LUND UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences

Graduate School

Master of Science in Gender Studies

Major: Political Science

Course: SIMV07

Term: Spring 2016

Supervisor: Dr. Catarina Kinnvall

From avengers to heroines

Muslim*women dismantling hegemonic discourses

Gina Waibel

Abstract

Hegemonic European discourses about muslim*women reduce the complex living realities of muslim*women to the singular of the gendered and racialized other. This thesis investigates the hegemonic functioning of these discourses and explores postcolonial and queer theoretical approaches for dismantling it. Employing Mouffe and Laclau's discourse analysis newspaper articles from seven European countries in English, French, and German are analysed. While the studies in case are a Pakistani cartoon series about the veiled super heroine *Burka Avenger*, and the fighters of the Kurdish women's protection units *YPJ*. The analysis shows however, that discourses that are racializing and othering muslim*women can sustain hegemony, by disguising their particularities as universal. Going beyond identity politics, a postcolonial queer approach was compiled, focusing on the constitution of subjectivities and possibilities of politicising them.

Key words: queer theory, postcolonial theory, Muslim, women, racism, nationalism, gender, Europe, discourse analysis

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the possibility to study abroad and Lund University for the great education I received. Moreover, I would like to thank my professors, who above all, taught us to develop our own critical thought.

I thank Frida Wallander for being a fantastic opponent and helping me to refine the thesis with her constructive criticism. More than that, I thank Frida for being a friend right from the beginning.

I am thankful for all the people I got to know during my time in Lund, for making it a fantastic experience. Most of all, I would like to thank all my friends for their company and support, especially Valerija Lapina and Riya Raphael.

I am most grateful for the love and support from my family. I thank my parents for their financial and emotional support and more than that, for always encouraging me to be curious and to study.

And I thank Valentin for staying calm throughout all the chaos and for always being there when hope seems lost. But most of all for challenging my thoughts in endless discussions and for being my intellectual counterpart.

Table of contents

1 Introduction

> "*The mobilization of foundationalist religious or secular meanings as they invest in the timelessness of the female body as the defining evidence of the boundaries of us versus them, here versus there, West versus Islam, civilized versus barbaric, and secularism versus religion is part of this process*"
> *(Moallem 2008, 109).*

This quote accurately describes the most recent debate over values, which has been dominating European public debate for more than a year. Yet, nothing it conveys is new, it is neither newsworthy nor informative. The binary thinking in dichotomies, celebrating artificial boundaries is not new. Neither is the exploitation of gendered bodies as boundary markers, sustaining national projects. Still, it seems that the mantra-like repetition of the Manichean allegory together with the wish of a renaissance of enlightenment thought, is all that current debates can offer. However, since these ideas have repeatedly been proven to be problematic, the aim of this thesis is to complicate hegemonic subjectivities and to explore possibilities of conceptualizing the political aside from universal laws.

1.1. Framing the case

According to the UN Refugee Agency, the global number of forcibly displaced persons has reached 65,3 million by the end of 2015, which corresponds with being the 21st largest nation in the world (UNHCR 2016a, 5f.). In 2015 the number of people risking their lives in the Mediterranean Sea to reach safety in Europe has reached an all time high and has come to be known as the European *refugee* or *migration crisis*. Between January 2015 and early August 2016 1,278,013 people reached Europe by boat, while at least 6,948 people died on sea (UNHCR 2016b). In 2015 the asylum applications in 38 European countries increased almost three times compared to the numbers of the previous year (UNHCR 2016a, 35).

Taken as a whole, it is obvious that these developments have had a quite substantial impact on European societies, which have led to a political crisis of the

European Union. Not only are the Schengen Treaty and the Dublin Regulation unilaterally suspended from time to time by a large number of EU members states, moreover do they jeopardize international law such as the Geneva Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, through dubious agreements between heads of states and governments, and by closing borders and building fences.

Obviously, questions of political subjectivity, of citizenship and of belonging pose themselves. Hence, developments that interfere with the hitherto existing processes of reproduction of nation, culture and citizenship are very likely to become conflicting. As critical (feminist) scholarship has shown, these processes are highly gendered (Yuval-Davis 1997; Ahmed 2000; Sauer 2009). And since it is women* who are "often required to carry this 'burden of representation', as they are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity", they are disproportionally affected by these conflicts (Yuval-Davis 1997, 45). As a project funded by the European Union, running from 2006 until 2009, showed the "bodies of Muslim women became a battlefield of conflicts over values and identity politics" over whom "liberal norms and values such as religious freedom, state neutrality and gender equality are not only challenged, but also renegotiated and reassured" (Sauer 2009, 76).

Within discourses about muslim*women, roughly two antagonistic positions can be distinguished: a liberal and a multicultural. The liberal position invokes notions of modernity, secularism, and freedom and frames muslim*women as antagonists to what is presented as an otherwise free European society. Whereas the multicultural position highlights and celebrates the difference muslim*women represent, and presents it as valuable addition to what is presented as an otherwise homogenous European society. From a postmodern point of view both of them are problematic. The liberal position because it is inherently racist and because it veils relations of power in concepts such as modernity or secularism. The multicultural position because it is reifying and essentializing, and thus covering up power relations.

Thus the purpose of this research project is twofold. First, I want to explore possibilities of dismantling current hegemonic discourses about muslim*women. Second, building on the insights of the first part of the study, I want to critically

engage with postcolonial and queer theory to explore space beyond this dichotomy. Eventually this thesis is guided by the question:

> *How can hegemonic discourses about muslim*women be dismantled with postcolonial and queer insight?*

1.2. Structure

The structure of this thesis is as follows: in chapter 2 I discuss methodological considerations. After a discussion of classical and unconventional concepts of ontology and epistemology, followed by a discussion of feminist thought about philosophy of science, I will introduce some of the main concepts of this thesis. Then I will go on with presenting discourse analysis, discussing theoretical and practical implications, and conclude with my approach of sampling and the choice of material. Chapter 3 offers an overview of current debates and critical scholarship about muslim*women in Europe. In order to structure this very broad debate, I will focus on the following aspects: hegemonic discourses about the Muslimwoman; the process of racializing muslim*women; (gendered) nationalism and othering, and; (liberal) conceptions of agency. In the fourth chapter I will employ discourse analysis to scrutinize my two case studies, which are the Pakistani TV show Burka Avenger, and the Kurdish fighters of the YPJ. Thereby I hope to get a comprehensive, analytical understanding of the hegemonic functioning of discourses about muslim*women. The fifth chapter will deal with the findings on a theoretical basis. Based on insights from the previous chapters I will critically engage with postcolonial and queer theories, to explore what they have to offer to dismantle current hegemonic discourses. Eventually in the last chapter I will revisit key arguments and findings from the thesis.

2 Methodology

Within this section I am going to discuss methodological considerations. I will start with a discussion of different conceptualizations of ontology and epistemology, then bring them together with critical feminist thought in the field of philosophy of science. Based on this insight I will outline and define some of my central concepts, before introducing discourse analysis. This last part will contain a theoretical/methodological discussion of the approach, an outline of the method, and will be concluded with considerations about sampling and the choice of material.

As my choice of theories – queer and postcolonial theory – already indicates, I place this thesis in the field of poststructural and postmodern thought. I agree with Ramazanoğlu and Holland that a clear definition, and subsequently a strict division between both terms is as difficult to give as it is problematic, considering that deconstruction lies at heart of this school of thought (2002, 84). Eventually the inherently deconstructive approach, is the connection to my theories as well as a link to the method of discourse analysis.

Drawing on *black* feminist and indigenous researchers, Alia Imtoual developed a "de-orientalising methodology for Muslim communities and researchers" in her article "De-orientalising methodologies: Towards an Articulation of a Research agenda for Working in/with Muslim communities". Therein she reminds researches to be aware of the long history of orientalist depictions in research about Islam or Muslims*, and exhibits that it is "imperative that a research methodology actively rejects the perpetuation or reinvention of stereotypes [...] and rejects the homogenisation of Muslims or interpretations of Islam" (Imtoual 2009, 177). I share her concerns about orientalist tendencies and I think her imperative is an important reminder to not re*produce such narratives. Yet, I do not agree with her suggestion to employ feminist standpoint theory as a de-orientalising methodology. Thus, I am taking on what is probably the most frequently voiced critique about standpoint theory, its inherently essentialist tendencies. By stipulating that the point of departure of any research project

should be revolved around the lived experiences of marginalized groups (Harding 1993, 63), it is hardly possible to not re*create the processes of marginalization.

By dismantling the colonial implications in the production of the subject of the "native informant", postcolonial theory offers a valuable objection to standpoint approaches. Taking on the example of the native elite in colonial India, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak criticises that they are "at best native informants for the first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other" ([1988] 2010, 253). Hence, in such a setting, the first-world intellectual is not openly exploring whatever she*he encounters. On the contrary, the intellectual merely establishes conditions to *discover* what was already designated in the first place. Since I share Spivak's criticism, I have decided against using the model proposed by Imtoual and to draw on postcolonial theory instead.

Thinking from a post-modern point, I usually find myself struggling between the wish to say something, to explain phenomena and to develop solutions, and the fear of simultaneously re*producing oppressive social structures through some form of essentializing. Eventually, one of the most central aspects of feminist methodologies is the imperative to acknowledge that research is embedded in particular historically and culturally specific conditions of knowledge production, and a "view from nowhere" is simply not possible (Harding 2004, 26). In the case of this research project this means that I have to mediate between the wish to make a substantial contribution, which can inspire political change, and being reasonable and hand in a thesis at some point. In order to make my underlying assumptions transparent, I will address questions of philosophy of science, discuss epistemological and ontological assumptions, as well as the theoretical implications of my method. Thus I do my best to take accountability for the questions of power within the research process. Eventually I understand this research project to be emancipatory, in the sense that it aims to dismantle relations of power, thus exploring prospects of conditions for change.

2.1. Epistemological and ontological considerations

As prescribed in their respective Greek and Latin origins, ontology is usually understood as the study of being, while epistemology refers to the study of

knowledge. According to this dichotomy the ontological level refers to how things *are*, respectively the objects of research. Whereas epistemology refers to the knowledge we have, to what we *know* about things and who can know them.

However, this distinction already implies a fundamental poststructural concern, which I would term the *metaphysical dilemma*, and what is outlined by Ramazanoğlu and Holland as the *nature* or *essence* of things, or in this case their ontological side (2002, 16). While poststructural thought does not deny that objects of research can have material aspects as well (Hall 2013, 29; Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 34), it definitely troubles ideas of how, where, and eventually if a line between the material and discursive side of an object of research can or should be drawn. According to the discourse theory of Mouffe and Laclau, the way we see the world is a product of historically and culturally specific understandings, which "are created and maintained through social interaction between people in their everyday lives" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 102). Hence, the authors do not intend to deny the existence of material conditions, but they emphasize the fact that "phenomena only gain meaning through discourses, and that the investment of phenomena with meaning contributes to the creation of objects and subjects" in the first place (ibid., 103).

Poststructural (re)definitions of (discursive) boundaries of objects of research then also have implications for the conceptualization of epistemology and ontology. First, if the creation of objects and subjects is mediated through discourses giving meaning to phenomena, then a distinction between epistemology and ontology is artificial. There is no *natural* or given connection between them, no line of differentiation inherent in the objects of research, waiting to be unearthed. Rather, this connection is constructed according to philosophical beliefs and based on analytical decisions. Second, a distinction between both concepts is contingent, and as such depending on the context of research.

These conclusions eventually pose the question of whether a distinction between the two concepts is even useful within a poststructural research project. By following an argument stated by Judith Butler, I tend to negate this question.

In the discussion, Butler refers to Jacques Lacan to show how ontology is no pre-historic, metaphysical condition, but constructed all along: "[*a*] thing takes on the characterization of 'being' and becomes mobilized by that ontological gesture only within a structure of signification" (Butler 1990, 43). Accordingly, for things to take on the mode of *being* they not only need to be mobilized, but more importantly the process needs to take place within a structure that makes it meaningful. This process of locating things in a wider scheme to make sense out of them, also termed intelligibility, is usually understood to belong to the sphere of epistemology. This becomes crucial, since theories which use the distinction between ontology and epistemology usually locate the origin of their objects of study in some form of ontological or even pre-ontological sphere. Thus, Butler argues, the process of reproduction is disguised by simply mapping the "political parameters of its construction in the mode of ontology" (ibid., 32). By highlighting how the concept of ontology is (mis)used, and by unmasking the idea of a reality "that is in some sense 'outside', 'before', or 'after' power", she illustrates that there is no reality that matters outside of discourse (ibid., 29). Accordingly, an analytical distinction between ontology and epistemology helps to naturalize and disguise processes of reproduction and eventually obscures relations of power, and as such is rather misleading than useful for a poststructural research project as this one.

2.2. Concepts

Based on these poststructural and postmodern considerations, I am going to outline some of the overarching concepts in this thesis and briefly discuss theoretical implications.

Not least due to its roots in poststructural thought, this thesis is centred on an analysis of power, hence it seems quite straightforward to begin discussing this concept. For my general understanding I am building on Michel Foucault's definition, who pointed out that "relations of power are, above all, productive" (1988, 118). Hence, power is neither defined as a negative force, nor as repressively exerting power onto subjects from the outside. On the contrary, power is understood to be creating the very subjects it is said to represent (Butler 1990, 2). To illustrate my thought, I would like to draw on the example of

borders. Without the concept of borders – whether inter or intra state – there is no such thing as a migrant. Since the concept of migration is based on a relational understanding of movement and borders, otherwise every kind of movement, irrespective of its intentions, causes, or its duration, would qualify as migration, and the concept would lose its analytical value. So what defines a migrant subjectivity is not the actual mobility of individuals, but their categorization based on relation to the concept of borders. Hence, an analysis based on a productive understanding of power is not asking how borders affect groups of people differently, but how the concept of borders produces different groups of people.

Such an all-encompassing concept of power can seem quite negative, almost negating agency. However, as Butler pointed out, if power is the condition sine qua non for a subject's existence and providing "the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are" (1997, 2). Or, borrowing Foucault's terms: "where there is power, there is resistance" (Butler 1990, 95). Thus, especially from a critical perspective I find this concept of power helpful, because here power is not emanating from a specific source, nor is it working unidirectional, but instead all positions in society contain at least some form of power. However, this is not to be confused with the idea that power has ever been or is currently equally distributed or accessible. Hence, in order to change relations of power, it is fundamental to understand the process of its distribution and re*production.

Based on this conceptualization of the working of power and subjectivity I will now briefly address my terminology. Attentive readers will find Muslim Women, the *Muslimwoman*, and muslim*women in this text and may be confused about the different terms. Since these are not simply different terms for the same thing, but rather different terms for different concepts I would like to embed them in a short theoretical context in order to explain the necessity of using several terms.

In her seminal work *Feminism without borders* postcolonial feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticises *western* feminism for being centred on "women as a category of analysis" which accordingly

> "refers to the critical assumption that all women, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogenous group identified prior to the process of analysis [*which facilitates an elusion between*] 'women' as a discursively constructed group and 'women' as material subject of their own history" (2003, 22f.).

Similarly, another postcolonial feminist scholar, Anne McClintock, warns of "generic abstractions void of political nuance" and reminds us that "the singular category 'Woman' has been discredited as a bogus universal for feminism, incapable of distinguishing between the varied histories and imbalances in power among women" (1995, 11). The problem of generic abstractions together with (neo) colonial process have according to Mohanty led to the discursive reduction of a vast amount of complex and varied subjectivities to the one singular identity of the *Third World Woman*. Hence, relating to this conceptualization, and borrowing a term from miriam cooke, by using the term the *Muslimwoman*, I am "attempting to draw attention to the similar effects of various [*discursive*] strategies used [*to*] codify others as non-Western and hence themselves as (implicitly) Western" (ibid., 18). By using italics together with a capitalised singularity the reader should be reminded of the discursive production of this fictional group. Contrary to the term "Muslim Women" which originates in some of the discussed texts, and which is based on an understanding of subjectivity as homogenous, stable, and universal. Eventually, based on the concept of strategic essentialism I have created the term muslim*women, and thus I want to communicate three aspects. First, the asterisk is inspired by queer interventions in the masculine German language. It is one of several approaches to subvert inherently masculine and binary structures in language and thought, and thus the asterisk works as reminder of the diversity beyond rigid and universalistic categorizations and disrupts conventional imagination. Second, the asterisk also works to highlight the hybridity of both parts of the neologism, underlining that there is neither something as universal femininity nor muslimness and followingly, there is no stable, coherent subjectivity of either or both. Third, binding both words together is a further way to employ unconventional writing techniques, to de-naturalise and thus politicise a concept. Moreover, is it a reference to Kimberlé Crenshaw's ground-breaking concept of intersectionality, which was a radical new way of conceptualizing how multiple power structures intersect, rather than purely adding them up. As such, combining both words

draws attention to the intersection of processes of gendering and racialization, while the asterisk again works as a reminder that these intersections are never exclusive or stable.

2.3. Discourse analysis

Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's discourse theory is one of the main theoretical influences for this thesis, and I am using their approach to discourse analysis as method for this thesis. This is due to two reasons. First, it places strong emphasis on contingency. Thus, discourse analysis takes up one of the most central elements of poststructural thought – the impossibility of permanently fixed meaning – and puts it at the centre of the analysis. Second, it is a deconstructive method. As such it "aims at the deconstruction of the structures that we take for granted; it tries to show that the given organisation of the world is the result of political processes with social consequences" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 48).

Since these two aspects always came to be prevalent in my thoughts, I have decided to use this focus for the analytical decision between different possible approaches. Thus I have decided not to use critical discourse analysis (CDA), since it is based on the presumption of a *dialectical* relationship between discursive practices and other social practices in the constitution of the social world (ibid., 61). Norman Fairclough for instance emphasizes that discursive practices, together with social practices of non-linguistic character, are partially constitutive but also partially constituted by the social world. But as to where to draw the line between the discursive and the non-discursive sphere he remains very vague. However, since the main concern of CDA is societal change, he does explain the transition from the discursive to the non-discursive. Accordingly, some "practices, relationships and identities were originally discursively constituted, but have become sedimented in institutions and non-discursive practices" which can in turn be *reflected* by discourse (ibid., 62). Here it seems Fairclough advocates for this distinction in order to elude what I have earlier termed the *metaphysical dilemma*. Thus it becomes clear, that CDA is not compatible with a strong focus on contingency.

Even though *Discursive Psychology* is more poststructuralist than CDA, it still locates the conditions of existence of some phenomena outside the realm of discourse and implies and *interactionist* understanding (ibid., 103). Broadly speaking, discursive psychology defines discourse as situated language use (ibid., 97). Within the different approaches of discursive psychology, there is no consensus as to whether the interactionist or the contextual aspect of a discourse is prevailing. However, the epistemological focus lies on "how people construct their understandings of the world in social interaction, and how these understandings work ideologically to support forms of social organisation based on unequal relations of power" (ibid., 107). So while the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive is substantially weaker than in CDA, it still prevails.

These considerations eventually led me to choose Mouffe and Laclau's discourse analysis as the best method for this research project. As Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips describe it, the "starting point of the theory is that all articulation, and thus everything social, is contingent" and this works both as "philosophical foundation of the theory and its analytical motor" (ibid., 38).

2.3.1. Method

While Mouffe and Laclau provide a sophisticated theoretical framework, they remain vague in specific explanations on how to carry out a discourse analysis according to their idea. They do however present key concepts and their relation towards each other. In the following I will present the concepts that I have adopted and outline my plan for the analysis.

Again, Jørgensen and Phillips provide a good summary of discourse:

> "[*it*] attempts to transform elements into moments by reducing their polysemy to a fully fixed meaning. In the terms of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, the discourse establishes a *closure*, a temporary stop to the fluctuations in the meaning of the signs" (ibid., 28).

Following Mouffe and Laclau's thoughts, it helps me to analytically divide their framework into different levels. Accordingly, on the first level, discourse operates through temporary closure. By arranging *elements* in a specific way with and

towards each other, their polysemy is reduced and thus they become meaningful – in the terminology they become *moments*. Yet, here two things are crucial to notice. First, the emphasis lies on the closure being temporary. As Mouffe and Laclau underline "the transition from the 'elements' to the 'moments' is never entirely fulfilled" (cit. in Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 28). Second, discourses can only attempt to create meaning through fixations. This is where the other two layers come into play. On the second level several discourses operate through *chains of equivalence* and *key signifiers*. Accordingly, signs become meaningful through their relational positioning towards each other. Through this process key signifiers become meaningful, since they have the power to determine or at least influence other moments and elements within a discourse. Explained in the terminology of discourse theory:

> "nodal points organise discourses (for example, 'liberal democracy'), master signifiers organise identity (for example, 'man'), and myths organise a social space (for example, 'the West' or 'society')" (ibid., 50).

While these three terms describe key signifiers that have already gained meaning, they all could always become *floating signifiers*. These are signs which "different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their own particular way" (ibid., 28). Since a discourse always relies on the exclusion of other possible meanings, its constitution is relationally and happens "in relation to the field of discursivity", which bears the potential of threatening the closure, thus creating ambiguity (ibid., 27). The third level is the relationship between discourses. While there are of course various ways to describe these relationships, Mouffe and Laclau provide some analytical concepts connected to their theory. One of these is the pair of *logic of equivalence* and *logic of difference* (ibid., 44f.). *Equivalence* is pointing towards a process of erasing diversity. When *white* people started classifying people as *black* they did not bother to deal with the diversity, rather the term inherently meant everything non-*white*. *Difference* instead highlights the implications of such diversity. It comes close to a non-additive model of intersectionality as proposed by Crenshaw and McClintock. Alongside, the cluster of *antagonism*, *hegemony*, and *objectivity* is central for this thesis. Accordingly, *antagonism* describes the situation when "everything the individual discourse has excluded threatens to undermine the discourse's existence and fixity of meaning"

(Laclau 1990, 17 cit. in ibid., 47f.). In other words, when the temporary closure becomes challenged and the contingency becomes visible again. Yet, *hegemonic* interventions can avert this, through the use of force, to reconstitute unambiguity (ibid., 48). Here it is important to note that this definition of hegemony diverts substantially from the definition based on Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony, employed by postcolonial theory. If not specified otherwise, my use of the concept of hegemony follows the latter, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. This eventually leads to the concept of discourse analysis, which is most central in my analysis, *objectivity*. Laclau describes it as "sedimented power where the traces of power have become effaced, where it has been forgotten that the world is politically constructed" (1990, 60 cit. in ibid., 38). So while Mouffe and Laclau emphasize the importance of contingency in discourse theory, they of course do not understand either discourse or power to be arbitrary. Quite the contrary, conceptualizing when and how discourses struggle over the creation of meaning, moreover, when this struggle is absent and why, is the core of discourse analysis. As Jørgensen and Phillips note:

> "the establishment of hegemonic discourses as objectivity and their dissolution in new political battlefields is an important aspect of the social processes that discourse analysis investigates" (ibid., 48).

This is why I have chosen discourse analysis as method for this thesis. It enables retracing and highlighting power structures which have become invisible, thus revealing the mechanism of construction behind seemingly natural constructs. Moreover, it can provide explanations of the process of producing meaning, and thus enables an analysis of which subjectivities become intelligible in discourses, and which do not. Eventually it makes conditions of power transparent, thus facilitating possibilities of intervention in hegemonic discourses.

2.3.2. Choice of material & sampling

Theoretical sampling is an approach which enables the development or refinement of theory. It aims to "provide a springboard for the generation of theory and the refinement of theoretical categories" (Bryman 2012, 419). Accordingly, the selection of material is conducted with reference to the aims of the research, and thus the units of analysis are chosen in terms of criteria that will help to answer

the research question (ibid., 418). Since I understand this thesis in the tradition of qualitative research, the selection of the cases is not based on the generalizability of results, but based on their potential to enable new theoretical insights, therefore theoretical sampling seems to be a valuable approach. Thus I hope the analysis will help me discover possible analytical categories or concepts and allow me to understand their relationship with broader structures, which will eventually lead to new theoretical insight.

Thus the choice of material was led by my aim to broaden the focus in a twofold way. First, I decided to focus on cases of muslim*women outside of Europe. Although there is already a substantial body of research and statistical data about the situation of muslim*women in Europe available, not so much work has been done on the level of discourses. If the discursive level is under scrutiny, the focus often lies on the situation of muslim*women living in any of the respective countries and covers aspects like political activism, news and media reports, policy documents, or legal issues, to name but a few. However, there is a gap of research connecting European discourses with muslim*women living outside of Europe. Thus I got inspired to conceive of a research design, which would enable me to study European discourses about muslim*women by examining non-European cases. Since I am focusing on the level of discourse, the cases can technically be situated everywhere, as long as they influence European discourses somehow (and be it due to absence rather than presence).

This brings me to my second point, the decision to select cases not based on the principle of similarity but on difference. Since I am focusing on discourses which are racializing and othering muslim*women, it seemed obvious to choose examples of this discourse. Yet, I have decided against it for three reasons. First, because it is very depressing to spend a lot of time and energy to retrace these discourses. Second, because thankfully critical feminist research has been doing this for years, which resulted in the theoretical accounts discussed in chapter 3. Third, because this would also mean reproducing a large share of these discourses, and I have decided to limit the space and attention they get to a minimum. However, since I am still interested in the hegemonic discursive production of the *Muslimwoman*, I decided to focus on the relationship with other discourses in the field.

This led me to a choice of examples based on the logic of difference – different from hegemonic discourses about the *Muslimwoman*. Eventually the two examples of my analysis are the Pakistani TV series *Burka Avenger* and the Kurdish fighters of the *Women's Protection Units YPJ*. Now the connection between the two cases – a cartoon series for children and teenagers on the one hand, and women fighting in war on the other – is probably everything but obvious. Yet they have something very central in common. The muslim*women portrayed in both cases are exceptionally powerful, independent, and inspiring. Because they transcend a broad variety of boundaries, I assume they could be insightful cases for a study which employs a set of non-normative theories. Besides this similarity, the cases diverge to a great extent. This bears the potential to reveal a broader variety of aspects, or, on the contrary, emphasise certain aspects, since they can be observed in very different cases. However, coming back to the approach of theoretical sampling, the focus of this discourse analysis does not lie on a comprehensive understanding of each of the cases. Rather, my aim is to understand the functioning of the hegemonic discourse, to identify and outline possible starting points for a postcolonial queer approach.

Following Mouffe and Laclau's approach of discourse analysis means that few specific instructions are given, since they never primarily conceived it as a method but rather as a philosophical approach. On the one hand this gives the researcher a lot of autonomy in designing the specific analysis. On the other hand, the lack of specific rules and guidelines makes the analysis part more challenging, since instead of following an existing scheme (or slightly adapting it), one has to entirely develop one. Thus, as with the choice of material, I made the choices about sampling in close connection to the research question.

Against the background that I have decided to use a qualitative approach, I narrowed the choice of material down to a) (academic) research; b) interviews, or; c) (media) reports. Almost instantly it became clear that there is not much (academic) research available about either of the two cases. Concerns, as discussed above in regards to the idea of "native informants", made me decide against interviews. Thus, the remaining choices were to either explore the absence of research on the cases or focus on (media) reports. Since I had already decided

to select the cases based on the logic of difference, I did not want to add a dimension consisting of the absence of a phenomenon, because this seemed to exponentially complicate a possible analysis. Which lead me to taking the only remaining option: (media) reports.

Since social media, blogs and independent media projects are built upon user-generated content I decided against using them. Although I consider them to be very relevant and interesting, this would have meant an additional level of analysis, which would obviously exceed the scope of this analysis. Therefore, I decided to use more conventional sources, in this case newspapers. And although aspects like (political) orientation and circulation of a newspaper can be crucial in a media analysis, these factors are not decisive in the case of this thesis, and thus I did not take them into consideration in the selection of the articles. As outlined above, the approach of theoretical sampling mainly aims to gain insight into the functioning of and logic behind these discourses to be able to refine theoretical approaches, and not to study the discourses themselves.

Language was eventually the final decisive criteria. Since I am proficient in three languages spoken in Europe I decided to choose two articles in each language. This sums up to six articles per each case, so in total to twelve articles. The languages are English, French and German, and they are mostly spoken in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, and the U.K. Since my interest lies in *European* discourses, I decided on a broad sample, selecting at least one article from each of these countries.

Applying all the criteria now introduced, this still resulted in a sheer load of articles. A closer examination however revealed that most of the articles were only copies of one of the big news agencies' reports. So, whenever possible, I did not choose an article that (mainly) consisted of such a copy. Another criterion was quite self-evident, that articles are not written by correspondents. Again the focus of this project lies on *European* discourses. And although I am aware that geographical location and involvement in discursive fields do not necessarily have to coincide, I decided on accounts written by journalists based in Europe whenever it was possible.

3 Theoretical Framework

Besides providing theoretical insight, this chapter situates the research project in the wider field of critical debates concerned with intersections of sexuality, gender, nationalism, belonging, religion and secularism in the case of muslim*women. Therefore, I will collect, analyse, and not least connect thoughts from an increasingly interdisciplinary field. By discussing relevant literature, I hope to gain deeper understanding of the main findings and insights of existing scholarly work. Moreover, I hope to be able to identify limits and gaps in current research, which will eventually allow me to outline the possibilities and limitations of this thesis. Thus, I hope not only to contribute to academic debates within these fields, but to use the existing work to develop new theoretical approaches, thus going beyond existing boundaries.

While European feminist debates have had many unique or recurrent topoi, the intersection of gender, sexuality, religion and secularism has been comparatively under-theorised and politicised (Mohanty 2003, 17; Manalansan 2006, 225). However, discourses, scholarly work, and social activism operating between the blurred lines of issues such as migration, identity, citizenship, belonging, religion and secularism have been present in Western Europe since the end of the 1980s (Bracke & Fadil 2012, 37; Sauer 2009). Almost simultaneously the "bodies of Muslim women became a battlefield of conflicts over values and identity politics" as they are reaffirmed as markers of cultural and political belonging (Sauer 2009, 76; Yuval Davis 1997; McClintock 1998; Mohanty 2003; Spivak [1988] 2010; Fernando 2013).

Eventually, this theme complex entered the feminist debate, first and foremost under the label of the so-called *headscarf debate*. Posing the question of whether the headscarf is oppressive or emancipatory (Bracke & Fadil 2012, 38; Kiliç et al. 2008; Rottmann & Marx Ferree 2008; Sauer 2009). As the question already indicates, this debate was only too often locked in an unproductive antagonism between a liberal and a multicultural position, as outlined in the previous chapter.

However, especially owing to the critical scholarship and activism of people of *colour*, LGBTI* and queer people, the silencing and marginalization of their voices has been denounced. Their critique challenged "Eurocentric feminists who claim to give voice to an essential womanhood (in universal conflict with an essential masculinity) and who privilege gender over all other conflicts" (McClintock 1998, 7). One result of this intervention was the growing body of critical scholarship on the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationalism, religion, and secularism in European discourses. In this chapter I discuss and retrace their findings, hoping to compile a critical understanding of European discourses about muslim*women. Thereby I focus on the following aspects:

- The process of racializing muslim*women
- (Gendered) Nationalism and othering
- (Liberal) Conception of agency
- Hegemonic discourses about the *Muslimwoman*

3.1. Racializing muslim*women

One aspect of the European hegemonic discourses about muslim*women is that they have a racializing function. As miriam cooke exemplifies:

> "the veil, real or imagined (because the unveiled woman is often thought to be the exception that proves the rule that all Muslim women are veiled), functions like race, a marker of essential difference" (2008, 118).

This underlines, that the hegemonic discourses do not represent how the lives of muslim*women actually look like – in this case whether they choose to veil or not – but rather how their subjectivity is structured according to the principle of race.

In "*Disarticulating feminism: Individualization, neoliberalism and the othering of 'Muslim women"*", Christina Scharff exemplifies how culture becomes racialized. Accordingly "culture is essentialized and reified only in discussions of cultural difference, producing an image of western culture as fluid and other cultures as deterministic" (Scharff 2011, 131).

Fatima El-Tayeb, in her article "*Time Travelers and Queer Heterotopias: Narratives from the Muslim Underground*", contributes a critical perspective about the role of queer and feminist people in this debate. As she illustrates, using Germany as an example, it is striking how:

> „claims grounded in nineteenth-century scientific racism have again become acceptable to the mainstream—with the help of progressive, feminist, and queer voices, nominally opposed to both traditional racism and neoliberalism, but nonetheless integrated into a neoliberal rhetoric presenting the dismantling of the West German welfare state [...] as both inevitable and necessitated by the irresponsible behavior of a foreign, racial Other" (El-Tayeb 2013, 313).

What these articles exemplify is how structures like gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion eventually become essentialized to an extent that people are constructed as *Muslim* according to the principles of 'race'.

Yet, *racism* as analytical framework perishes in the face of the predominant concept of *islamophobia*. Introduced in 1997 in the "Runnymede Reports" islamophobia has succeeded as the common expression to describe hatred against Islam and subsequently against muslimified people (Müller-Uri 2014, 99). Certainly, though, the concept has analytical weaknesses; which were even acknowledged in the report itself, as being not the ideal conceptualization (ibid., 100).

Hence, to cover this gap, Fanny Müller-Uri did establish *antimuslim racism* as an analytical framework within the German-speaking academic debate in her corresponding book.[1] Accordingly, islamophobia as an analytical point of departure is misleading in two ways. First, because it enhances the fiction of a unified, stable, homogenous, monolithic *Islam*. Second, because the suffix *phobia* suggests that it describes a set of pathological fears, which would shift the problem into the realm of individual dispositions, rather than social and political power structures (ibid.). Therefore, Müller-Uri, in her comprehensive analysis, further problematizes the inherent weaknesses in the concept, before offering the counterproposal of an understanding along the lines of a broad conception of racism. Correspondingly, she defines antimuslim racism as functioning through

[1] See Fanny Müller-Uri (2014) Antimuslimischer Rassismus. Intro, Wien.

the essentializing of cultural differences, connected to the notion of *Islam* as a static, homogenous, essentially different culture, leading to and followed by the process of de-individualization and reduction of *Muslims* to these understandings (ibid., 107).

Along similar terms, Amanda Haynes and James Carr argue for the substitution of islamophobia by the concept of anti-Muslim racism in their article "A Clash of Racializations: The Policing of 'Race' and of Anti-Muslim Racism in Ireland". In conjunction with Müller-Uri they argue against a narrow understanding of racism, noting that although "[*h*]istorically 'race' has denoted phenotype [...] the designation of a 'racial group is always socially rather than biologically based'" (Carr & Haynes 2015, 24). They propose their own definition of anti-Muslim racism operating on:

> "Muslim communities through historically informed racialized discourses that centre on assertions of Muslim homogeneity, inferiority, misogyny, atavism and incompatibility with 'Western values' [*where*] Muslim identities and symbols of Islam are frequently presented as synonymous with terrorism, fundamentalism, repression of women and extremism" (ibid.).

Thus in this case the framework of racism proves to be more adequate, since it reveals lines of power in the discursive process of muslimifying people.

In the case of muslim*women this racialization is most commonly organised around the idea of *oppression* (Mohanty 1988; Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002; Zine 2008; Scharff 2011; Vintges 2012). In the seminal article "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" Chandra Talpade Mohanty was the first to offer a comprehensive analytical understanding of this process, conceptualizing the *Third World Woman*. Thus, she not only highlighted how feminist discourses are trapped in a dichotomy between the powerful and the oppressed, she furthermore showed how they employ colonial ideas, inherent in a paternalistic attitude towards women in the so-called *Third World* (Mohanty 1988, 80). Eventually she shows how the *Third World Woman* is defined as:

> "religious (read 'not progressive'), family oriented (read 'traditional'), legal minors (read 'they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights'), illiterate (read 'ignorant'), domestic (read 'backward') and sometimes

> revolutionary (read 'their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war; they-must-fight!')" (ibid.).

This model is still highly relevant, and can be used to describe the discourse about muslim*women today. To speak figuratively: the *Third World Woman* and the *Muslimwoman* can be seen as sisters united in their oppression.

Building on a similar thought, Spivak infamously broke the racism in both the colonial as well as the indigenous patriarchy down to "white men saving brown women from brown men" thereby conveying the colonialist saviour motif ([1988] 2010, 268). Taking up Spivak's critique, critical scholarship highlights how altered versions of this narrative are at work in current discourses about muslimified people. Quite prominent for example is the "figure of the victimized brown queer, who needs saving form the brown straight" (Fernando 2009, 384; Haritaworn 2012, 73; Petzen 2012, 110; Dhawan 2013, 210). In other words – these discourses function to produce and sustain the European saviour subject as *white*, male, secular and straight. Furthermore, since the primary focus shifted from gender and sexuality to an emphasis on the epistemology of race (here especially *whiteness* and *Europeanness*) women embodying these aspects became allowed to "be included in the position of the saviour subject" (Jungar & Peltonen 2015, 139).

3.2. (Gendered) Nationalism and othering

Another key aspect highlighted in critical scholarship is the functioning and significance of *nationalism* in the discursive production of the *Muslimwoman* (Yuval-Davis 1997; Fernando 2009; El-Tayeb 2013; Bracke & Fadil 2012; Jungar & Peltonen 2015). In their critical account "'Is the Headscarf Oppressive or Emancipatory?' Field Notes from the Multicultural Debate" Sarah Bracke and Nadia Fadil point out that:

> "framing the presence of ethnic minorities in terms of the 'diversity challenge' hence becomes not only a way to constitute these minorities as 'other' – and thus to exclude them from the national imaginary – but also to construct and enact a particular understanding of the national self" (Bracke & Fadil 2012, 42).

What makes their critique powerful and distinguishes it from liberal and multicultural approaches is that they map out the political parameters of the production of the national self. Preceding accounts have shown and problematized the essentializing and racializing forces at work in the discursive production of the *Muslimwoman*. Yet, they have not been critically located in specific relations of power, but portrayed as somehow abstractly operating in a kind of vacuum. However, as Bracke & Fadil demonstrate, these processes do neither happen by chance, nor because of misdirected good intentions, but they are foundational for the construction and perpetuation of the national self; Spivak calls this the "benelovent first-world appropriation and reinscription of the Third World as an Other" ([1988] 2010, 259).

This perspective also allows to understand why muslim*women are so highly visible and central in current public discourses, for they "are functional to the constitution of Western European national identities" (Bracke & Fadil 2012, 45; Spivak [1988] 2010, 270). Since the late 1980s European identities have been subject to not only constant and substantial, but also intensifying change. In this context Bracke and Fadil have pointed out how "analysing discourses of multiculturalism provides a way to map crises and transformations of the national self, by tracing how self and other get constructed in the debates, and which mechanisms of representation sustain such constructions" (2012, 42).

Following up on this argument, I want to underline the double functioning of this analysis. While the main intention is to dismantle the hegemonic discursive re*production of muslim*women as well as finding a postcolonial queer approach, the project is also aiming to destabilize and intervene in the re*production of a national self. Moreover, do I not understand the latter to be a positive by-product of the former, but mutually dependent. Highlighting and deconstructing the inherent nationalist tendencies in the European project is a condition sine qua non for any antiracist and decolonizing politics. If the creation of a "stable sense of self" depends on the racialization and oppression of the other, emancipatory strategies are a priori doomed to fail (Jungar & Peltonen 2015, 137). Thus, I argue that the failure of European states to prevent racism "[...] is fuelled in part by dominant, historically informed, narrow conceptions of [*Europeanness*],

which are themselves subservient to a neoliberal agenda" (Carr & Haynes 2015, 22). Therefore, in order for antiracist and decolonizing strategies to succeed, they need to respect this double bind.

Another crucial aspect that has been highlighted by critical scholarship is how this nationalism is deeply gendered (Yuval Davis 1997; Mohanty 2003; cooke 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Kiliç et al. 2008; Moallem 2008; Fernando 2009; Petzen 2012). In her article "Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation" Minoo Moallem exemplifies how "the borders of barbarism and civilization and the terms of entry into the civilized world are drawn via women's bodies" (2008, 109).

Moreover, as Mayanthi Fernando pointed out, it is unsurprising "that such a politics was played out on non-white women's bodies [...], since 'native' women were particular objects of concern for the colonial *mission civilisatrice*" (2009, 384; Rottmann & Marx Ferree 2008, 482).

Central in both remarks is, that they shift the focus of nationalist practices to the site where they actually take place. Whereas, traditional scholarship about nationalism still claims that the nation is primarily constructed, negotiated and governed within the male dominated, institutionalized fields of power, Fernando opposes this conceptualization, demonstrating how the gendered bodies of muslim*women became a primary site of nationalist struggles.

This draws attention to a dimension of power, which has been theorized by Nira Yuval-Davis in her seminal book "Gender & Nation". Therein Yuval-Davis exemplifies the significance of gendered subjectivities in the re*production of the national self. Again, in Moallem's words:

> "[*i*]n this case, the battle between civilization and barbarism continues to take place on the spectacle of the contained, mutilated, or brutalized bodies of Muslim women, enabling the human/humanist subjects of the empire to save, protect, and kill all at once" (2008, 109).

Two aspects are central in this argument. First, the focus on the gendered *body* as a site of contestation. Although this is not the main framework of analysis here, the discursive re*production of the *Muslimwoman* can be conceptualized as a form of epistemic violence. Including the body in these debates shows how easily epistemic violence enables, even translates into literally tangible physical

violence. Studies have shown that especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the US the hijab became a "primary visual identifier as a target for hatred" and that muslimified women were singled out for attack often by forcibly removing their veiling (Carr & Haynes 2015, 27; Petzen 2012). Again this violence should not be mistaken as unfortunate coincidence, but rather understood as rooted in the functioning of gendered bodies as markers of nationalist boundaries:

> "[...] 'the constructed collectivity boundary 'between "us" and "them" also indicates the limits and intersections of social obligations and social norms' [*which can be seen*] as a central dimension in the understanding of racist violence and violence against women in everyday life, as the absence of social responsibilities towards the others often implies the freedom to violate and attack" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 52).

The second aspect brought out by Moallem's argument is the production of a *humanist* subject. This connects to the discourse about the backwardness of muslim*women (Mohanty 2003; Petzen 2012; El-Tayeb 2013; Richter-Montpetit 2014). In "Time Travelers and Queer Heterotopias: Narratives form the Muslim Underground" Fatima El-Tayeb conceptualizes a spatio-temporal regime of knowledge production in Europe, which accordingly is linked to the notion of European enlightenment. Drawing on McClintock's work she highlights how the secularization of time enabled its placement at the disposal of nationalist projects, thus organizing it "into a linear procession, from the 'childhood' of 'primitive' races to the enlightened 'adulthood'" of European nationalism (El-Tayeb 2014, 309). As such, the teleological idea of linear progress sustains the fiction of a modern, enlightened Europe. Jennifer Petzen dismantles this fiction, arguing

> "[...] that moral panics over 'Muslim' sexism and, by extension, homophobia, are less a reaction motivated by a concern for women and queers, or the integration of 'pre-modern' migrants. Rather, they serve as boundary markers in the reconstitution of a unifying Europe" (Petzen 2012, 98; Bracke & Fadil 2012).

Ultimately, the racist and neo-colonial ascription of backwardness is not only constitutive of the trope of the *Muslimwoman*, but also foundational in the re*production of the national self.

3.3. (Liberal) Conceptions of agency

After critically examining the spatio-temporal implications of enlightenment legacies, I eventually want to turn to the functioning of *agency* in discourses about the *Muslimwoman*. Although agency is one of the focal points of these discourses, it is usually under-theorized or not explicitly addressed at all. Thus, it cannot deploy its analytical potential, since it carries unspoken assumptions and ideas that will (re)direct and/or limit possible findings and conclusions. Critical scholars have repeatedly criticised feminist scholarship for implying an individualized, (neo-) liberal conception of agency (Chapman 2016, 239; Spivak [1988] 2010; Castro Varela et al. 2011). This conception of agency has been problematized for perpetuating:

> "a naturalized (humanist) understanding of the agent, or 'autonomous will', that exists outside any power structure, and, concomitantly, participates in keeping those other voices unintelligible, which do not align comfortably with the liberal and secular grammar undergirding our prevailing conception of agency" (Bracke & Fadil 2012, 51).

Eventually, a comprehensive analysis of agency is thus foreclosed, since such a specific and narrow understanding can simply not grasp a broad variety of agencies, which are hence rendered unintelligible.

Against this backdrop I want to examine the critique of autobiographic narratives by ex-Muslim female writers (Zine 2008, 111; Fernando 2009, 380; Vintges 2012, 284; Dhawan 2013, 218; El-Tayeb 2013, 313). Into this category the bestselling books and public accounts from Dutch/U.S.-American Ayaan Hirsi Ali, German Necla Kelek and Seyren Ates, and French Fadela Amara, Loubna Meliane, and Chahdortt Djavann amongst others belong. Central to these tales is that the protagonists are presented as "having cast off the chains of Islamic tradition and embraced the secular-*qua*-universal values of liberty, equality, and tolerance" (Fernando 2009, 380).

This is firstly problematic, because it enhances the idea of muslim*women as eternal victims of oppression, and *western* secularism as their only way to emancipation (Vintges 2012, 284). Only through a break with their *muslimness*, they can step into modernity, since both positions are narrated as mutually exclusive. Thus, muslim*women are portrayed outside of and in opposition to agency.

Secondly, the attention that these authors receive can be criticised as a form of "hegemonic listening in the Western media to the 'critique' of Islam by 'native informants'" (Dhawan 2013, 218). Thus, the critique is shifted from implications in the individual accounts to social power structures. Rather than debating whether these accounts are true or not, or if they should and how they could be generalized, the question should be whose stories are being told? Whose voices are being heard?

3.4. The Muslimwoman

Eventually, all these processes intersect, leading to a reduction of diversity coinciding into a single primary identity, conceptualized by miriam cooke with the neologism the *Muslimwoman* (2007, 140). Accordingly, the term should draw attention "to the emergence of a newly entwined religious and gendered identification that overlays national, ethnic, cultural, historical and even philosophical diversity" (ibid.). Cooke understands the term as an analytical concept, and discusses its potential as a category of political affirmation, and most importantly not as a description of reality (ibid.).

This brings me to the relevance of the term for my analytical understanding. As the articles analysed and discussed in this chapter point out, there is a process of othering which "subverts the saliency of race, class, sexuality, and ideological orientations among those who claim their identities as Muslim *and* as women, and collapses them into a homogenized melting pot out of which only a singular identity based on religion and gender is possible" (Zine 2008, 112). To be clear at this point: I do not think that there is such a thing as a primary subjectivity of *Muslimwoman*, in Europe or elsewhere. I rather employ the concept to describe the effect of European hegemonic discursive processes.

In this context, I want to introduce another term, borrowed from Melanie Richter-Montpetit: *muslimified*. Although she has not analytically defined the concept, she relates it to "gendered racial-sexual logics" (Richter-Montpetit 2014, 44). Furthermore does she underline the relationship of "contemporary security discourses" in the production of "the figure of the Native Indian and the figure of the Black" and analogous the production of *muslimified* people, all connected in

questions about legitimate suffering and griefable lives (ibid., 45). I find the concept helpful because it draws attention to the epistemological functioning of hegemonic discourses. Thus, what becomes politically relevant is not whether people actually identify as *Muslim*, but rather if they are identified as *being* Muslim.

Both concepts have in common that they describe the "discursive construction of this category as externally imposed" (Zine 2008, 114). This is why I think they are helpful in analytically framing European hegemonic discourses. Following critical scholarship within this field, I argue that European discourses do not re*construct the variety of subjectivities of gendered and as *Muslim* racialized people, but rather that there is a hegemonic discourse about the homogenous, "racialized Others, metonymically represented by Muslims" (El-Tayeb 2013, 307; cooke 2007; Scharff 2011).

The discursive construction of gendered and racialized others includes a very prominent aspect, the debate around veiling.[2] In this context Kiliç et al. raise the question of how the process of veiling became the primary site of public outrage, almost fetishized and perverted "into a mystificatory discourse" (2008, 408; Rottmann & Marx-Ferree 2008; Chapman 2016). While it seems virtually impossible to write about muslim*women without touching upon the issue, the mainstream accounts consistently frame it as the point of origin for a "[...] political discourse on citizenship, liberalism, European identity, and gender equality" (Kiliç et al. 2008, 398).

Opposing this hegemonic conception, Sarah Bracke and Nadia Fadil demonstrate how cause and effect are inverted in this debate. They do so by taking on Foucault's concept of problematization. Accordingly, rather than highlighting an already existing problem "[...] problematization announces the establishment of a set of scientific and non-scientific discourses and institutional practices that seek to regulate a distinctive conduct singled out as an object of concern" (Bracke &

[2] In this section I focus on the discursive production of meaning attached to the process of veiling. Thus I do not go into detail, discussing different forms of veiling practiced by muslim*women such as hijab, jilbab, niqab, and burqa separately, but rather their collective meaning in discursive processes.

Fadil 2012, 48). It becomes evident that instead of drawing attention to an existing problem, the *headscarf debate* rather is a constitutive process, literally problematizing what essentially is a piece of fabric. Since a hijab is empty of social meaning in itself and "only becomes constituted as a meaningful act by a distinctive discursive apparatus" (ibid.). Thus rather than being trapped in a Manichean understanding of veiling – either as a symbol of oppression or one of emancipation – the concept of problematization reveals the functioning of power in these discourses. In addition, it is crucial to retrace "how the headscarf debate is functional to the constitution of (a specific idea of) 'neutrality' on the one hand, and that of an 'emancipated gender identity' on the other" (ibid., 48f.). Eventually these critical accounts highlight how the debate about veiling is a constitutive element of the discursive re*production of the *Muslimwoman*.

This chapter has offered an overview of the current debates with the critical scholarship about muslim*women in Europe. Research analysing the livelihoods and living realities of muslim*women in their respective countries, focusing on processes of racialization, othering and nationalism is extensive. Research focusing on linkages beyond the nation-state context and opposing the picture of the oppressed *Muslimwoman*, remains comparatively underexplored. The following chapter will therefore situate the distinctive aspects and insights of these theories in the analysis of the two cases, to gain first theoretical insights, and lay the ground for a final in-depth discussion of theoretical possibilities in the fields of queer- and postcolonial theory.

4 Discourse analysis

This chapter is dedicated to a discourse analysis of European hegemonic discourses about muslim*women. As already stipulated, I have decided to focus on two examples: the Pakistani TV cartoon series Burka Avenger and the Kurdish Women's Protection Units YPJ. At first I will briefly present some background information about both cases, to enable an understanding about each of them, before using Mouffe and Laclau's framework to analyse the functioning of each of the discourses and their significance towards others. Then I will combine the findings of the individual chapters to get a comprehensive and analytical understanding of the discourse's functioning, which will be the basis for the theoretical considerations in the next chapter.

4.1. Burka Avenger

Burka Avenger is a Pakistani TV cartoon series, first airing in 2013, and created by the Pakistani pop star Aaron Haroon Rashid, known as Haroon.

It tells the story of Jiya, a dedicated teacher in an all-girls-school in the fictional town of Halwapur, in the north of the Pakistani mountains. Her alter ego is the Burka Avenger, a female super heroine, who fights corrupt politicians and villains with a special form of martial arts, including throwing books and pens.

The creator of the series, Haroon, says as a musician he was already focusing on issues of social justice, but that the closing of girls-schools in 2010, in a country with a very low female literacy rate, eventually inspired him to devise the cartoon character of a school teacher fighting for "justice, peace and education for all" (Shedd 2014). What followed is a cartoon series with 22-minute episodes, each of them conveying a social justice message, ranging from the importance of girls' education to the danger of climate change or vaccination as a fight against deadly diseases.

Originally released in Pakistan in August 2013, and currently running in its fourth season, the series is also being broadcasted in India and Afghanistan, and the producers have repeatedly talked about a global launch (Bhalla 2015). Beside the

original language Urdu, it has been dubbed in six languages including Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, Dari and Pashto (Bhalla 2015; Chakrapani 2015). While financial information (revenues, brand worth, profit, etc.) so far seems to be inaccessible, it is clear that Burka Avenger is also a huge financial success. As such it is the pioneer project of *Unicorn Black*, a production company run and found by Haroon, located in Pakistan and currently employing 70 full time staff (Unicorn Black 2016). What began as a cartoon series has developed into a multi-national brand including music titles and videos on Vimeo and iTunes, three video games, an App for iPhone and Android, and a merchandising line containing everything from action figures to fashion and stationary.

Yet, its international success is rooted in the combination of social justice messages with a funny, diverse and exciting entertainment format. This award-winning recipe lead to a number of nominations for international film festivals such as the *International Emmy* and the *Peabody Award*, from which the producers were able to take several prices home. Among them, in 2014, the show won the first *International Gender Equity Price* at the *Prix Jeunesse International Munich* film festival, for explicitly depicting positive and alternative role models and not permeating old clichés (Prix Jeunesse International 2014).

Indeed, the heroine's costume is sparking the most controversy. The significance of this controversy around the Burka Avengers costume is why I found the series an interesting and enlightening case for the context of this thesis. Through analysing the discourse about the TV series I hope to gain insight in how discourses around veiling, belonging, and gender are functioning, structured.

4.2. Women's Protection Units (YPJ)

The *Women's Protection Unit* or YPJ – the acronym for their Kurdish name *Yekîneyên Parastina Jin* – is the *Defence and Self-Protection* branch of the Kurdish *Democratic Union Party* (Kurdistan National Congress 2014, 15; Peace in Kurdistan 2016).

The PYD – the acronym for their Kurdish name *Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat* – is a Kurdish Syrian party, founded illegally in the early 2000s (International Crisis Group 2013). Although no official ties exist, the PYD is often referred to as an

offshoot of the illegal *Kurdish Worker's Party* (PKK) in Turkey (ibid). That the organizations at least sustain close ties becomes almost self-evident in the case of Abdullah Öcalan. As "philosophical, ideological representative of the PKK" and one of the parties founders, he has been imprisoned in Turkey since 1999, where the PKK is considered a terrorist organisation (Dirik cit. in Sutton 2015). So besides being a founder and leader of the Turkish PKK, the Syrian PYD regards him as their ideological leader, founding the party's ideology on his philosophy (Dirik cit. in Sutton 2015; Kurdistan National Congress 2014, 11f.).

At this point the inherent contradictions in international relations start to unfold. The PKK is regarded as a terrorist organization by many states, including Turkey, the United States and the European Union. Now while the PYD understands itself to represent "party of the third way" in the on-going war in Syria, neither at the side of the opposition nor the Assad regime (Kurdistan National Congress 2014, 9) the Turkish foreign minister Çavuşoğlu, discussing an upcoming round of the Syria peace talks, called them a "terrorist organization [*that*] has no place with the opposition at the negotiating table" (Yackley 2016). Meanwhile, during the fight over the besieged city of Kobanê in 2014, the US government, which happens to be Turkeys NATO ally, "dropped weapons, ammunition and medical aid to Kurdish forces" defending the city (Letsch 2014). Eventually, EU parliamentarians called the "continued designation of the PKK as a terrorist organization [...] hypocritical, because Europe supports the PKK's Syrian Kurdish sister militias, the People's Protection Units (the YPG and the all-female YPJ)" (Bookchin 2016). Obviously, international opinions about the YPJ's military struggle differ greatly.

Coming back to the YPJ itself, it was founded in the aftermath of the so-called "silent revolution", during which, on 19th July 2012 the Kurdish people of Rojava declared their autonomy (Kurdish National Congress 2014, 7). With the war still under way in Syria, and fuelled by many parties interests against a Kurdish independence project "women, who were taking leadership roles in every part of life, felt the need for self-defence and founded the YPJ" on December 2nd 2013 (Serhat & Servan 2015). As such the YPJ is established parallel to the Peoples Protection Units YPG (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*) with whom together they form

the section for *Defence and Self-Protection* within the PYD's structure (Peace in Kurdistan 2016). Getting reliable figures about their number of troops, their military weaponry and their structure is not possible, due to the on-going conflict and the lack of (academic) research about them. Regarding the numbers of female fighters in the YPJ, accounts range from several hundred up to 15.000 combatants, or between 30 and 40 per cent women in the ranks of PYD units (Dirik 2014).

What is certain, however, is that following their military success in the on ground fight, the female fighters of the YPJ received unprecedented international media attention. And since the fighters of the YPJ are per definition *female*, and Kurdish people are predominantly *Muslim*, I am interested in how their accounts are narrated and re*produced in societies so obsessed with their female Muslim other.

4.3. Discourse analysis of European media

As outlined in the methodology chapter, I roughly group Mouffe and Laclau's concepts on three analytical layers. Yet, since my interest lies not primarily in the functioning of one specific discourse, but rather in the relationship between several discourses, I will focus on the second and third layer.

In a first step I have identified key signifiers and chains of equivalence, as well as floating signifiers in each article. Key signifiers are defined as *empty in meaning* themselves and they only attain meaning through their relational positioning towards each other. So the width of moments, together with their frequency of mentioning is significant to understand a chain of equivalence. Then I have merged the findings from the individual articles to one common analysis for each of the two cases. The outcomes are key signifiers with a corresponding chain of equivalence each, as well as floating signifiers. First, each of the cases will be analysed separately, before bringing them together for a concluding discussion.

4.3.1. Burka Avenger in European media

The signifier with by far the most prominent mentioning is "Pakistan", with a chain of equivalence consisting of 11 moments mentioned 27 times overall, as you can see in figure 1.

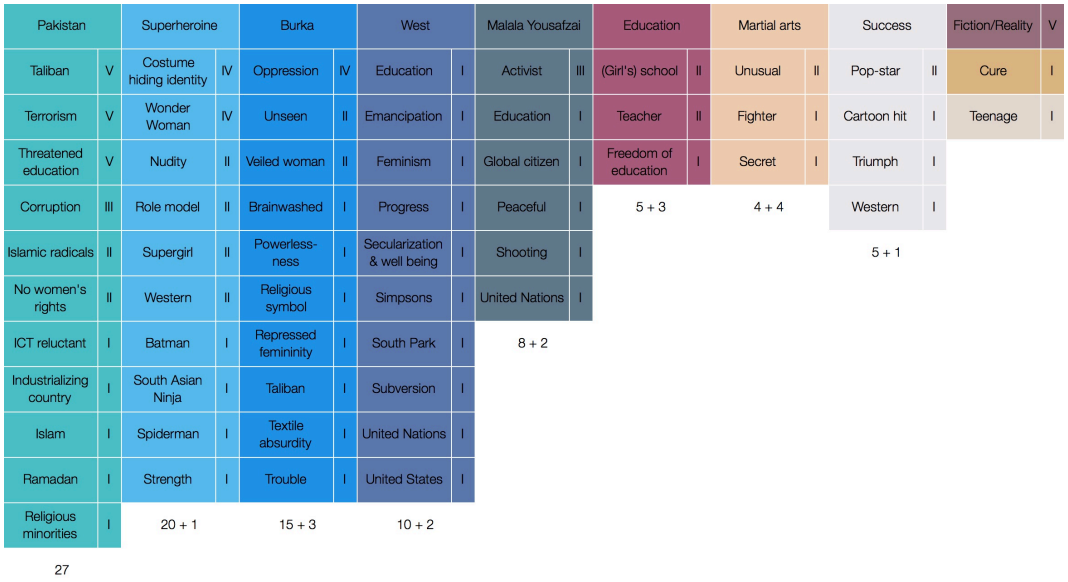

FIGURE 1

"Taliban", "terrorism", and "threatened education" are the three moments that are mentioned most often. This is not surprising because they touch upon issues which are conveyed in the cartoon series. The style of the show and the articles in discussing these topics is quite different, however. As one of the articles shows in drawing a parallel to the show:

> "Sadly, it [*closing of girls schools*] is a battle Pakistanis are all too familiar with in the real world. The Taliban have blown up hundreds of schools and attacked activists in Pakistan's north west, because they oppose girl's education" (Abbot 2013).

This perpetuates the idea of Pakistan as a war-torn country, where terror is not only defying everyday life, but where it becomes synonym with reality. This is not to say that it would be per se problematic to broach these undoubtedly highly relevant as well as complicated issues. That said, usually, discussing a carton series and international relations or domestic terror do not go hand in hand. So I would assume that if authors are truly keen on discussing these topics, they will do so with appropriate depth and scope. In the case of these articles, however, it almost seems as if these topics serve the function of providing a quick and easy solution for a background, to spark the article with life and make it more colourful. Similar, in the case of the second and third most common moments, "corruption" and "lack of women's rights" are portrayed as defining everyday life, and mentioned frequently, but not further explained or set in a context. The

remaining moments portray Pakistan as a highly religious country and range from "religious minorities" to "Islamic radicals". The chain is completed with "industrializing country", almost working as a reminder and underlining all the stereotypes.

Super heroine is the second most common key signifier, with a chain of equivalence consisting of 10 moments, which are mentioned 21 times in total. Their cluster of "costume hiding identity", "Wonder Woman", "nudity", "Supergirl", and "western" is usually addressed together. Thus it seems that most of the articles presuppose some common knowledge about super hero*ines, as for example the fact that they need to cover their identity. Eventually the discussions in the articles are centred on the question of what a suitable super hero*ine's attire should look like. Unambiguous, and in what seems to be a matter-of-factly way, the authors conclude that the lack of clothing, as the female US examples demonstrate, is the standard of measurement. Surely they have been around for quite a while now, and numerous comic books and movies about their tales have been consumed around the globe. However, no single thought is given to the fact that maybe once it could be the other way round, and preceding heroines would have to live up to the standards of their new counterpart. Quite the opposite is the case though. Not only is the Burka Avenger's clothing judged as compared to her predecessors, moreover this judgment is accompanied by moral (double) standards in all the cases.

These double standards can also be observed, and are best exemplified by the moment of "role model". Again, unambiguity that being a role model and wearing a Burka is mutually exclusive is prevailing. Aside from perpetuating double standards yet again, this is highly informative about the author's envisaged readership and the respective audience of the show. It seems that the underlying assumption is that a veiled heroine is an inappropriate role model for unveiled children. Initially this might seem reasonable. Yet, the functioning of children's pedagogy is that they do not have to follow it literally. I would assume most parents hope that their children also do not take Pippi Longstocking literal – living in their own house shared with a monkey and horse, dropping out of school and ignoring the law. Even if the role model is supposed to be taken literal, how about

children who are already or are going to wear a veil in the future? Do they not need role models or should their role models not resemble them?

Burka is the third most common key signifier, consisting of 10 moments, mentioned 18 times. A brief look at these moments shows how nearly all of the articles unambiguously equate Burka with oppression. As one author reasons: "The show aims to present a positive and strong image of women. But why of all things put the heroine in a burka?" (Spengler 2013). I have already discussed the problem behind this equation, why it is analytically useless, and how it creates and sustains the idea of an emancipated *self* while the *other* is simultaneously muslimified and racialized in the previous chapter. What is irritating and somehow incomprehensible in the case of these articles is the wasted opportunity to see the creative potential in the show's approach to garment. To retrace how a character can be powerful despite of, or maybe just because of being female and wearing a burka at the same time. While in real life things may be or not be possible, there is no doubt that the fictional Burka Avenger is very powerful. This eventually challenges stereotypes, inspires creativity and opens up spaces for imagination. In the articles at hand, this potential has not been tapped, instead, old clichés have been perpetuated.

The next key signifier is Malala Yousafzai. She is mentioned in all but one of the articles and the chain of equivalence contains 6 moments. Looking at these, it becomes clear that she is some form of a hybrid. In contrast to the Burka Avenger, or her creator Haroon, she is not framed as "Pakistani". Quite the contrary, she is portrayed as a global citizen, connected to the United Nations and to activism. This brings up another question from the previous chapter, the power of *hegemonic listening* in the West. The articles consistently and exclusively connect the story of Yousafzai to her background in Pakistan and the terror against (girls') schools there. If however the focus would not lie on culturalized violence, and only superficially touch upon gender, interesting perspectives could open up. If the nexus of terrorism, education and gender were considered seriously, Malala Yousafzai's story could also be connected to school and campus shootings in the US or femicide in *western* countries. Such narratives, however, do not sustain the

dichotomy of the safe and civilized west and the dangerous, barbaric rest of the world.

Eventually four signifiers remain, one of them, "the west" will only be discussed in the next section. The remaining three are not as impactful as the above discussed. Overall, they seem to fulfil a supportive rather than decisive function. In the case of "martial arts" a culturalizing process can be identified. It works similarly to what Amanda Chisholm has described as the "colonial strategy [*of*] martial race" (2014, 355). Accordingly, this ambiguous logic works in a twofold way. First, it serves the function of sustaining a racial superiority of the colonising masculinity (ibid.). Second, people who were deemed *martial* were "positioned as the ideal subjects of the colonial project" and constructed in direct opposition to their native counterparts, who "were assumed to be effeminate, religiously dogmatic, traditional and underdeveloped" (ibid.). The martial arts signifier relates to these narratives and invokes these pictures, which serves the functioning of painting an as much colourful as culturalizing background to the stories told. The remaining signifiers of "education" and "success" work analogously but inverted. They underline the notions of an alleged *western* supremacy.

Eventually I want to turn to the floating signifiers. As already stipulated, they are significant in a discourse analysis, since different discourses try to invest meaning in them. Thus they highlight existing or potential relationships with other discourses. In the case of this analysis, three floating signifiers have been identified, one of them mentioned five times. This already indicates that the discourse at hand, in this case about the Burka Avenger, is quite closed to the outside, and monothematic in the sense that it does not relate to a broad variety of other discourses.

The most common floating signifier that was employed by all but one article is "fiction/reality". In the case of these articles, solely to draw a parallel between real life in Pakistan and its depiction in the series, or by implicating that Malala Yousafzai is the real life alter ego of the fictional character of the Burka Avenger. However, authors could instead also have drawn upon the enormously rich field of feminist and queer media studies. It offers a vast amount of approaches for analysing the nexus of gender, sexuality, and performativity together with tools

for criticism and affirmation. Adhering to Foucault's concept of genealogy, these approaches usually contain a dedicated analysis of the real and the fictional historical and socio-political backgrounds of the respective case of analysis. By drawing upon these approaches, the authors could still discuss Burka Avenger's real and fictional background in Pakistan, but not only would it be in a more critical way, it would also highlight the interlacing with sexuality and performativity.

Another floating signifier is "cure", which is a key signifier in medical discourses. The context in this case is that one author assumes that "letting loose Catwoman and Wonder Woman on Pakistan, would indeed be a feminist radical cure" (Spengler 2013). Under closer scrutiny this sentence reveals many underlying assumptions. First, the language is very violent. Especially in the German original "letting loose on" is mimicking the phrasal verb "setting the dogs on somebody". Thus it connects to policing discourses, indicating the use of force to make somebody do or omit something, or to violently detain someone from entering or leaving somewhere. Eventually, it can be seen as revealing how feminist subjects are exploited in the creation and sustainment of a *progressive* European self. The two heroines do not act on their own behalves, but are let loose, figuratively equating them with attack dogs. Second, relating to a medical discourse, it has a colonial history. The logic inherent in a medical discourse is that a cure is a treatment for disease. So by suggesting that Pakistan needs to be cured somehow, the author already presupposes a disease. This is the essentializing basis for the colonial narrative to work. As in this case the problems which the author identifies in the Pakistani society, such as a lack of women's rights, are naturalised by equating them with bodily functions. Thus they are not portrayed to be caused by political power structures, but are either already inherent in the patients' genes, caused through infection because of a weak immune system, or due to irresponsible behaviour. Moreover do medical discourses function with a clear hierarchy: doctor and patient are not understood to be on an equal level. Quite the contrary, the doctor is in a hegemonic position both in the diagnosis and in the decision about treatment, with the subordinate patient supposed to unquestioningly follow what the doctor says. Thus, once more, the colonial forces play in favour of the *white* European saviour who brings its cure to save the

essentially weak Pakistan from its lurking disease. Third, it contains a teleological notion of progress. In the case of the medical discourse, the process from a diseased body to a healthy body. And while medical processes are usually understood to work in a broad variety of ways, the pace of their working is related to the gravity of the disease as well as the healing functions ascribed to the body. The renunciation of this pace is thus either caused by an identified lack of self-healing functions, or a gravity of disease. So if a *radical cure* is proscribed, the patient must either way be in a very bad position. In the case of the article, the author parallels this state of disease with the state of feminism. Eventually, through attesting a fundamental lack of women's rights to Pakistan, he re*produces the idea of an emancipated European self. Taken together, this relation to medical discourses is done in a violent way, and is re*producing colonial narratives to sustain the imagination of *modern* Europe.

The third and last floating signifier is "teenage". In the respective article it is ambiguous in meaning. On the one hand it is part of the heading, thus quite impactful, but on the other hand it is not taken up explicitly within the article, suggesting a bit of a weakness. Usually discourses about the teen-ages contain moments such as identity struggle, orientation, sexuality, gender, education, or belonging only to name a few. So in this case it is especially irritating that the author relates to all these topics, even goes on to discuss the role model functions of the Burka Avenger, but draws no connection what so ever to the realities of (Muslim) girls growing up in Europe. Another lost chance of leaving the path of clichés and engaging in discourses about (political) power structures.

Taking together all the individual aspects I will now discuss the re*production of objectivity in this discourse. In the methodological chapter I have explained in detail that objectivity describes the state of sedimented power, the assumption that things somehow just exist as they are, rather than being constructed within a specific socio-political, historical power matrix. In the case of the Burka Avenger, the discourse even takes on the form of a modern example of Edward Said's ground-breaking theory about *Orientalism*. While on the face of it, the articles are about a new TV series in Pakistan, a closer look reveals that the subtext is quite different.

The articles do not only communicate the minimum facts about the series (as for example in a fact box) but provide some context to them, they relate to other discourses, and in doing so re*create the dichotomy between an exotic orient and a modern occident. This becomes quite evident in case of the key signifier "the west". In the terminology of discourse analysis a key signifier that links together a geographical region with other key signifiers and moments to organize a social space is called a *myth* (Laclau & Mouffe 2002, 39f.). As figure one shows "the west" is a myth and works through linking the geographical region of the United States with institutions like the United Nations and ideas like secularization, feminism and progress. And since discourses can only create meaning relationally and exclusionary, this myth does not only try to establish a hegemonic idea of what "the west" is, but moreover communicates what the rest of the world is not – in this case they do not have functioning and institutionalized international relations, are religious, anti-feminist and yet-to-be-enlightened. A look at the chain of equivalence of Pakistan is enough to see how the relational degradation works.

The discussion of the burka follows similar patterns. All but one article discuss it exclusively in connection with oppression, reinforcing the idea that wearing a veil and having agency are mutually exclusive. The one article which acknowledges that the burka in the show has emancipatory potential does however go on calling it a "textile absurdity" before closing with the question if "the Lord truly had the integral wrapping of one half of humanity in mind when he created men and women?" (Schader 2013). The difference between what the TV series tries to communicate, and what the articles make of it is vital, and through an analysis of the graphic moments of the discourse it becomes evident.

Figure 2 is one of the series official pictures, used by one of the articles and followed by a caption reading “the Pakistani animation superhero fights for girls’ education, against the villains who devilishly resemble the Taliban” (Araujo 2013).

FIGURE 2

It portrays the Burka Avenger in a very powerful posture. Her facial expression as well as her body language is alert and determined and she raises her fist. Although covered from head to toe, the picture definitely leaves no doubt about her strength and independency. Furthermore does this picture resemble a very famous feminist icon, the poster of Rosie the Riveter. While there is no official comment from the Unicorn Black production company on whether this analogy was intended or not, it highlights how the character of the Burka Avenger disrupts traditional ideas of femininity.

Quite different than one of the other articles which used figure 3 as a graphic moment and did not provide any capture. It shows only the face of a real woman wearing a Burka. Her gaze seems disillusioned and the eyes are sad and exhausted. The picture definitely does not convey strength or agency, rather oppression and/or sadness.

FIGURE 3

Interestingly though, while on a linguistic level the articles are unambiguously leaning towards an illustration as seen in figure 3, all but one of the articles used graphic material provided by the production company, which is contradictory to their writing.

Eventually it is this significance of Burka Avengers veiling why I found her interesting in the context of this thesis. Feminist blogger and Journalist Bina Shah criticised that an image of "girls and women [...] hidden away, shrouded by yards of black cloth to make their presence in society acceptable, safe, or halal" is perpetuated in the series (cit. in Gölz 2014, 56). In contrast, some religious groups have criticised that the series is insulting religion and its symbols (Schader 2013). Again, other religious groups have pointed out that a traditional burka is blue, covering the eyes, and mantling the body shape, neither of which the heroine's costume fulfils. In an interview, creator Haroon marked that "she chooses to wear the burqa, she's not oppressed ... and on the other end of the spectrum, a lot of female superheroes in the West are objectified, and sort of sexualized in their costumes, like Catwoman and Wonder Woman, and that certainly would not work here" (NPR 2013). After all, feminists were the first in criticising the objectification of U.S. American super heroines. They do exactly permeate old clichés and do not extend or even break traditional sex or gender boundaries.

Burka Avenger on the contrary does have quite some queer potential. First and foremost does she completely subvert the dichotomy that women can only be veiled and oppressed, or un-veiled and an active agent, because these things are mutually exclusive. Burka Avenger shows that a woman* does not have to choose whether to veil or not, but can be both: sometimes covered from head to toes, sometimes not wearing any veiling at all. And moreover, she overcomes the idea that the veiling is used to shield herself from male* gaze, since she wears the garment to hide her true identity, not her gender.

Chapter three has already shown that discourses about muslim*women are racialized, oppressive, and organised to create and stabilize the fiction of an emancipated European self. This analysis shows that discourses functioning along these lines have established a firm hegemony. The character of the Burka Avenger disrupts exactly these boundaries. She does not try to fit in with the liberal *white* idea of an emancipated woman. Neither does she take her assigned position of oppressed *Muslimwoman*. She mediates between these and other positions, she is neither and both of them at the same time. Thus she encourages creativity in the reconfiguration of questions about gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, and belonging.

4.3.2. Women's Protection Units in European media

The European media discourse around the Kurdish women's protection units (YPJ) can be broken down into six key signifiers with a chain of equivalence each. The reason for including media coverage about the YPJ in this thesis is the focus on the discourse about muslim*women. Thus, the first chain of equivalence in figure 4 will be discussed in detail, while the others are analysed together and in a more compact manner.

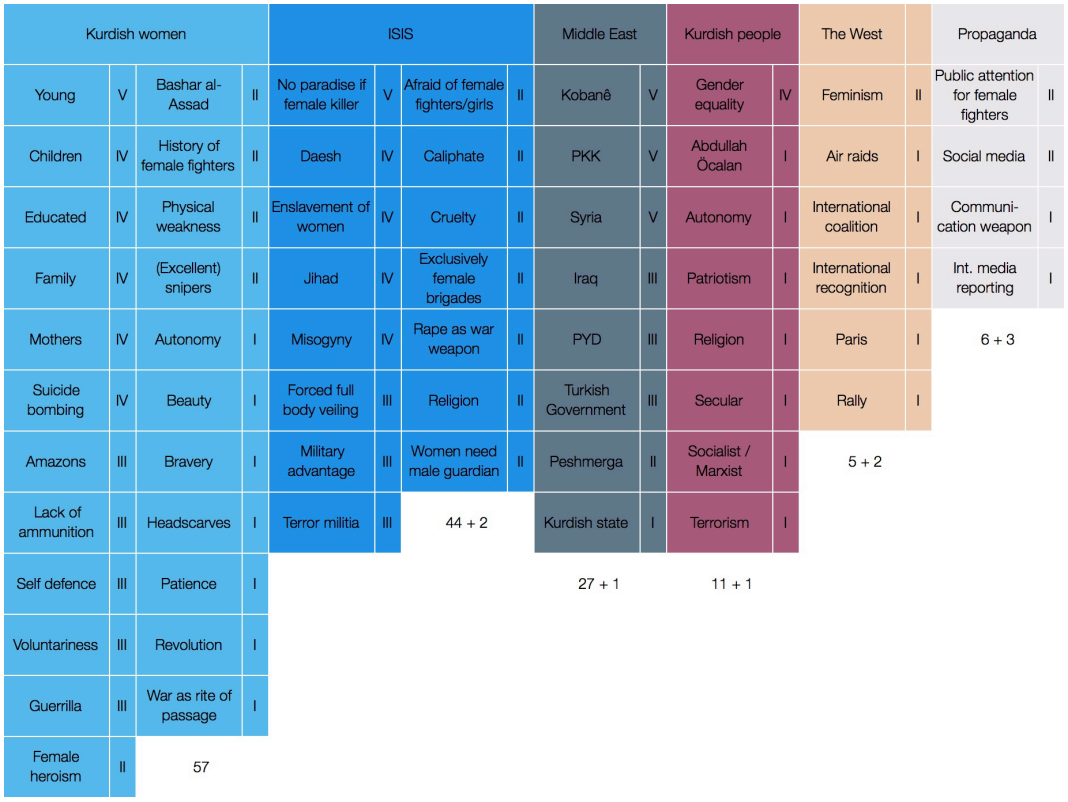

FIGURE 4

As expected, "Kurdish women" is the most prominent key signifier consisting of 23 moments mentioned between one and five times and 57 times in total. Figure 4 shows how the Kurdish female fighters are mostly portrayed as "young" and "educated". Yet, these facts are not set in any kind of context, for example the nexus between peace and education or the levels of education in military units. Nor are they related to the other war parties, so no information about the age or education of non-female Kurdish fighters, the fighters of ISIS or the Syrian fighters is provided. Thus, besides gender, these are further criteria which distinguish YPJ fighters from other parties of this war. Already, only by analysing these two moments, it becomes clear that the intersections in the case of the female fighters are comparatively complex.

The cluster of "children", "family" and "mothers" is the next most common. Following a study by Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry titled "Mothers, Monsters, Whores. Women's Violence in Global Politics" this is highly unsurprising. Accordingly, discourses around women's violence re*produce narratives which can be roughly grouped around *mothers*, *monsters*, and *whores*. The first narrative (mother) ascribes the reasons for female violence to the role of

wife and mother, effectively essentializing femininity (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 30&36). The stories connected to this narrative convey tales of women who lost their children or husbands, or who could not have children or get married in the first place, and who supposedly *became* violent because of this failure or loss. According to Sjoberg and Gentry what makes these narratives common, powerful and problematic at the same time is that they shift the focus of analysis from women's political or religious motivations to the discussion of whether or not they comply with the respective normative female sexuality, which is often related to the biologist fiction of a *peaceful female nature*. This dislocation of reasoning is more than obvious in the discourses around the female Kurdish fighters. Although most of the articles include some reference to global politics or international relations in the Middle East, they do it side by side rather than connected to the YPJs fight. Instead they discuss the fighters' family constellation: "mother of two boys" (Peternel & Al-Serori 2014); their family arrangements: "[...] mothers, who sent their children to safety in Turkey" (AFP 2015); or their familial aspirations: "I'm not thinking about children now, because I'm fighting for my home [...] but later I want to start a family" (Nordhausen 2014). Less prominent, but nevertheless present is the second narrative (monster), which "explains their violence as a biological flaw" and which describes women "as both actually evil and psychologically broken" with the result that "neither they nor their gender are responsible for their actions" (Sjoberg & Gentry 2007, 36 & 41). Within these accounts women often are psychologized and anthologized, and their actions framed in a mental health context. This irrationality is the subtext in some of the articles when mentioning the "suicide bombing" of female fighters. The third narrative (whore) links female violence to women's alleged sexual depravity, as well as sexualizing their actions (ibid., 46). This is overly present in the "amazons" narrative and further sexualizing connections. For example, the author who is astounded that one of the fighters, a former journalist, would rather talk about her motivation to join the fighters – "a failed uprising in the Kurdish city against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad in 2004" – than her relationship status: "single, she remains short on details about her private life" (AFP 2014). Or another author suggesting that the "price" young Kurdish women need to pay "to break with the strictly patriarchal structures at home" is "a vow of chastity", before he gives the word to a former long-time PKK fighter, letting him confirm

that “sexual relations were prohibited, no one from us has even thought about having sex” (Nordhausen 2014).

Scattered in this net of familial and sexual relations, there are at least some other attributes used to describe the YPJ’s engagement in the war. These are “self defence”, “voluntariness”, and “bravery”. One of the articles draws an explicit connection to the conscription for young men, adopted by the Kurdish PYD, underlining that the YPJ combatants are fighting voluntarily (Starr 2014). Although a lot less prominent, strength and agency are some virtues that the combatants are portrayed with. Furthermore, some articles make the effort to give some historical context. They introduce icons of “female heroism” and discuss the “history of female fighters”, as well as “war as rite of passage” within the Kurdish society.

Too often these portrayals end up being rather self-contradicting. While the authors acknowledge that the YPJ has “excellent snipers” and distinguished “guerrilla” fighters it would be far fetched to assume that these are grounded in excellent skills and hard training. Rather – according to the authors – they excel as snipers because of their “patience” and they have no other option than guerrilla tactics because of their “physical weakness” (Beunaiche 2014). Because readers are used to this kind of essentialism in mainstream media, this may not even sound striking at first. Only reversing the argument reveals its stupidity. The authors imply that non-female fighters, with all their “physical strength”, are useless for the delicate task of guerrilla fighting. And those non-female combatants cannot be deployed as snipers either, because of their impatience. Reading it this way it becomes rather obvious that it makes no sense to equate certain genders with certain war skills.

Besides all the attributes and virtues, some of the articles explore the reasons behind the Kurdish female fighters’ struggle and shed light on their wartime realities. Accordingly, they fight for “autonomy”, the “revolution”, and against “Bashar al-Assad”, but they are restrained by a “lack of ammunition”. Yet, compared to the overall number of 57 references, this cluster with only 9 references seems to be rather insignificant. This is problematic in at least two ways. First, all of these four theme complexes are highly elaborate per se, thus

they should be more than garnishing while discussing a fighters relationship status. Not addressing the implications of a Kurdish independence struggle interwoven with the Syrian war, while providing detailed accounts about the family structures of the combatants is questionable to say the least. Second, the question of what is relevant to communicate in European media poses itself. I do not want to suggest that it is per se wrong if authors include children into accounts of war. However, I would argue that if they do so they could reason about the millions of children in the Middle East who are growing up traumatized and often orphaned, or ask where the tens of thousands of children who went missing on their deadly route to putative safety ended up (Townsend 2016), or what it means for the humanity of European people that corpses, like the one of two year old Alan Kurdi, are washed up at their shores (Gunter 2015).

The remaining two moments are "beauty" and "headscarves". After analysing the functioning of the three narratives for violent women, it is not surprising that news coverage focusses on the fighters' looks. Yet, that "headscarves" is only mentioned one time is surprising. As shown in the previous chapter the debate around veiling has not only become fetishized but is functional for the constitution of the idea of neutrality and is sustaining the fiction of a European emancipated self (Kiliç et al. 2008; Bracke & Fadil 2012). I will come back to this point in the discussion of objectivity.

The second most common chain of equivalence, consisting of 15 moments, which are mentioned 46 times, is the one around the Islamic State of Syria (ISIS). Among these, one story was so prominent that all but one article had it covered: that "Isis are afraid of girls" and that "they believe if someone from Daesh [*ISIS*] is killed by a girl, they won't go to heaven" (Dearden 2015). As figure 4 shows, these moments are mentioned seven times in total. That the information value from this story is rather minimal is self-evident, and gets underlined by the fact that it was reported as *news* over a period of at least 15 months.
Dominating in connection with ISIS is their ignorance of women's rights: "enslavement of women", "misogyny", "forced full body veiling", "rape as war weapon", and "women need male guardian". This was expected because of at least two aspects. First, the focus of the articles is on the Kurdish female fighters.

Thus it seems likely to also consider the situation of other women involved in this war. Second, because through the outbreak of the Syrian war, which was followed by an unprecedented migration towards Europe, Europe has re*discovered its feminism. The phenomenon that women's rights and feminism are exploited when necessary is of course not new (Spivak [1988] 2010, 270). But sparked by the various current crises in Europe it has currently reached another all time high. It can be most easily observed by analysing the newly found interest far right and conservative parties show in feminism and LBGTIQ* rights. It also manifests itself in the increase of media coverage and public debate about femicide, domestic violence and rape. During all the years when queer and feminist people raised these issues, NGOs campaigned against it and for more and better rights, and scholars showed that these issues are part of International Relations, they were mildly smiled at and regarded as naïve. Only when these discourses entered the mainstream debate, it became more common to find this point of view in mainstream media. Just to be clear, I think that ISIS is a misogynist, fascist organisation that has to be fought on every level. But it should also be clear that hypocrisy, the exploitation of queer and human rights, and racism are no suitable answers either.

The last cluster revolves around more traditional war narratives like: "jihad", "military advantage", "terror militia", "caliphate", "cruelty", and "religion". Especially since 9/11 and the following wars in Afghanistan and Iraq these narratives, concepts, and buzzwords have dominated discourses about international relations. This is problematic because they remain superficial. Traditional International Relations were built around state actors exclusively until very recently. Scholarship on "jihad" is compared to others extremely young and too often not intersectional (e.g. with scholars from theology, political science, or social work). And yet journalists and analysts make everyone believe that they and their audience are all absolutely clear on the meaning of these concepts.

The next chain of equivalence is the Middle East with 8 moments, which are mentioned 28 times. This comparatively high number may seems to contradict my earlier criticism that the authors do not include international relations enough.

However, aside from the historic roots of the "PKK", these mentionings are descriptive rather than analytical.

Women's roles and "gender equality" dominate the chain of equivalence of the "Kurdish people". Most of the articles praise the Kurdish gender equality in parliamentary or military structures, although often in a classical dichotomous way. Then gender quality and civil rights once more become "Western values" rather than being presented as intrinsic motivation of the Kurdish people.

Looking closer at the reasons behind is also relevant for the next chain of equivalence about propaganda. Some of the articles argue that the female combatants are exploited because they are strategically employed as a "communication weapon" to win over "international media reporting". Firstly, using communication in a strategic way is a common war tactic also known as propaganda. It is defined as using biased information to promote a political cause, and it became a key tactic in war during the 20th century (Oxford Dictionaries 2016). It is everything but surprising that in a world which relies heavily on information and communication technologies, the Kurdish fighters will rely on this tool. Secondly, this does not make the YPJ's engagement in the war any less relevant. These female combatants are killing their enemies whether Twitter is following or not, as they are dying whether the international media covers it or not.

As explained in the chapter about the Burka Avenger "the West" is a myth, meaning that it links a geographical region, in this case France, with institutions like the "international coalition" and ideas like "feminism", while simultaneously communicating what the rest of the world is not.

The re*production of objectivity in this discourse is not easy to grasp. One way this is exercised is the articles' focus: they all present women fighting in a war as a novelty. Although some do shed light to the long history of Kurdish women participating in armed struggles, female fighters are always portrayed as something exceptional. It is of course true, that women's engagement in wars and armed struggle has been ignored and annihilated throughout history. Yet, feminist historical scholarship in this field is very active and the findings indicate that

women have always been participating in wars. Still, the authors chose to sensationalize the female fighters, thus perpetuating the idea that (political) violence and war are reserved for the non-female part of humanity.

Dilar Dirik is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge, a Kurdish activist, and one of the first scholars researching about the current Kurdish women's movement. As such she has been one of the fiercest critics of *western* (media) attention for the Kurdish women's fight. She argues that "the women's political motivations, their ideologies are ignored or co-opted [...] even by feminists" and that the "media frenzy over the women fighting ISIL is bizarre, myopic, orientalist" (Dirik 2014, 2015). While I agree with the former, which basically relates to the critique of de-politicising, the latter is not the case for all the articles that I have discussed. However, I would assume, that the reason why now more articles are including a broader background of the Kurdish women's movement is the constant criticism of activists and scholars like Dirik. One of her other critical remarks is, that *western* media *white*-washes the radical resistance of the Kurdish female fighters, and that these media accounts conveniently leave out, that the movement for which the majority of the women is fighting for, is still "labelled as a terrorist organisation - by Turkey, the EU, and the US" (Dirik 2014).

Overall, the depiction of the YPJ's fighters is mixed. They are at the same time orientalised and de-politicised, while they are presented as strong and successful agents against the most feared terrorist organization on the planet.

There are at least two implications for European discourses about muslim*women. First, as outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the YPJ's fighters are mostly muslim*women. Yet, none of the articles made any connection between the two discourses, no single word is spent. Although exact and reliable numbers are evasive, Kurdish people are said to be predominantly Muslim, from which 98% are said to be Sunni Muslim and 2% Shiite, besides a very small number of believers in Judaism, Christianity, "Babaism, Yezidism, and Yazdanism, which includes sects such as Yarsanism, and Alevism" (Kurdish Project 2016; Bordenet 2014). Nevertheless, it is often pointed out that for the Kurdish identity, cultural aspects are more important than religion (Bordenet 2014). So a possible and comprehensible explanation would be that in this case

maybe even political aspects are more influential for the Kurdish identity than religion. However, arguments like this do not count for Muslim born women in Europe like French Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and Austrian State Secretary Muna Duzdar. When both of the women took their high-ranking jobs in politics their ideologies and ideas dissolved in the background, while their Muslim family context dominated news headlines. These discourses gained even so much power that both politicians had to publicly declare their religious status (Allaire 2012; Rauscher 2016). Something that is unthinkable for a politician with a Christian background, whether in laic France or religious Austria. Second, neither of the two politicians wears a hijab, yet there are numerous articles about them which discuss either their stances toward veiling, or include a general discussion about veiling. So what about the case of the YPJ's fighters?

FIGURE 5

Four out of six articles contain at least some pictures of veiled women. Yet, as figures 5 and 6 show, they do not at all look void of agency, "despite" their veiling.

FIGURE 6

Eventually the double standards in both cases reveal the power structures underlying these discourses, and the relational and exclusionary forces at work. Once more it becomes evident that the fiction of a stable and emancipated European self is built upon the fiction of a racialized, gendered and muslimified other. This discourse analysis shows that the discourse about the eternally oppressed *Muslimwoman* has established a firm hegemony. The Kurdish female fighters of the YPJ are the living proof of how wrong and misguided this discourse is. They do not align with liberal, *white* conceptions about ideal femininity, and in no way do they fit into the model of the oppressed and racialized other. Therefore, the YPJ's fight has an enormous disruptive potential of out-dated ideals on every side.

4.3.3. The European media discourse about muslim*women

The literature analysis in chapter 3 and the findings in this chapter show that a racializing, muslimifying discourse which portrays muslim*women as the eternally oppressed female other has established a firm hegemony in the European

discursive sphere. The antagonistic discourses under scrutiny in this thesis cover a very broad field. Firstly, I have analysed scholarly accounts of radical autonomous activism in the field of queer belonging as well as theoretical elaborations for alternative strategies. Both of which are directly aiming to destabilize the hegemony of the current discourse. Secondly, I have analysed the discourse about the fictional accounts of a super heroine who uses a Burka as disguise. Though the show combines funny TV entertainment with social justice messages, it does not see itself as an explicit intervention in (European) discourses about muslim*women. Thirdly, I have analysed the discourse about Kurdish women fighting for the YPJ. And while their aim is radical social change, also regarding gender equality, they are not concerned about the European discourse but rather about winning the war in Syria. So the examples range from being set in Europe, or at European borders, to the other side of the planet. Some of them are directly aiming for intervention in the current hegemonic discourse, others do not even relate to this discourse at all. Some are real, some are fictional, some are theoretical, and others practical. This is to show that a very broad range of alternatives exists. There is no lack of different narratives, other stories waiting to be told, and subjectivities demanding to be acknowledged. They do however vanish under the hegemonic discourse. And this is unacceptable because of two things.

First, if we want to find new and better answers to the problems European societies are facing, we have to ask different and better questions. Europe is an also Muslim continent, has always been an also Muslim continent, and is hopefully going to be an also Muslim continent. The increase of violence, and the political success of fascist groups and right-extremist parties clearly shows that racism and social exclusion do not lead to more solidarity and a positive future. So we need to stop limiting muslim*women to being the racialized, muslimified other of an allegedly emancipated European self. Second, and even more important, this is a question of human rights. As feminist and queer of colour scholars and activists have repeatedly pointed out: if values like equality or emancipation demand a liberal and *white* conception of subjectivity they are worthless. Or as famous *black* lesbian feminist Audre Lorde said: “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (Lorde 1984, 110).

5 Queer and postcolonial theories

This last chapter is an attempt to configure and demonstrate a way to conceive subjectivity in a non-hegemonic way. Thus within this chapter I am exploring queer and postcolonial theories to see which concepts they have to offer.

What both theories have in common, what makes them radical and thus critical, is that they keep emphasizing that merely replacing certain elements in any given constellation of power "is not going to break the frame" (Spivak [1988] 2010, 246). Both queer and postcolonial theory are very interesting in this context, because they both have a huge potential of complicating relationships, rather than simplifying them. They reveal dissonances instead of smoothing things out and thus they are valuable approaches in studying (inherent) contradictions.

5.1. Queer theories

Emphasis on contradictions is something that some queer theories have in abundance. While they all have in common that they extend the analytical category of gender and systematically include sexuality and desire, there are actually at least three different understandings of *queer* in queer theories. First, queer as synonymous to homosexual, a kind of gay 2.0. While this usage is getting more and more common, almost a buzzword, it is increasingly being criticised for selling normative ideas under a radical label. Accordingly, the way queerness is displayed in these accounts rather emphasises normative structures, because they "do little or nothing to subvert various interlocking systems of oppression that perpetuate heteronormativity" (Lester 2014, 246). Only through applying an intersectional approach, it becomes visible how heteronormative relations are reproduced through interlocking mechanisms of oppression, and eventually can only be tackled if these mechanisms are viewed separately. In an analysis of queer themed picture books Jasmine Z. Lester shows how the books' supposedly queer identities resemble a homonormative subject, thus reproducing white supremacy through "supporting current regimes of practice including consumerism, marriage, family, inequality, military action, and complicity"—rather than forms of non-normative identities (ibid.). *Queer* as synonymous for

non-normative subjectivities is actually the second conceptualization. In this queer ranges from kinky to pervert, from flamboyant gayness, over drag as entertainment, to the outright perverse. Focusing on the perverse is also the analytical strength of this understanding. Since the ingenious effect about perversion as analytical concept is that it highlights that the perverse is not threatening because it genuinely contains the *ab*-normality, but rather mirrors what is contained deep inside the *normal*. Thus what "had seemed deviant, insubordinate, or perverse originates in the very thing to which it seems opposed" (Hurley 2011, 119). This refers to an analytical potential that is shared by the perverse and the queer: the power to light the dark, or to point out all the unspoken. It is, however, the third conceptualization of queer which I find most enlightening in the context of this thesis: queer as a radical and disruptive term. Accordingly, I understand it as "a poststructuralist, deconstructive approach that maintains a critique of identity more than it delineates or names any specific identity category" (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth 2013, 146). Through this way of conceptualizing queer, it explicitly highlights relations of power, since the focus lies on the "disruption of normative categories relating to sexuality, gender, bodies and desire" (ibid., 144). A disruption of bodies that was occasionally intended to be taken literal:

> "They don't want us anymore. They will beat us, rape us and kill us before they will continue to live with us. What will it take for this not to be ok? Feel some rage" (Published anonymously by queers 1990).

This quote reveals the murderous and grotesque face of normativity. It is taken from a manifesto which was produced and distributed by *Queer Nation* in the gay pride parade in New York in 1990 (Stryker 2007), and their activism is generally understood to mark the political inauguration of the queer movement. What made this movement radical, and what makes contemporary movements like #blacklivesmatter radical, is that they let us not forget that epistemic violence most easily transforms into physical violence, that people are killed because they do not confirm to an established normativity.

Judith Butler's book "Gender Trouble" is widely regarded as a theoretical inauguration of the queer theory. I will use her arguments to explain one of the

most central concepts in queer theory, heteronormativity. Butler describes her book as a "genealogy of gender ontology", which she defines as successful if it:

> "will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames as set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender" (1990, 32).

Thus she already forecloses that the social appearance of the subject is not so much determined by how the subject is actually constituted, but rather about how it becomes intelligible. This process of becoming intelligible is organised in a compulsory framework which is termed a heteronormative matrix (ibid., 151). She explains it as a "grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized" (ibid.). Accordingly, it is this framework that ensures that gender is continuously re*produced in a coherent and stable manner. This is achieved by a set of regulatory practices which enforce certain social norms. At this point this explanation could describe any given matrix which has a regulating affect on gender. Yet, as Butler points out, this is not arbitrary, the matrix is not defined by chance, but by specific relations of power, in this case as she specifies, it is a heterosexual matrix. So in this particular matrix, for gender to become intelligible, it has to represent a trinity of gender, sex and desire, displayed in a stable and coherent way, based on an obligatory heterosexuality. Furthermore does "the cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible [*require*] that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'" (ibid., 17).

While in the beginning queer theory had a rather narrow focus more or less exclusively on the intersections of gender, sexuality, and desire, this narrow focus was broadened. Again, especially because of the critical remarks of people of colour, queer theories are now often applied as intersectional approaches. Thus, it moved from a theory preoccupied with heteronormativity to a critical approach to scrutinize normativity, eventually it is an approach that shows the inner workings of productive power. Queer theory made explanations possible which approaches focussing on a repressive model of power failed to provide.

5.2. Postcolonial theories

This focus on normalization and the interplay of different structures of power is where possible connections to postcolonial theories emerge. When asked to explain my thesis, I often faced the problem outlined by Castro Varela and Dhawan that it seems impossible to provide an easy, universal definition which could define what exactly should be understood as postcolonial theory (2015, 286). While colonialism easily provokes associations, and prefixes like post- are very common also in popular culture, it is not self-evident where the relevance of this school of thought is, in seemingly un-colonial contexts, and "'postcolonialism' itself remains a diffuse and nebulous term" (Gandhi 1998, viii). However, I do think that it is neither necessary to provide a full definition here, nor is this thesis the right place for a philosophical discussion of a possible definition of this school of thought. Thus I have chosen the following aspects, which are most useful in the context of this thesis.

First and foremost the invaluable work of radically dismantling the idea of modernity. In times when debates around allegedly European values such as secularism, human rights, and equality dominate everything from newspaper feuilletons to laundry chats, this postcolonial critique cannot be overrated. As McClintock claims in her seminal book "Imperial Leather", "imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere – a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity. Rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity" (McClintock 1995, 5). As such, postcolonial theories often work as a critical intervention in liberal or progressive projects which are rooted in or positioned towards the enlightenment. It is due to postcolonial studies as well as holocaust studies that this understanding of modernity – modernity understood as rooted in the tradition of enlightenment, validating "reason, logic, and universal truth as the foundation for action in the world" (Gannon & Davis 2012, 13) – and enlightenment has fundamentally been challenged (Dhawan 2014, 9). They underlined that notions of progress and emancipation, and the glorifying narratives of European normative hegemony, are systematically linked to "colonialism, slavery, genocide, and crimes against humanity" (ibid., 9f.; McClintock 1995, 10). Postcolonial theories have thus

sustainably shifted social scientific thought by pointing out that enlightenment and colonialism did not accidentally happen to historically coincide, but that they rather are different outcomes of the same process. Furthermore feminist postcolonial scholars point out how "enlightenment claims of universality and trans-historical truth are themselves a reflection and imposition of androcentric patriarchal ideology" (Dhawan 2014, 28). This insight however raises the question of how then to conceptualize political struggles if not as progressive and emancipatory? Spivak perfectly put the answer in a nutshell: "the invention of the telephone by a European upper class male in no way preempts its being put to the use of an anti-imperialist revolution" (Spivak cit. in ibid., 71). This constant struggle not to reproduce Manichean binaries is what makes postcolonial theory so powerful. It does not side with either embracing modernity and defending it, or diabolizing and denouncing it universally, instead of suppressing contradictions it puts them on the forefront. For people who are used to binary thinking, this can be very challenging. At various stages the radical and ambitious claims in queer and postcolonial thought left me speechless, afraid to re*produce the hegemonic structures that I am aiming to disrupt. However, it is exactly a central aspect of these theories that they abandon a "bourgeois humanist model of agency" which equates it with resistance, and to challenge scholars and activists to "imagine forms of politics that overcome simple antagonisms and that exert political power by virtue of being implicated in the very relations they seek to transform" (Castro Varela et al. 2011, 7-9). Eventually I thought about a quote of the famous Marxist feminist Rosa Luxemburg saying "those who do not move, do not notice their chains". So eventually I take these feelings of discomfort as a reminder to always be careful when writing about power, because there is no such thing as before, or after, or outside of power. As famous postcolonial feminist Nikita Dhawan reminds us "the challenge is to employ the master's tools to dismantle the master's house" (Dhawan 2014, 71).

The other part of postcolonial theory I find most valuable for this thesis is the conceptualization of hegemony. The concept was developed by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and derives from the Greek word *hegemonia*, meaning the "dominance of one group or state over another" (Castro Varela et al. 2011, 5). Its success and wide dissemination in post-structural scholarship is owed to another

very common concept, Foucault's theorization of power as productive. For hegemony is a concept aiming to explain power relations not based on the use of force, but rather based on compliance. Accordingly it shifts the focus "from repressive to productive forms of power, from coercion to complicity with normative power and to the violence of 'normality'" (ibid., 3). Hence, the concept revolves around "forms of power that make use of cultural forms of consensus production, popular practices and what he [*Gramsci*] calls 'common sense'" (ibid., 4). Thus hegemony does not describe a stable state of affairs, established once and for all (or until overthrown), but rather an inherently dynamic process, a relation of power that has to be constantly reproduced. The concept furthermore offers a different conceptualization of subjectivity as Castro Varela et al. point out:

> "If, as suggested by Laclau and Mouffe, neither social relations nor subjects exist prior to political practices, then theories of hegemony offer the potential to irritate the dualisms between the essentialist subject positions of dominator and dominated and of victim and perpetrator" (ibid., 7).

This again enhances the productive functioning of power, underlining that hegemony is not regulating how power is distributed between different subjectivities, but instead how power produces differently powerful subjectivities. Eventually, "'hegemonic relation' is a relation where a particular group assumes the representation of universality by universalizing a particularity" (ibid., 7).

5.3. A postcolonial queer approach

After all the discussing and analysing it is now time to come back to the question behind this project: *How can hegemonic discourses about muslim*women be dismantled with postcolonial and queer insight?*

The previous chapter was dedicated to dismantling the hegemonic European discourse about muslim*women with the help of Mouffe and Laclau's discourse analysis. The insights about the hegemonic stabilization from the analysis informed the theoretical discussion in this chapter. So eventually I would like to outline how a postcolonial queer approach goes beyond "essentialist identity and minority politics [*in order to*] explain the *constitution* of subjectivities rather than

presupposing them" (Castro Varela et al. 2011, 2). Because, following Spivak, this is a project aiming at the "difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility" ([1988] 2010, 254). So in the following section I summarize how a postcolonial queer approach diverges from a hegemonic conception of the subjectivity of muslim*women.

Normativity. A postcolonial queer approach is focusing on normativity. It reveals the functioning of power, thus underlining that the world does not happen to be in any particular way, but rather that it is politically constructed in specific ways (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 38). Taking the example of veiling: it can highlight that the view that women should not veil is not in any case more *neutral* than the view that they should be veiled. Both of them are politically constructed against the background of a set of norms and embedded in historically specific social relations. In order to politically mobilize normative relations, their functioning in re*producing hegemonic relations of power must be made transparent.

Intelligibility. A postcolonial queer approach offers the concept of intelligibility. As shown throughout the thesis, in several of the articles, and in both of the case studies – the idea of a homogenous, unified, monolithic subjectivity of the *Muslimwoman* is a fiction. Yet, as I have shown in the analysis chapter, it is one that is constantly re*produced and thus sustained in hegemonic discourses. And it is produced analogue to the *western*, liberal, *white* subjectivity of an emancipated European woman. Now queer theory highlights that as long as both of these subjectivities are hegemonic, thus determining normativity, other subjectivities cannot become intelligible. Therefore, the problem is not a lack of non-normative subjectivities – the two case studies of this thesis prove that. However, within hegemonic discourses they are not acknowledged (made intelligible), but narrated as failed attempts to comply with normativity. They are framed as not-good-enough (not religious or devout enough) in discourses about the *Muslimwoman*. And as not-yet-there (not secular or independent enough) in relation to liberal, *white* conceptions of agency. In order to dismantle hegemonic discourses, the appropriation of alternative narratives must be revealed.

Disenchanting the enlightenment (Dhawan 2013, 21). A postcolonial queer approach works as a constant reminder that the legacy of enlightenment is actually

a racist legacy full of blood in the most literal sense of the words. While values of enlightenment are currently very popular to reclaim European supremacy, their entanglement in the destructive aspects of progress are conveniently left out. While I abject that these debates about values and social contracts are violently played out, once again on the gendered bodied of the other, I think these debates are long overdue. But instead of employing them to deepen the trenches between the self and the other, the bad and the good, a postcolonial queer approach demands a radical historicizing of these values. Only through acknowledging their violent history, they might be put to use in an anti-hegemonic project.

Hegemony. A postcolonial queer approach offers the concept of hegemony to scrutinize relations of power that are based on a productive understanding. Accordingly, groups produce hegemony by claiming that their particularities are universal. The analysis in the previous chapter showed how hegemonic discourses either appropriate dissonance or leave it out and narrate it as unintelligible. In the case of the Burka Avenger, who is the living proof that veiling and agency can even enhance each other, the hegemonic discourses mantra-like repeat them as mutually exclusive. In the case of the fighters of the YPJ, the hegemonic discourses conveniently leave questions around religion and veiling out, since these would complicate their narrations too much. Employing a postcolonial queer approach enables to explain how power is sustained seemingly without the use of force. Based on such insight, it then becomes possible to conceive ways of destabilizing hegemony, beyond simple forms of antagonism, which are rooted in a liberal conception of agency.

Subjectivity. Eventually a postcolonial queer approach goes beyond common identity politics and retraces the constitutive process of subjectivity. Thus the political demands of such a postcolonial and queer critique are not direct to tolerance pluralism or liberal diversity politics, but to “a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal” (Warner cit. in Castro Varela et al. 2011, 12). This leads to a politicization of subjectivity, where subjectivities are neither taken for granted nor understood to be outlining the limits of the possible. Eventually radically multiplying political subjectivity is possibly the best way how a postcolonial queer approach can dismantle hegemonic discourses about muslim*women.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore possibilities of dismantling European hegemonic discourses about muslim*women. Processes of social and political disintegration can be seen all over Europe, and they are inciting or intensifying struggles about nationalism, belonging, and political subjectivity. Once more they are taking place on the bodies of the gendered and racialized other.

Against this background I employed this research project to explore possibilities of dismantling hegemonic discourses about muslim*women. A critical analysis of existing research in this field showed, that most often it is caught in a dichotomy. It became clear, that projects are either rooted in a multicultural tradition, celebrating and embracing the diversity that muslim*women are said to represent, or in a liberal tradition, defending what is understood to be the occident and offering the benevolent hand of the *white* savior to rescue muslim*women from the dangerous orient. While this is of course a pointed reduction, the analysis of critical research already started to shed light on the functioning of hegemonic discourses, discerning the following aspects. First, these discourses racialize muslim*women. They employ culture analogue to the principle of 'race', functioning as a marker of essential difference. Second, they are based on debates of nationalism that are deeply gendered. Thus, questions of gender (equality) are exploited in the creation and sustaining of the self and the other. Eventually, the analysis showed, how gendered bodies are used as boundary markers. Third, hegemonic discourses employ a liberal conception of agency. This was shown to be problematic, since agency is on the one hand the central focus of most studies and debates, but on the other hand it is mostly unquestioned. Thus, the concept carries a lot of unspoken assumptions, which limit its analytical potential, since it already forecloses some possibilities. Fourth, all these processes intersect, leading to the reduction of diversity coinciding into a single primary identity, which was appropriately termed as the *Muslimwoman*.

Building on these insights, I have then turned to a discourse analysis. In order to further scrutinize the functioning of the discourses about muslim*women, I have selected two cases about exceptionally powerful and strong muslim*women who

transcend a whole variety of boundaries. Yet, the analysis showed, that discourses portraying muslim*women as oppressed, have established a firm hegemony, by claiming their particularities to be universal.

With the understanding of the functioning of the hegemonic discourses, I eventually turned to exploring postcolonial and queer theories. Both approaches share a radical claim, to think beyond dichotomies, and both are aiming to encourage contradictions rather than suppressing them. Based on the findings of the previous chapter, I then outlined a postcolonial queer approach to dismantling hegemonic discourses, consisting of 5 parts. First, such an approach deconstructs normativity by showing how the idea of neutrality is historically specific and socially embedded. Second, the concept of intelligibility reveals the functioning of power in the acknowledgment of different subjectivities. Third, a postcolonial queer approach is a reminder of the violent legacy of the enlightenment. Fourth, such an approach offers the concept of hegemony, which can explain the functioning of power along the lines of compliance rather than force. Fifth, a postcolonial queer approach enables a focus on political subjectivity rather than identity politics. Taking all these aspects together, it became clear that to dismantle hegemonic discourses about muslim*women existing subjectivities must be radically multiplied.

References

Ahmed, Sara, 2000. "Introduction: stranger fetishism and post-coloniality" in Sara Ahmed: *Strange Encounters. Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. London: Routledge.

Allaire, Marie Bénédicte, 2012. "A 34 ans, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem est la benjamine du gouvernement", Internet: http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/a-34-ans-najat-vallaud-belkacem-est-la-benjamine-du-gouvernement-7748259483 (15.08.2016).

Bhalla, Nita, 2015. "Pakistan's cartoon 'Burka Avenger' swoops into India to empower girls" Internet: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-women-entertainment-idUSKBN0N50ZU20150414 (15.08.2016).

Bookchin, Debbie, 2016. "The Feminist, Democratic Leftists Our Military Is Obliterating: *Why is the US helping to fight the Kurds?*" Internet: http://www.thenation.com/article/the-feminist-democratic-leftists-our-military-is-obliterating/ (15.08.2016).

Bordenet, Camille, 2014. "Qui sont les Kurdes?" Internet: http://www.institutkurde.org/info/qui-sont-les-kurdes-s-1232550797.html (15.08.2016).

Bracke, Sarah & Nadia Fadil, 2012. "'Is the Headscarf Oppressive or Emancipatory?' Field Notes from the Multicultural Debate" Religion & Gender 2(1), 36-56.

Butler, Judith, 1990. *Gender trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith, 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Carr, James & Amanda Haynes, 2015. "A Clash of Racializations. The Policing of 'Race' and of Anti-Muslim Racism in Ireland" *Critical Sociology* 41(1), 21-40.

Castro Varela, María do Mar & Nikita Dhawan, 2015. *Postkoloniale Theorie. Eine Kritische Einführung*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Castro Varela, María do Mar, Nikita Dhawan & Antke Engel, 2011. "Introduction" in María do Mar Castro Varela, Nikita Dhawan & Antke Engel (ed.) *Hegemony and Heteronormativity: Revisiting 'The Political' in Queer Politics*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Chakrapani, Vishaka, 2015. "'Burka Avenger' to launch in India and Afghanistan" Internet: http://www.animationxpress.com/index.php/latest-news/burka-avenger-to-launch-in-india-and-afghanistan (15.08.2016).

Chapman, Madeleine, 2016. "Feminist dilemmas and the agency of veiled Muslim women: Analysing identities and social representations" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 23(3), 237-250.

Chisholm, Amanda, 2014. "Marketing the Gurkha security package. Colonial histories and neoliberal economies of private security" *Security Dialogue* 45(4), 349-372.

Cooke, Miriam, 2007. "The Muslimwoman" *Contemporary Islam* 1(2), 139-154.

Cooke, Miriam, 2008a. "Deploying the Muslimwoman" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24(1), 91-119.

Cooke, Miriam, 2008b. "Rejoinder to 'Muslimwoman' Responses" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24(1), 116-119.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" *University of Chicago Legal Forum,* 139-167.

Dhawan, Nikita, 2013. "The Empire Prays Back: Religion, Secularity, and Queer Critique" *boundary* 40(1), 191-222.

Dhawan, Nikita, 2014. "Affirmative Sabotage of the Master's Tools: The Paradox of Postcolonial Enlightenment" in Nikita Dhawan (ed.) *Decolonizing Enlightenment. Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World*. Opladen: Budrich, 19-78.

Dirik, Dilar, 2014. "Western Fascination with 'Badass' Kurdish Women. The Media Frenzy over the Women Fighting ISIL is Bizarre, Myopic, Orientalist and Cheapens an Import", Internet: http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/western-fascination-with-badas-2014102112410527736.html (15.08.2016).

El-Tayeb, Fatima, 2013. "Time Travelers and Queer Heterotopias: Narratives from the Muslim Underground" *Germanic Review* 88(3), 305-319.

Fenstermacher, Laurie, 2015. "Countering Violent Extremism. Scientific Methods & Strategies" *Air Force Research Laboratory*, Internet: https://info.publicintelligence.net/ARL-CounteringViolentExtremism.pdf (15.08.2016).

Fernando, Mayanthi L., 2009. "Exceptional citizens: Secular Muslim women and the politics of difference in France" *Social Anthropology* 17(4), 379-392.

Fernando, Mayanthi L., 2013. "Save the Muslim Woman, Save the Republic: Ni Putes Ni Soumises and the Ruse of Neliberal Sovereignty" *Modern & Contemporary France* 21(2), 147-165.

Foucault, Michel, 1990. *The history of sexuality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel & Lawrence D. Kritzman, 1988. "Power and Sex" in Michel Foucault & Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.) *Politics, philosophy, culture. Interviews and other writings, 1977-1984.* New York: Routledge, 110-125.

Gandhi, Leela, 1998. *Postcolonial Theory. A critical introduction.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Gannon, Susan & Bronwyn Davies, 2012. "Postmodern, Post-Structural, and Critical Theories" in Sharleen Nagy Hesse-Biber (ed.) *Handbook of feminist research: theory and praxis.* Thousand Oaks: Sage, 65-92.

Gölz, Olmo, 2014. "Burka Avenger" *helden.heroes.héros* 2(1), 56–57. http://www.sfb948.uni-freiburg.de/e-journal/ausgaben/012014/helden.heroes.heros._heft_2_goelz.pdf.

Gunter, Joel, 2015, "Alan Kurdi death: A Syrian Kurdish family forced to flee", Internet: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34141716 (15.08.2016).

Hall, Stuart, 2013. "The work of representation" in Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans & Sean Nixon (ed.) *Representation*. London: Thousand Oaks.

Harding, Sandra, 1993. "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity"?" in Linda Alcoff & Elizabeth Potter (ed.) *Feminist epistemologies*. New York: Routledge, 49-82.

Harding, Sandra, 2004. "A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory's Controversiality" *Hypatia* 1, 25-44.

Haritaworn, Jin, 2012. "Women's rights, gay rights and anti-Muslim racism in Europe: Introduction" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19(1), 73-78.

Hurley, Nat, 2011. "The Perversions of Children's Literature" *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 3(2), 118-132.

Imtoual, Alia, 2009. "De-Orientalising Methodologies: Towards an Articulation of a Research Agenda for Working in/with Muslim Communities" in Tanja Dreher & Christina Ho, (ed.) *Beyond the Hijab Debates: New Conversations on Gender, Race, and Religion*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

International Crisis Group, 2013. "Syria's Kurds: A Struggle Within a Struggle" Internet: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2013/mena/syrias-kurds-a-struggle-within-a-struggle.aspx (15.08.2016).

Jørgensen, Marianne & Louise Phillips, 2002. *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: Sage.

Jungar, Katarina & Salla Peltonen, 2015. "'Saving Muslim queer women from Muslim hetero-patriarchy'. Savior narratives in LGBTI youth work" *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 10(2), 136-149.

Kiliç, Sevgi, Sawitri Saharso & Birgit Sauer, 2008. "Introduction: The Veil: Debating Citizenship, Gender and Religious Diversity" *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 15(4), 397-410.

Kurdish Project, 2016. "Kurdish religions" Internet: http://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdistan-religion/ (15.08.2016).

Kurdistan National Congress, 2014. “Canton Based Democratic Autonomy of Rojava, Western Kurdistan – Northern Syria). A Transformations Process From Dictatorship to Democracy” Internet: https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.files.wordpress.com /2011/11/rojava-info-may-2014.pdf (15.08.2016).

Lester, Jasmin Z., 2014. “Homonormativity in Children’s Literature: An Intersectional Analysis of Queer- Themed Picture Books” *Journal of LGBT Youth* 11(3), 244-275.

Letsch, Constanze, 2014. “US drops weapons and ammunition to help Kurdish fighters in Kobani”, Internet: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/20/turkey-iraqi-kurds-kobani-isis-fighters-us-air-drops-arms (15.08.2016).

Lorde, Audre, 1984. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” in Audre Lorde (ed) *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crossing Press, 110–113.

Manalansan, Martin F., 2006. “Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies” *International Migration Review* 40(1), 224-249.

McClintock, Anne, 1995. *Imperial Leather*. New York: Routledge.

Moallem, Minoo, 2008. “Muslim Women and the Politics of Representation” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24(1), 106-110.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, 2003. *Feminism Without borders. Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Müller-Uri, Fanny, 2014. *Antimuslimischer Rassismus*. Wien: Mandelbaum.

NPR, 2013. “Lady In Black: ‘Burka Avenger’ Fights For Pakistan’s Girls”, Internet: http://www.npr.org/2013/07/31/207288030/lady-in-black-burka-avenger-fights-for-pakistans-girls (15.08.2016).

Oxford Dictionaries, 2016. “Propaganda”, Internet: http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/propaganda (15.08.2016).

Peace in Kurdistan, 2016. “List of Acronyms”, Internet: https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/resources/list-of-acronyms/ (15.08.2016).

Petzen, Jennifer, 2012. “Contesting Europe: A call for an anti-modern sexual politics” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 19(1), 97-114.

Puar, Jasbir K., 2005. “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages” *Social Text* 23(3-4), 121-139.

Published anonymously by queers, 1990. “I hate straights. Queers read this”, Internet: http://www.actupny.org/documents/QueersReadThis.pdf (15.08.2016).

Ramazanoğlu, Caroline & Janet Holland, 2002. *Feminist methodology. Challenges and choices*. London: Sage.

Rauscher, Hans, 2016. "Muna Duzdar: Die Muslimin", Internet: http://derstandard.at/2000037209320/Muna-Duzdar-Die-Muslimin (15.08.2016).

Richter-Montpetit, Melanie, 2014. "Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism. Lawfare, Torture and the Racial–Sexual Grammars of Legitimate Suffering" *Security Dialogue* 45(1), 43-62.

Rottmann, Susan B. & Myra Marx Ferree, 2008. "Citizenship and Intersectionality: Geman Fminist Debates about Headscarf and Antidiscrimination Laws" *Social Politics* 15(4), 481-513.

Ryan, Caitlin L. & Jill M. Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013. "Already on the Shelf: Queer Readings of Award-Winning Children's Literature" *Journal of Literacy Research* 45(2), 142-172.

Sauer, Birgit, 2009. "Headscarf Regimes in Europe: Diversity Policies at the Intersection of Gender, Culture and Religion" *Comparative European Politics* 7(1), 75-94.

Serhat, Rojda & Sevin Servan, 2015. "Rewriting Women's History in Rojava – Part 1", Internet: http://kurdishquestion.com/oldsite/index.php/kurdistan/west-kurdistan/rewriting-women-s-history-in-rojava-part-1/692-rewriting-women-s-history-in-rojava-part-1.html (15.08.2016).

Scharff, Christina, 2011. "Disarticulating feminism: Individualization, neoliberalism and the othering of 'Muslim women'" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18(2), 119-134.

Shedd, Matt, 2015. "Interview with Haroon, Creator of Burka Avenger", Internet: http://www.peabodyawards.com/stories/story/interview-with-aaron-haroon-rashid-creator-of-burka-avenger (15.08.2016).

Sjoberg, Laura & Caron E. Gentry, 2007. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores. Women's violence in global politics*. London/New York: Zed Books.

Solbach, Renate & Judith Butler, 2006. "Feminism should not resign in the Face of such Instrumentalization. Interview by Renate Solbach" *IABLIS Jahrbuch für europäische Prozesse* 5(1).

Spivak, Gayatri Chakraorty & Rosalind C. Morris (ed.) 2010. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Stryker, Susan, 2007. "Queer Nation" *GLBTQ Social Sciences*, 1-2.

Sutton, Ed, 2015. "Rojava Versus the World", Internet: https://antidotezine.com/2015/02/23/rojava-versus-the-world/ (15.08.2016).

Townsend, Mark, 2016. "10,000 refugee children are missing, says Europol", Internet: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/30/fears-for-missing-child-refugees (15.08.2016).

Unicorn Black, 2016. "About Unicorn Black", Internet: http://unicornblack.com/about-us.html (15.08.2016).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016a. "Global Trends. Forced Displacment in 2015", Geneva.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016b. "Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean ", Internet: http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php (15.08.2016).

Vintges, Karen, 2012. "Muslim women in the western media: Foucault, agency, governmentality and ethics" *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19(3), 283-298.

Yackley, Ayla Jean, 2016. "Turkey to boycott Syrian peace talks if Kurdish PYD invited minister", Internet: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-kurds-idUSKCN0V423D (15.08.2016).

Yuval-Davis, Nira, 1997. *Gender & Nation*. London: Sage.

Zine, Jasmin, 2008. "Lost in Translation: Writing Back from the Margins" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24(1), 110-116.

Case study articles

Abbot, Sebastian, 2013. "Female superhero takes to the screen in a black burka", Internet: http://www.irishexaminer.com/world/female-superhero-takes-to-the-screen-in-a-black-burka-237865.html (15.08.2016).

AFP, 2015. "Syrie: des femmes kurdes en première ligne face au groupe Etat islamique", Internet: https://www.rtbf.be/info/societe/detail_syrie-des-femmes-kurdes-en-premiere-ligne-face-au-groupe-etat-islamique?id=8904465 (15.08.2016).

Araujo, David, 2013. "Burka Avenger, une héroïne pleine de super", Internet: http://next.liberation.fr/culture/2013/07/29/burka-avenger-une-heroine-pleine-de-super_921628 (15.08.2016).

Beunaiche, Nicolas, 2014. "Daesh: Les femmes kurdes, icônes de la lutte armée en Irak et en Syrie", Internet: http://www.20minutes.fr/monde/1456931-20141008-daesh-femmes-kurdes-icones-lutte-armee-irak-syrie (15.08.2016).

Dearden, Lizzie, 2015. "'Isis are afraid of girls': Kurdish female fighters believe they have an unexpected advantage fighting in Syria", Internet http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-are-afraid-of-girls-kurdish-female-fighters-believe-they-have-an-unexpected-advantage-fighting-a6766776.html (15.08.2016).

Edwards, Anna, 2013. "Step aside, Wonderwoman: Pakistan (almost) unveils its first ever woman superhero… the Burka Avenger", Internet: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2379999/The-Burka-Avenger-

Forget-Wonderwoman--Burka-Avenger-new-female-caped-crusader-Pakistan-unveils-female-superhero.html (15.08.2016).

La Libre, 2013. "Burka avenger, la super héroïne pakistanaise", Internet: http://www.lalibre.be/culture/medias-tele/burka-avenger-la-super-heroine-pakistanaise-51f51e2e3570ebbf8e010a39 (15.08.2016).

Nordhausen, Frank, 2014. "Kurdische Frauenbataillone in Kobane: Wie kurdische Frauen gegen den IS kämpfen", Internet: http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kurdische-frauenbataillone-in-kobane-wie-kurdische-frauen-gegen-den-is-kaempfen-351544-seite2 (15.08.2016).

Peternel, Evelyn & Leila Al-Serori, 2014. "Kämpfende Frauen: Kurdische 'Amazonen' jagen Dschihadisten, Internet: http://kurier.at/politik/ausland/kaempfende-frauen-bei-peschmerga-pkk-ypg-kurdische-amazonen-jagen-den-is/81.598.236 (15.08.2016).

Schader, Angela, 2013. "Immer Ärger mit der Burka", Internet: http://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/fernsehen/immer-aerger-mit-der-burka-1.18128509 (15.08.2016).

Spengler, Johannes, 2013. "Teenage Burka Ninja Turtle", Internet: http://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/cartoon-serie-burka-avenger-teenage-burka-ninja-turtle-1.1733225 (15.08.2016).

Starr, Stephen, 2014. "Women in vanguard of Kurdish battle against IS and Syrian regime", Internet: http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/women-in-vanguard-of-kurdish-battle-against-is-and-syrian-regime-1.1968199 (15.08.2016).