hypersexualized, brutal, and yet also ridden with "deviant" homosexual desire, where women are oppressed and have no agency; a place of bloodshed, and more recently, terrorism. Orientalism therefore constructs the Orient as a negative entity. Orientalism functions less as a means of producing knowledge about the Orient and more, according to Said, to construct the Occident (the West) as its positive polar opposite. Thus, a dynamic is created in which the Orient becomes the Other to the Occident's Self. This goes back to "the Orient's special place in European Western experience . . . [as] one of Europe's deepest and most recurring images of the Other."[18]

Orientalism is also a productive discourse, one in which the Orient was brought into life, or created *as* the Orient.

> Without examining Orientalism as a *discourse* one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient, politically, sociologically, militarily, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.[19]

Said draws on Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, as power/knowledge that produces realities on the ground.[20] One example that highlights the constructive power of discourse is the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), in which the lines drawn on a piece of paper by British diplomat Mark Sykes and French diplomat François Georges-Picot created material borders transforming Greater Syria into four countries: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.[21]

Not all pens and papers are equal. Not all pens and papers create material borders on the ground. A Kurdish girl in 1916 was not able to draw lines demarcating Kurdistan to make it into a reality. Orientalism functions because of the unequal power relation between the Orient and the Occident, which is exemplified in the material conditions of colonialism, missionary activity, commerce, academic research, and military domination. This unequal power relation, however, is not only between the greater entities of the so-called Orient and Occident, but are also transferred to subjects who are affiliated with these entities.

> Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. . . . The scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about, the Orient because he could be there, or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part.[22]

The personal interactions between those who are connected to these entities are marked by this power differential. Their subject positions – that is, the identities

they occupy and what this means within power structures – play a big role in the ability of certain actors to create material realities on the ground. The pen of our imagined Kurdish girl could not create the borders that Sykes's and Picot's pens could. Unlike Sykes and Picot, the girl's understanding of her life and home did not result in the production of sanctioned knowledge about the area she inhabited.

Drawing on Foucault, Said shows that these forms of power cannot be separated from various forms of knowledge production, be they archeological, political, theological, sociological, anthropological, economic, or other. It is this power relation that enables the Occidental researcher to produce this type of knowledge about the Orient. "The Orient was Orientalized not because it was discovered to be Oriental . . . but because it *could be* . . . *made* Oriental."[23]

The very fact that the Orient was Orientalized (spoken about, written about, discussed and created as an Other to be compared with the Occident) was the result of power politics on the ground. That includes the material conditions of power as well as the knowledge that enables these conditions. Orientalism is indicative of a power/knowledge structure in which the negative representation of the Orient as Other goes hand in hand with the military occupation, economic exploitation, and dividing up of the land that accompanied/emerged from these knowledge systems.

As students of the Middle East, this means that understanding discourse and representation also enables us to gain insight into the workings of politics and power structures. As a result, studying the Orient, or the Middle East, is not a value-neutral exercise that happens in a power vacuum. Rather, the intellectual interaction is itself indicative of politics, shedding light on the political order. When studying Middle East politics, the knowledge and various discourses produced about the Orient/Middle East become key sites to be examined in order to understand current world politics. What does the ongoing existence of negative representations tell us about world politics?

Centrally to decolonial pedagogy, Said argued that knowledge produced about the Orient was much more indicative of problems, dreams, and desires of the Occident. Orientalist knowledge actually speaks very little to what was happening in the so-called Orient. Rather, Orientalism is indicative of the entity that produced it, the Occident. For example, the pornographic images that French Orientalist paintings evoke are more useful in helping us understand sexual suppression and desire in nineteenth-century France than in giving readers any knowledge about the sexual lives of those who inhabited the so-called Muslim Orient in the nineteenth century.

Orientalism, as a theoretical framework, thus enables the student to turn the tables to focus not on the topic of focus (the Other), but on the invisible Self. In examining nineteenth-century French Orientalist art, Orientalism allows analysts to study nineteenth-century French desires and understand dominant pow-

er structures during that time. Since the knowledge produced about the Orient is more revealing about the problems, dreams, and desires of the Occident and about the power relations between Orient and Occident – or to use more modern language, the Middle East and the West – then studying the Middle East invariably also becomes studying the West. Since the Middle East has functioned as the Western Other in the post–Cold War era, studying Orientalist discourse on the Middle East tells us at least as much about the Western Self as about the Middle Eastern Other.

Pedagogically, and equally important, what follows is that teaching about the Middle East is also teaching about the society and culture of the Western student. In discussing the Italian genocide in Libya, political scientist Ali Ahmida makes the case that learning about colonial Libya is as important for understanding Italy as it is for understanding Libya.[24] Because of the relationship between the Middle East and the West, studying Middle Eastern politics also means studying Global North politics.

Starting with this awareness means that how we understand the Middle East – how we see it, how we hear it, how the media discusses it – provides not only insight into Western imaginations of the Middle East, but also about the current politics of the West itself. Seeing East/West, Middle East/Europe and North America, or Orient/Occident as examples of Other/Self relationships also means that these imaginaries are part of the same phenomenon, and studying one invariably means studying the other. While many students might only have marginal knowledge about Middle Eastern politics, they will have intimate knowledge of living in the Global North, knowledge that can be developed through the self-reflective journal assignment I will discuss shortly.

Paying attention to representation also means recognizing silences as sites of politics. Silences are not natural. They are a direct result of the workings of power, especially power/knowledge that defines and distances Others. Who is spoken about? Whose version of a story do we never hear? It is these Others who continue to be silenced. Thinking about othering necessitates examining silencing as a continuous political act.

In addition to silencing, the voices of those who are othered are also rendered unintelligible. In *Screamers*, a documentary about genocides in the twentieth century, Armenian director Carla Garapedian develops the notion of screamers as those whose narratives can only be heard as screams.[25] Having survived a genocide, survivors often cannot find any words to express the horrors they have undergone. The only way to express the inexpressible is to scream. There is no language, no words to express what happened, only screams. Those who have not undergone genocide see screamers as having lost their minds. Drawing on literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the subaltern forces us to ask not only why screamers can only scream, but also why we, who are listening, are un-

able to hear their words?[26] Why are we unable to understand? Rather than asking screamers to speak to us using the hegemonic discourse, thinking about silencing means that we might need to learn how to understand a different language.[27] It also means that rather than accepting silence, we need to examine the role of hegemonic discourses as engines of silencing. In hegemonic discourses, there are no words to express horrors like genocide precisely because these atrocities are happening to those who are othered. Othering is not an unfortunate mistake of the system, but a direct result of a power/knowledge structure that creates a certain Self. The Self is the Self precisely because the Other is silenced/othered.[28] Thinking about othering means that classroom discussion cannot just focus on the Other, but also on understanding the power structures that created Others and continue to do so.

This brings me to the second theoretical underpinning of my pedagogy: standpoint feminist thought. My teaching pedagogy builds on political theorist Cynthia Enloe's standpoint feminist assertion that the personal is political and the personal is international.[29] Understanding everyday gendered, racialized, and classed lives helps us understand the workings of international politics. As a result, we (students and educators alike) constantly experience and have something meaningful to say about politics. However, as feminists and decolonial scholars have highlighted, members of marginalized groups are often told that their knowledge is subjective or unimportant. Decolonial learning emphasizes that marginalized groups are legitimate producers of knowledge, and that knowledge can be learned from the experiences of ordinary people, including students themselves.[30] Self-reflective journaling is a powerful pedagogical tool that allows students to hone their standpoint skills and recognize the potential of their embodied experience as a lens to understand the political.

As feminists have taught us, objectivity is naturalized privileged male subjectivity.[31] Knowledge is therefore always subjective; to produce good knowledge, the aim is not to erase subjectivity but to 1) become aware of one's subjective knowledge and 2) clearly articulate the subjective viewpoint that has enabled the particular insights. It also means that the experiences of those who have been deemed outside the norm because they come from marginalized social backgrounds must be included in producing knowledge.

Much of my teaching focuses on helping students develop skills to understand the working of politics around them and the confidence to recognize their expertise and grounded knowledge. To that end, I encourage students to find their voices to speak back to politics, drawing on the work of feminists who develop the framework of "women's ways of knowing," which also extends to other marginalized people's ways of knowing.[32] Using lived reality to speak back to what they read not only facilitates greater understanding, but also empowers students to

recognize their own embodied knowledge. The self-reflective journal allows students to discover their embodied knowledge and develop it.

Students often find the self-reflective journal challenging, not least because it pushes them to do what most of their academic training has told them is *un*academic: scrutinizing their own subjective knowledge. Students who are economically privileged generally have not had many experiences in which their identity or subject positions have been challenged or questioned. As a result, they can find self-reflective journals difficult to write. Students from marginalized backgrounds are accustomed to having their worldviews and very subjecthood questioned. They are often forced to explain themselves, to explain their *difference* from the status quo.

Students' ability to understand their own subject positions is one of the main aims of decolonial learning. Theoretically informed class exercises help to achieve this goal. I use experiential learning and various facilitation methods in my classroom to help students understand this sometimes difficult concept.[33] One tool I have borrowed from conflict resolution facilitation is an identity game in which I invite students to reflect on their own subject positions within wider power structures. This experiential exercise helps students grasp the concept of subject position and the power structures they inhabit.[34]

Decolonial pedagogy strives to raise student awareness of how they fit into the web of power relations and politics, but also to break free of these positions, allowing their voices to create knowledge. Moreover, this pedagogy endeavors to enable all students to feel comfortable speaking in class and to feel they have the space to articulate their differences and show how these differences fit within wider discourse. In addition, however, the classroom tries to create an environment that is inclusive, not only by emphasizing that those who are not in the majority also have a space, but so their voices can be heard and respected just as much. A decolonial classroom also teaches those who belong to a privileged majority to reflect on their privilege and subject position. This pushes students to think about the spaces they occupy or take up and a sense of entitlement that might accompany such actions.

The identity exercise works best in smaller group seminar settings. This activity requires at least an hour (preferably an hour and a half) for a group of about ten students. In the first exercise, students assign labels to their identity on a piece of paper, dividing it into eight pieces. In each piece, they put an aspect of their identity. Students are given time to really think about the different elements of their identity. I demonstrate the game below with information I might write if I were to play this game (Table 1).

After they finish writing the main elements of their identity, I ask students to describe their identity more fully. I encourage them to examine the labels (Table 2).

Table 1
Range of Identities in the First Exercise of the Identity Game

Woman	Muslim	Arab	Leftist
Feminist	Mother	Family Member : Daughter/Wife/Sister	Activist

Source : Example uses author's own identifiers.

Table 2
Detailed Identity Descriptions in the Second Exercise of the Identity Game

Woman Sisterhood, solidarity with other women, period, awareness of how I look, gendered experiences	**Muslim** Relationship to God, worship, fasting, striving to do good	**Arab** Shared experience with other Arabs, speaking Arabic	**Leftist** Belief in social justice, struggle for a better world, anti-exploitation, resistance
Feminist Cynthia Enloe, Amina Wadud, Musawah movement, Ziba Mir Husseini	**Mother** Mother of Leila and Ali, cuddling with them, reading to them, bearing responsibility	**Family Member** Oldest daughter of Dorothee and Mahmoud, granddaughter of Thledjeh, Mohammad Tayseer, Gertrud and Heilo, sister to Nora and Hanna, wife of Shadaab	**Activist** Women's rights, workers' rights, standing up against injustice, Palestine solidarity work

Source : Example uses author's own identifiers.

After they review each, I inform them that I will remove two aspects of their identity. They can choose which ones, but they have to give up two, to take a pen and physically strike out two parts.

I invite the students to look at themselves again, without these parts. I ask students to think who they are now without these pieces of their identity. After that, I ask them again to take away two more parts and invite them to think about who they are without these four parts (in total). The exercise continues in this manner until only one part of the students' identity is left. Depending on the people in the room, this game can be quite emotional and triggering. Before starting the game, and as it goes on, I continually emphasize that students should feel free to stop playing, take a break, or leave at any time. However, emotions are also an impor-

Table 3
Markers of Privilege in the Identity Game

Upper/middle class	University-educated, from a family of university-educated parents and maternal grandparents with PhDs	Able-bodied	Economically secure, homeowner, able to travel, able to go on holiday, able to work in a place to which I can commute
Food secure	German, strong passport holder/ can travel	Able to see my family	Cisgender/ heterosexual

Source: Example uses author's own identifiers.

tant part of learning and being. Therefore, while emotions might be difficult, they are welcome in a decolonial classroom.

After that, I invite all students to go around the classroom and introduce themselves through their identity posters. It is important that students take their time, explaining who they are in detail, telling stories about their different identity parts. This game gives students the chance to think about the wealth of knowledge that is entailed in their experiences and subjectivities.

We then discuss the game and reflect on it. I ask students to think about some of the differences between how students introduced themselves and what parts of their identity they included. I also ask students to reflect on how they have described themselves. What aspects of their identity have they left out? What is the relationship between what they left out and privilege? Why do they think they left these aspects out? Are there patterns? We then make lists of the items they had previously crossed out. I invite students to make another grid writing other markers of their identity (this time related to privilege only). That grid might look like Table 3.

I ask students to think about how these aspects of their identities influence their lives, which enables them to think about subject positions and what they mean. What actions can they take because of their privilege? Is this connected to any feelings of entitlement? We define subject positions as who we are in a given power structure. I ask students to think about their own subject positions and the difference between the impact that the visible and invisible aspects of their identities have on their lives.

This exercise supports self-reflective learning that can then be further developed in the self-reflective journal. The journals encourage students to learn about themselves and the type of subject positions they occupy in the power structures

around them. A white British heterosexual cisgender male student, for example, wrote about how safe he feels whenever he sees a police officer on the street. He reflected on the stark difference between his own experience as a young middle-class white man from Southern Britain and that of a Black British man of the same age. He used his own experience to evaluate the British Home Office's data that states that 52.6 percent of all police stop-and-search actions targeted Black British subjects, as opposed to only 7.5 percent targeting white British subjects.[35] He then thought about the role of racism and sexism in enabling some to live a life that feels safe, while others not only feel unsafe, but actually are unsafe.

The game can also facilitate discussions about scenarios in which people are forced to give up parts of their identity. In Middle Eastern politics, there are various current and historical examples ranging from Palestinian refugees today to Greek and Turkish people who were forced into the population exchange after World War I, to name only a few examples. This exercise helps students become sensitive to their subject positions and think about the differences between themselves as members of multiple communities.

Most higher education academic training focuses on teaching students how to construct an argument, debate, agree, or disagree with something. Especially at Oxbridge, students are often encouraged to be able to play the devil's advocate and argue any point of view, successfully preparing students to become crafty politicians. Self-reflective teaching instead aspires to help students gain self-understanding in their journey to find their own theoretical home and ethical pathway. In the self-reflective journal, I ask students to use the arguments of others to learn more about themselves and their beliefs. I also invite them to draw on their lived realities and experiences to engage with the classroom material and to respond to it. The journal provides students with an opportunity to engage the material not just with their minds, but also with their bodies and souls.

The journal teaches students how to connect to seemingly distant times, places, and peoples. Students are encouraged to think through what they learn by trying to find connections or parallels in their own lives, of which they have intimate knowledge. Students' embodied knowledge, which they gain through their everyday life experience and have experienced through their senses and body, can then be used to scrutinize theories we discuss in class. This enables students to find their theoretical home. The self-reflective journal is a great tool that enables embodied learning to help students understand the power structures they inhabit through the vantage point of their lived experiences and use their embodied knowledge to engage with theory and concepts and to find themselves.

As a way to start their journal, I ask students to pay attention to their emotions while reading. Has anything in the readings stirred them or provoked a certain

feeling? Students are encouraged to identify their emotional responses, and to sit with these emotions, listen to them, and learn from them. Students learn to read emotions, not only as a means to engage with the reading, but also as an outcome of their lived reality and embodied knowledge, an indicator of knowledge that needs to be understood so that students can access and reflect on the experiences they had that might be behind these emotions. I ask students to describe these experiences in detail. Their lived experiences provide students with data to speak back to the reading.

It is crucial that students have enough time to work on their journals. Self-reflection cannot be done one night before the journals are due. I encourage students to start writing down their thoughts and journaling after the very first lecture or seminar. I then invite students to come to office hours to go over their drafts to see how they could deepen their reflections. For most students, self-reflection is not a skill for which they have received any training. Through multiple sessions in office hours, in-class writing workshops, self-reflective exercises, and sharing some of their work in smaller groups and the wider classroom, students have enough time to appreciate the ways their lived experience informs their insight and truth.

During one of my office hours, a white British cisgender male student told me how angry he was after reading political scientist Asma Barlas's article "The Qur'an and Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur'an's Opposition to Patriarchy," in which she argues that Islam was not just not patriarchal but, in fact, an antipatriarchal religion.[36] He was "agitated and furious" with Barlas's interpretation. He told me that even though he did not know much about Islam, this was just taking it too far; he was "agitated because Barlas was simply incorrect." I asked him to postpone his rational engagement with Barlas's arguments and instead think about why he reacted so strongly to the reading. I encouraged him to see if he could find experiences that would help him make sense of his reaction. The following week, he had reflected on these questions, specifically on his experience in his nuclear family. When he was eight years old he wanted to get an ear piercing and had asked his mother's permission. However, as usual, his mother, did not give him an answer, referring him to his father instead, who unequivocally forbade the piercing. As a teenager, the student lived in a single-parent home, where his mother was head of household. However, this did not result in his mother taking on the role of decision-maker that his father had previously occupied. Instead, despite him having two older sisters, his mother started deferring to him, her only son, as the man of the house. My student reflected on how, from early childhood, he learned to honor patriarchy, and that his reaction showed him that Barlas's dismissal of patriarchy in the Qur'an had touched something that was sacred for him: patriarchy itself. This assignment enabled my student to think about his lived experience with patriarchy and about how it materialized in his own life.

> Through my upbringing, I was socialized to accept and embody patriarchal norms and values. A central part of patriarchy is the obfuscation of women's voices, a theme which characterized my upbringing. Viewed through this lens, my reaction of contestation becomes much more explainable.... [A]lthough my initial critique was centered around specific parts of engaging in Qur'anic hermeneutics, my actual objection was to women engaging in Qur'anic hermeneutics.... My socialization has obscured the capacity of women to make moral judgments about simple daily events.

The self-reflective journal not only helps students connect deeply with the readings, but also helps them use the reading to understand more about themselves, their lives, and the kinds of regimes of truth they have been brought up with. When studying people from other regions, cultures, and religions, it is often easy to make generalizing statements about beliefs of others. By being able to think about their own beliefs, students learn to understand the readings by connecting them to their lives, rather than differentiating themselves from the subjects in the texts.

Connective, embodied knowledge encourages students to find an example from their own lives that helps them connect to the subject they study. This way, students learn by relating the subject to their own experiences and engaging through their personal lives. Here, knowledge is not reached by understanding an abstract, distant concept, but by looking inward to consider how personal experiences are linked to the topic and what this allows students to understand about the topic at hand. Going back to Enloe's assertion that the personal is international, connected knowledge also helps students zoom out and think about what their personal experience tells them about the wider power structures they inhabit.

Connected learning facilitates transformative pedagogy. The latter works "by blending scholarly readings and theories with personal experiences, intuitive knowledge, and social critique."[37] This way of teaching challenges the overemphasis of the cognitive at the expense of the "sensual and imaginative" in education.[38] The feminist emphasis on the role of emotional learning enables students to value their own knowledge that is based on their individual and communal lived experience.[39] This form of learning is particularly helpful to the students whose experiences are often absent from mainstream narratives.

In my "Gendered Politics in the Arab World" third-year module, we think a lot about the sexualization of the female body and the invisible male/patriarchal gaze that those who are socialized as female experience. A reading that many of my women-identifying students find very powerful is philosopher Susan Bordo's 1988 study of anorexia.[40] In class discussions, it is striking to see that almost all of the women-identifying students have intimate knowledge of body dysphoria or eating disorders. A cisgender Chinese woman student wrote the following entry:

> "Power is everywhere…because it comes from everywhere."[41] This insight has led me to realize that my struggle with body image and self-discipline was not just a personal battle, but an experience deeply influenced by pervasive cultural expectations and subtle social control.…I was attracted to watching social media influencers display their physiques, document strict diets, and share workout routines.…This environment led me to scrutinize my own body and adopt a strict diet of just 900 calories per day, rejecting my previous eating habits. However, my routine became quickly unraveled. After eating a high calorie biscuit one day, I felt intense guilt over my perceived loss of control, and my disordered eating worsened. I would diet for several days, repeatedly weighing myself to track changes, but the hunger from excessive restriction triggered uncontrollable binging – thousands of calories of junk food consumed in one sitting until my stomach welled painfully, making it hard to even breathe. After each binge…overcome with shame, I would rush to the bathroom to vomit. This cycle repeated endlessly.…Every binge eating felt like a personal failure, deepening my self-blame and fear of facing my body shape.

The student's meticulous description of her thoughts and practices around food and her appearance explain Foucault's notion of the workings of disciplinary power, in particular the Panopticon, which is the way systems of power teach us to surveil our own behavior and enforce punishment without a threat of direct violence.[42]

> Reflecting [on this] through the lens of Foucault's Panopticon, I recognize that I had transformed from being merely observed to becoming my own most stringent observer, perpetually measuring myself against an idealized standard that emerged from complex power dynamics.…I was neither simply a passive victim nor an entirely autonomous agent, but an active participant within a broader system of power relations. …My personal narrative of disordered eating exemplifies this.…This reframing empowers me to see my experience not as a personal failure, but as a manifestation of broader systemic influences – transforming my understanding from individual pathology to a critical exploration of societal power mechanisms.

This twenty-year-old student was able to draw on her lived reality to explain highly complex poststructural theory to show how the internal gaze led her to shape and form her female body through daily eating and physical practice. Through self-reflection, students demonstrate how power manifests itself in their own lives. This personal window also allows students to zoom out from their personal experiences to think about what type of power structures they inhabit.

Connective learning also allows student to transcend time and space by relating to the reading. Thinking about the critiques that Palestinian women's movements faced for not focusing solely on women's rights, a queer white British student (she/they pronouns) wrote:[43]

> Whilst the Arab Women's Union [formed in Palestine in 1929] has been criticized for their lack of *feminist* values or placing Palestinian liberation before "women's rights," I believe this movement to be the epitome of what feminism is and should be; after all, without self-determination, how could Palestinian women fight for just the rights of women? In my experience of being a working-class queer woman, the notion of gender equality has always been far less important to me than my class oppression, my working-class family and my community. I think of my younger brother, who was kicked out of school before receiving any qualifications, who is only seventeen and has already spent a night in jail. I think of my cousin, who recently died because of class violence and street warfare. What about their rights?[44]

The social, economic, and political reality of 2020 Northern Britain from which this student came was completely different to that of mandate Palestine in the 1920s. Yet they drew on her experience to find connections that enabled her to engage in a sophisticated analysis of intersectionality.[45] The student reflected that her womanhood could not be separated from their class subject position. Contrary to many feminists, the student argued that gender was not the most important part of their identity.[46] They used her own experience to speak to development initiatives that villainize local men and pit women against members of their own communities.[47] From her embodied knowledge of class politics, the student connected to the Palestinian women's movement over time and place to speak to the dichotomy that is often drawn between women's and national liberation. This connection allowed her to understand how the movement prioritized liberation from the British mandate and the threat of Zionist settler colonialism over other struggles.

In the self-reflective journal, the Self becomes a window into the political that the students inhabit. In her journal, the same student, who grew up in a small working-class town in the North of England, reflected on what modernity means to them based on her lived experience of it:

> Growing up working-class in [X], North of England, I often felt divided from modern Britain.[48] From witnessing neighbors pleading for a few pounds to feed their children to my parents battling unemployment, modernity served a constant reminder of our backwardness. . . . My family and I lived in a council house surrounded by broken fences . . . free school meals or cheap packed lunches. . . . The modern being created in [X] is being enabled by its perception of being backwards compared to metropolitan cities like Manchester or Leeds. However, in reality is that the working-class people of [X] created the modern world through mining during the industrial period.

The student was able to both think about what modernity felt like for them, and explain how modernity works by establishing that which is unmodern. Through

the richness of their example, the student unpacked the theoretical relationship between Self/Other, pointing to the role that the Other plays in enabling the Self to emerge.[49] Without the smaller northern former mining town X, Manchester and Leeds could never be considered metropolitan, and without the work of the unmodern miners, there would have been no Industrial Revolution.

By drawing on their lived reality, the student engaged with the concept of modernity in a highly sophisticated fashion. Through the practice of engaging through their journals, students learn to trust their own lived reality as a legitimate source of academic inquiry and critical engagement. Instead of moving away from their subjective experiences, students are invited to become aware of these experiences and appreciate the lived knowledge that they already possess, and to unpack what their lives tell them about the political orders they inhabit. Self-reflective journals allow students to demystify and engage with theories. Here I follow Indigenous scholars who have emphasized that "theory is not just an intellectual pursuit. . . . It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives."[50] Most importantly, self-reflective journals bring theory into life and help students engage with complex theoretical discussions by understanding them through their own lives.

Even personal experience of the most intimate nature is indicative of wider power structures and politics. A British cisgender woman described her experience with an eating disorder that manifested itself at the same time that she came of age politically and socially.

> I became politically and socially aware while developing an eating disorder. My early adolescent body became the physical manifestation of the complex relationship women have with their agency and subjectivity to the political power systems and structures that have shaped their reality. As a teenager, I started noticing the injustices around me, and began educating myself on the social structures and power dynamics that surround us. My knowledge, smartness, and outspokenness designed me – I made it my mission to ensure that patriarchal norms don't define my choices in any aspect of my life and strived to become the perfect emancipated woman. Despite this, on a much more internalized and hidden level, my mind was constantly consumed with an obsession over thinness. A calculator embedded itself into my brain, counting every calorie, ensuring to emotionally and mentally debilitate me, if God forbid, I went 1 calorie over my self-imposed limit. I stopped marking allowances for my developing body, making it my priority to ensure that unless I exercised, I would stay hungry.

In this entry, the student thinks about the dual dimension of the neoliberal woman who needs to be an overachieving superhuman, but also imposes her iron will onto her body, willing it into the perfect shape.

> Reading Susan Bordo's work on Anorexia Nervosa allowed me to delve into how the mind and body are not mutually exclusive, but intricately linked by culture around me. . . . Reflecting, I realized how neoliberal feminism, which I embraced young, drove my self-imposed restrictions. Bordo expands on this, arguing that the Cartesian separation of the mind and the body have created an environment where women are expected to control their bodies and its needs – anorexia both complies to this and rebels it. . . . My restrictions allowed me to exert control over my body and ensured I fit into the demand of thinness and submission. However, it also acted as a form of resistance – I was controlling my own body, using my own agency.

Finding a theoretical language, my student was able to make sense of her experiences of disordered eating and the feelings that accompanied it. The contradiction of seeming like an empowered strong woman fighting patriarchy, while inwardly adhering to patriarchal norms of beauty, left my students – like so many of us – feeling a deep sense of shame.

> I have always been embarrassed about my struggles. I am another privileged white woman starving herself, despite always having a full fridge, and a loving mother cooking dinner every night (it is only years later I realized she rarely ate it herself – diet culture never leaves a woman's mind). Reading Bordo's work allowed me to look past my privileged shame, and understand that my eating disorder was not purely a psychological issue, but acted as a mirror to the society and culture in which I was raised.

Moving from the personal to the theoretical and then the structural, the student was able to elegantly walk her reader through the workings of power. She showed how her very *personal* experience is indicative of a particular power/knowledge discursive structure, which works through the bodies and minds of thousands of self-identifying women, from teenagerhood to old age. Rather than hiding these experiences in shame, seeing them as signs of personal failing, the student shone light on them to think about what these feelings say about wider power structures. Her discussion was not only a great intellectual achievement, but her self-reflection also helped her use the theoretical insight she gained to resist and dismantle the power structures she found herself inhabiting. Finally, through scrutinizing her own experience, she was able to reflect on what patriarchy encompassed in the United Kingdom in the early 2020s, highlighting the personal and bodily dimensions of what coming of age as a woman political subject entailed in twenty-first-century Britain.

The Self becomes a place of scrutiny and analysis, not to discover truths about the individual student and their essence, but rather to understand how power works through subjects, to understand how knowledge/power creates discourses and these discourses create subjectivities and desires. The aim is not to engage in self-blame, but rather to understand how some desires and thoughts

might be indicative of wider hegemonic power structures. Many students start their self-reflective journey by speaking about how they feel guilt for not having any knowledge about some of the subjects discussed in class in their first journal drafts. I encourage students to focus on thinking about what this lack of knowledge indicates in terms of the type of knowledge they have consumed so far. Students often reflect on their school education in the United Kingdom, in which they have learned mostly about Britain's role in World War II in fighting the Nazis, while never really learning about British colonial history and crimes during the same period. This is how many have been taught to be proud of British politics, and celebrate colonial political figures like Winston Churchill. They write on how this has ingrained a colonial common sense in which colonial agents are celebrated and those who resist colonization are villainized.[51] Through thinking about their schooling, students can understand how current British power/knowledge structures continue colonial commonsense knowledge at the same time that many institutions make verbal commitments to decolonization. Their lack of knowledge of liberation movements is indicative of British education rather than any individual shortcoming.

Women-identifying students often think about their own struggles as British women to scrutinize the assumption that Muslim women are somehow more oppressed than all other women, especially women in the Global North. The comparative lens allows students to question this assumption. In class, students reflect on current British feminist foreign policy using their own lives as British women as their starting point. For example, students are particularly angered by the assertion of Evelyn Baring, First Earl of Cromer, that Britain occupied Egypt to liberate Egyptian women.[52] They connect this assertion to current British foreign policy that alleges to be feminist and compare it to U.S. claims under the Bush administration that the war on Iraq was meant to liberate Iraqi women.[53] Students often reflect on what a feminist foreign policy means, when most of the women-identifying students do not feel safe walking home at night and over seven hundred thousand British women are waiting to be seen by a gynecologist.[54]

A white British cisgender woman student challenged the assumption that Western women are empowered because they can choose to take off their clothes in juxtaposition to the perceived oppression of Muslim women, who are believed to be forced to cover their bodies. This student thought through the assumption that uncovering the body is inherently liberating, given the continued sexualization of the female body that she herself experienced.

> The very image of a free and body-positive woman struck a nerve with me.…I grew up in an environment where eating disorders were normalized, and thus, a negative perception of the body was inherent. I never really celebrated my body unless it was in a sexual context, subconsciously subverting to the male gaze by finding satisfaction in myself from romantic partners.

My student maintained that a woman's "choice" to uncover herself functions in a continued context in which women's bodies are sexualized, and does not feel empowering to her at all. Drawing on her lived experience, this student criticized the assumption that Western women have more of a choice to uncover and that this is inherently liberating.

The self-reflective journal helps students find themselves. One of my students came from a dual-national, mixed religious, Muslim-Christian background. Growing up, she had always felt that she had to choose between her seemingly different backgrounds, being told that she could not speak about Islam. As a result, she turned away from Islam completely. In her journal, she used the work of Muslim feminists to speak back to some of the rigorous understandings of Islam she was told to follow as a child growing up in Indonesia.[55] She reflected on the different interpretations of Islam that she had witnessed her relatives practice, and the increased rigidity of certain practices over the years. She connected her own experiences and those of women in her family who started practicing Islam in news ways, moving away from wearing colorful silk painted clothes, to wider political global trends. This shift coincided with changes in Indonesian politics, the flow of Saudi petromoney into the Indonesian economy, and Wahabi interpretations that accompanied these economic changes.

The journal helped the student use the academic work we discussed in class to inform how she saw herself, and allowed her to find the confidence to speak back to hegemonic narratives through her experience. No longer feeling that she needed to choose one fixed identity, she found language through her journal practice to describe the hybrid moving identities she inhabits and occupy them without feeling the need to apologize.

A woman student of color who grew up in the United States reflected on how she had always felt that she needed to take up less space. She felt ashamed of her loud voice. She made sense of her experience using bell hooks's assertion that patriarchy fears the loud, connected, alive sisterhood of women.[56] In a racialized world, Brown and Black women are even more of a threat.

> Someone spoke about how we grow in resilience after trauma. They talked about fireweed, one of the first plants that grow after wildfires, but was commonly considered ugly. I was reminded of the shame I feel about my voice, and the reality that I speak like a man in part because I realized as a young woman of color that if I did not yell, I would not be heard. It was an act of resilience. . . . However, when speaking to Sara recently about the fireweed, she remarked, "Ugly to whom?" I hadn't seen fireweed before, and upon searching it up saw they were a beautiful bright pink color.

The student included a colored photo of fireweed in her journal, which was indeed breathtaking in its beauty.

> I've noticed especially in England, people in general (but especially men) seem quite emotionally detached and fearful of vulnerability. It would make sense that to them, embodying my full alive self would feel threatening. . . . I'm reminded of the image of the fireweed, how the bright pink of the flowers made the trees seem especially grey. To men, to the West – to a society based around subjugating and controlling life – unapologetic connection to self and to others challenges discourses normalizing disconnection.

Through deep engagement with the Self, theory in which they find truth, and inspiring examples from the readings, it is my aim that all my students are able to reach this unapologetic connection to themselves that allows them to reclaim themselves loudly and proudly.

I have argued for the importance of critical theories and self-reflective training in a subversive classroom on Middle Eastern/Arab politics. First, through the notion of Orientalism, students learn to search for the invisible Self that draws a certain picture of the visible Other. Generally, academic inquiry focuses on understanding the Other. We study why the poor are poor, never looking at the power structures that have impoverished them, and how this impoverishment directly results in the enrichment of others. Through Orientalism, students learn that there cannot be an Orient without the Occident, an Other without the Self, a Middle East without a U.S./European-centered colonial/imperial order. The prism of Orientalism allows students to turn the flashlight around and understand the political role that the representation of the Other plays in enabling a specific reality to emerge for the Other and, by extension, a type of Self to appear. Orientalism also encourages students to trace lived realities to particular discourses and to appreciate how power/knowledge formations continue to shape political life.

Second, students learn to distinguish between different discourses, and to listen for silences. Students learn to rethink what they know based on the perspectives of those whose voices continue to be excluded. Students also search for and learn how to hear counter-hegemonic discourses. Recognizing commonalities and differences enables students to find ways to contribute to and to stand in solidarity with counter-hegemonic discourses, which gives rise to more equitable political realities.

Third, self-reflective learning draws on students' embodied knowledge for an engaged, connected learning. Rather than seeing the Middle East as something that is out there, disconnected from their lives, this form of learning helps students appreciate the connections between the Middle East and their own lives. By learning about the role that power relations play in their own subject formation, students can connect this knowledge to political processes outside their daily ex-

periences. Their own subject position, therefore, becomes both a place of scrutiny and a source of knowledge of not just of their own lives, but the power structures and political systems they inhabit.

Fourth, students can draw on their embodied knowledge to speak back to theory and evaluate what they learn, an exercise that is different depending on what type of subject positions students occupy in the power structure. This is particularly meaningful for students from marginalized backgrounds whose communal experiences and histories continue to be silenced by dominant power structures. This form of subversive studying does not simply aspire to understand power relations but to enable students to contribute to power/knowledge discourses that can give rise to alternative, more just realities that stem from students' embodied knowledge and lived experience.

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ENDNOTES

[1] I have received written permission from the student authors to include and discuss their work in this essay. All original entries were written in British English but have been changed to American English for consistency.

[2] Jomana Karadsheh, Florence Davey-Attlee, and Abeer Salman, "'I Kissed Her But She Wouldn't Wake Up.' Grandfather Grieves for 3-Year-Old Granddaughter Killed as She Slept in Gaza," CNN, November 29, 2023, https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/29/middleeast/gaza-truce-israel-grandfather-returns-home-intl-hnk/index.html.

[3] Khaled Nabhan has since been murdered by Israeli bombardment. Al Jazeera Staff, "'Soul of my Soul': Israeli Shelling Kills Gaza Grandfather Who Moved World," Al Jazeera, December 16, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/16/soul-of-my-soul-israeli-shelling-kills-gaza-grandfather-who-moved-world.

[4] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Polity Press, 1995).

[5] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Books, 1978).

[6] Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Stanford University Press, 2011).

[7] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1) (2012): 1–40. See also Alyssa Hadley Dunn, "'Why Did We Never Learn This?': Preparing Educators to Teach for Justice and Equity on Days After," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 37 (5) (2022): 1481–1495, https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2181456.

[8] There are, of course, a variety of additional tools that I will not engage in this short essay. Consider, for example, the central role of history, not the simple and self-congratulatory accounts of the victors, but the historical processes of dispossession, occupation, and colonialization, as well as Indigenous resistance, as they happened. This framework allows students to appreciate different common senses, such as the colonial common sense that still underpins many theories, accounts, and coverages today, and the anti-colonial common sense of resistance. Another framework that I do not examine here, which is as essential for decolonial learning, is that of politics from below: focusing not on representations and erasures of the diverse inhabitants of the region, but on learning from the lives, forms of knowledge, and agencies of actors on the ground. In other words, learning from *Ahel al Qadiya* (the people of the cause) as experts of their own lives and leaders of action. For a discussion on colonial common sense, see Abdel Razzaq Takriti, "Thawra Epilogue: Genocide and Resistance, Thawra," *The Dig*, October 11, 2024, https://thedigradio.com/podcast/thawra-epilogue-genocide-and-resistance. The term "people of the cause" or *Ahel al Qadiyya* was developed by Nisreen Haj Ahmed and Ahel, a community-based organization that works on issues of social and labor justice in Jordan. See Ahel, "Our Values," https://ahel.org/en (accessed September 24, 2024).

[9] For a "subversive force," see Richard Shaull, "Foreword," in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (Continuum International, 2000), 31. For "awaken their critical consciousness," see Paulo Freire, "Preface," in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 36.

[10] Diane C. Fujino, Jonathan D. Gomez, Esther Lezra, et al., "A Transformative Pedagogy for a Decolonial World," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 40 (2) (2018): 69–95; and Sue Grace and Phil Gravestock, *Inclusion and Diversity: Meeting the Needs of All Students* (Routledge, 2008), 30.

[11] Barbara Applebaum, "Moral Paralysis and The Ethnocentric Fallacy," *Journal of Moral Education* 25 (2) (1996): 185–199.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Lara Sheehi and Stephen Sheehi, *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation: Practicing Resistance in Palestine* (Routledge, 2022).

[14] For a discussion on teaching hope in the classroom, see Radhika Govinda, *Feminist Politics, Intersectionality and Knowledge Cultivation* (Routledge, 2025). Charles Paine, "Relativism, Radical Pedagogy, and the Ideology of Paralysis," *College English* 51 (6) (1989): 557–570. See also Brian Daniels, "The Critical Moral Classroom: An Approach to Teaching Values" (master's thesis, University of Massachusetts Boston, 1996), https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1081&context=cct_capstone. See also Laurie Grobman, "Postpositivist Realism in the Multicultural Writing Classroom: Beyond the Paralysis of Cultural Relativism," *Pedagogy* 3 (2) (2003): 205–225.

[15] The University of Sheffield, "University of Sheffield Graduate Attributes," https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/skills/sga (accessed August 11, 2024).

[16] Bonine, Amanat, and Gasper, *Is There a Middle East?*

[17] Said, *Orientalism*.

[18] Ibid., 1.

[19] Ibid., 3, emphasis added.

[20] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality I*, trans. Robert Hurley (Pantheon Books, 1978).

[21] "Sykes-Picot Agreement: 1916," Yale Law School, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/sykes.asp (accessed September 24, 2024).

[22] Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

[23] Ibid., 4–5, emphasis added.

[24] Ali Ahmida, *Genocide in Libya: Shar, A Hidden Colonial History* (Routledge, 2021).

[25] Carla Garapedian, dir., *Screamers* (2006; Maya Releasing, 2009), YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpHkzwE4qzg.

[26] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (Columbia University Press, 2010), 21–78.

[27] The notion of hegemony was developed by Antonio Gramsci. A hegemonic discourse is a discourse that is generally accepted by the majority as being true despite it only benefiting a particular class/group and being based on this group's worldview. Antonio Gramsci and Joseph A. Buttigieg, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Columbia University Press, 1992).

[28] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Grove Press, 1962).

[29] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Basis: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 1990).

[30] Fujino, Gomez, Lezra, et al., "A Transformative Pedagogy for a Decolonial World," 77.

[31] Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: 'What Is Strong Objectivity'?" in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (Routledge, 1993), 49–82.

[32] Mary Field Belenky, Blyth McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing, The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Basic Books, 1986).

[33] Adrian Adams, "An Open Letter to a Young Researcher," *African Affairs* 78 (313) (1979): 451–479; Pat Caplan, "Engendering Knowledge: The Politics of Ethnography (Parts I and II)," *Anthropology Today* 4 (6) (1988): 14–17; Ann Oakley, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms," in *Doing Feminist Research*, ed. Helen Roberts (Routledge, 1981), 30–61; and Sara Ababneh, "The Fear Factor: Fieldwork away from the Safety Blanket of Depoliticized Gender and Women's Issues," in *The Politics of Engaged Gender Research in the Arab Region: Feminist Fieldwork and the Production of Knowledge*, ed. Suad Joseph, Lena Meari, and Zeina Zaatari (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 119–138.

[34] Noah De Lissovoy, "Decolonial Pedagogy and the Ethics of the Global," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 31 (3) (2010): 279–293.

[35] Rosanna Currenti, "Police Powers and Procedures: Stop and Search and Arrests, England and Wales, Year Ending 31 March 2023 (second edition)," Gov.uk, Home Office, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/stop-and-search-and-arrests-year-ending

-march-2023/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2023 (accessed September 25, 2024).

[36] Asma Barlas, "The Qur'an and Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur'an's Opposition to Patriarchy," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3 (2) (2001): 15–38.

[37] Fujino, Gomez, Lezra, et al., "A Transformative Pedagogy for a Decolonial World," 73.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 75.

[40] Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture," in *Feminism and Foucault, Reflections on Resistance*, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Northeastern University Press, 1988), 87–103.

[41] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Pantheon, 1977), 98.

[42] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

[43] To demonstrate identity flexibility, there is a varied usage of her/they pronouns. Specifically, both pronouns are used in the same sentence.

[44] Emphasis added.

[45] Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38 (4) (2013): 785–810.

[46] For a critique of placing patriarchy and gendered violence at the top of structural violence hierarchy, see Janet Halley, "Rape in Berlin: Reconsidering the Criminalisation of Rape in the International Law of Armed Conflict," *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 9 (1) (2008): 78–124, http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/MelbJIL/2008/3.html.

[47] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104 (3) (2002): 783–790. See also Hala Marshood and Riya Alsanah, "Tal'at: A Feminist Movement That Is Redefining Liberation and Reimagining Palestine," *Mondoweiss*, February 25, 2020, https://mondoweiss.net/2020/02/talat-a-feminist-movement-that-is-redefining-liberation-and-reimagining-palestine; and Sara Ababneh, "The Time to Question, Rethink and Popularize the Notion of 'Women's Issues': Lessons from Jordan's Popular and Labor Movements from 2006 to Now," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 21 (1) (2020): 271–288, https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol21/iss1/21.

[48] Town name removed to ensure anonymity of the student.

[49] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (Grove Press, 1967).

[50] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 3 (3) (2014): 1–25.

[51] Takriti, "Thawra Epilogue: Genocide and Resistance *Thawra*"; and Hala Shoman, Ashjan Ajour, Sara Ababneh, et al., "Feminist Silences in the Face of Israel's Genocide Against the Palestinian People: A Call for Decolonial Praxis Against Complicity," *Gender, Work & Organization*, March 28, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13258.

[52] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Anniversary Edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016).

[53] Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"

[54] Zoe William, "760,000 Women in the UK Waiting for a Gynaecological Appointment? That's Just the Tip of the Iceberg," *The Guardian*, November 19, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/19/760000-women-uk-waiting-gynaecological-appointment-tip-iceberg.

[55] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale University Press, 1992); Rifat Hassan, "An Islamic Perspective," in *Women, Religion and Sexuality, Studies on the Impact of Religious Teachings on Women*, ed. Jeanne Becher (Trinity Press International, 1990); Asma Barlas, "The Qur'an and Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur'an's Opposition to Patriarchy," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3 (2) (2001): 15–38; and Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

[56] bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (Atria Books, 2004).