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### **Abstract**

*The paper is to display through critical discourse analysis discursive structures of six opinion articles taken from three Canadian newspapers discussing the niqab after the ban of it in France: two newspapers are national – Globe and Mail and National Post – and one is locally published in Ottawa –Ottawa Sun. Studying these articles through a CDA lens, I have found that the discourse of the opinion articles features two ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger 2008) towards the face veil: one is the colonial gaze, which comes from a history of colonization and for which the face veil stands out as a barrier to obtaining knowledge about these women and thus conquering them. The other coded way of seeing is that of nationalism which translates Muslim women as symbols of anti-nationality and inability to assimilate into the ‘imagined Canada’ (Jiwani 2006; Berland 2009). The theoretical investigation of the paper relies on discussions of Orientalism, and on critical descriptions the socio-historical and political context of Canada. It is substantiated by a qualitative critical analysis of the data to illustrate discursive patterns that characterize ideologically loaded presentations of the face-veil and Muslim women.*

**Key words:** newspapers, CDA, colonialism, Canada

### **1. Introduction**

In 1994, French Education Minister, Francois Bayrou, issued a decree banning all ‘ostentatious’ signs of religion in school. Although he made no direct reference to headscarves, he let no doubt as to the nature of ‘ostentatious religious symbols’ he was talking about (Vivian 1999). In 2004, the French senate decreed a law prohibiting ‘conspicuous’ religious symbols in public schools (Langlaude 2007). The law, according to the government, was to emphasize the ‘neutrality’ of public schools and provide approval of the previous ministerial decree (ibid.). In 2009, Sarkozy, the president of the French public at that time, made a statement that ‘we cannot accept in our country women imprisoned behind bars, cut off from social life’. He stated that this was one Islamic custom that ‘is not welcome in France’ (Stern 2007: 8). The following year, France’s National Assembly has approved the legislation banning face coverings in public spaces including markets, transportations, and corporate and government buildings (Greenaway 2010: 27). This series of legal practices indicates intolerance against Muslims in

general and Muslim women in specific, which has increased in the last ten years in France (Croucher 2008). However, the increasing 'intolerance' towards Muslims is not a feature of legal and discursive practices only in France, but in Canada here, the province of Quebec tabled Bill 94 to introduce a veil ban to deny government services to those covering their faces with a niqab, and controversies are continually generated in media in other provinces around the niqab/burka/face veil and 'problems' it is presupposed to cause regarding social communication, assimilation and safety (Washington 2010).

My aim in the paper is to examine through 'aesthetics of seeing' (Vivian 1999) discursive features and structures of six opinion articles taken from three Canadian newspapers discussing the niqab after the ban of it in France: two newspapers are national – *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* – and one is locally published in Ottawa – *Ottawa Sun*. My desire to explore the issue comes from my belief in the crucial role such discursive practices play in promoting hegemonic ideology that alienates and marginalizes Muslim women. According to Jiwani (2006), if particular groups are constantly represented in stereotypical ways as abnormal, unable-to-assimilate immigrants, who don't fit the ideal normative standards, then it follows that the ruling powers are likely to use these representations as justifications for imposing rules that hinder the rights of these groups in entering the nation. Haddad, Moore and Smith (2006) note that when Muslim women first come as immigrants, they may not be hurt by these media stereotypical images because of their confidence that they are not fitting in them but eventually these continuant scornful images of Muslim women 'grind them down' (p. 34). Beside affecting Muslim women's self-esteem, such stereotypical representation may curtail their political economic and cultural initiatives and advancements

I argue in the paper that the discourse of the opinion articles studied features two 'ways of seeing' (Berger 2008) towards the face veil: one is the colonial gaze, which comes from a history of colonization and for which the face veil stands out as a barrier to obtaining knowledge about these women and thus conquering them, and as a marker of their inferiority and 'geographical' differences (Vivian 1999). The other coded way of seeing is that of nationalism which translates Muslim women as symbols of anti-nationality and inability to assimilate into the 'imagined Canada' (Jiwani 2006; Berland 2009). The literature review of the paper will look at the notion of gaze, and then how the gaze has been loaded with ideology linked to Orientalism, and to geopolitical conditions and national narratives of unity. This theoretical investigation will consist of discussions of Orientalism as critiqued by post-colonial studies, and the socio-historical and political context of Canada whose status Berland (2009) describes as both a colony and a colonizer, including critiques of the multiculturalism policy and 'unofficial' hierarchal structure of Canadian society. The theoretical discussion will be followed by a qualitative critical analysis of the articles to illustrate discursive patterns and coded ways of seeing that characterize ideologically loaded presentations of the face-veil and Muslim women.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Concept of Gaze and the Other**

Much work has examined the interpellation of the Other through the 'gaze'. One of these works is Wakeham's *Taxidermic signs* (2008), which demonstrates the relevance of the colonial gaze to taxidermic semiotics through case studies of taxidermy as a material and symbolic practice. Lisa Parks (2005) in *Cultures in Orbit*, shows how the 'satellite gaze' arises from a combination of Euro-centric and Western military, scientific, colonial, and capital knowledge practices. McGowan (2007) develops a new film theory through rethinking the gaze that has been historically central in film studies and locating it with the filmic image rather than the spectator. Such studies have made major contributions to the field of communication, and have extended the application of the 'gaze' to different media and various geopolitical and cultural contexts. I would like to use the concept of the gaze to study the 'politics of seeing' (Vivian 1999) the face-veil/burka in the specific Canadian post-colonial setting. But, at first, what is *gaze*?

Foucault (1991) posits that perception of 'reality' is not governed by 'truth' but ordered by external and discursive structures. In his discussion of this concept, Foucault contends that the world is not controlled by a universal intrinsic order other than by discourse and linguistic descriptions of it. Discourses are affected by external forces of political, economic and social pressure, and are also internally ordered by discursive narratives and structures (Mills 2004). 'Regimes of truth', to Foucault, then are linked in a relation to power which produces and is maintained by these truth affects. A principal technology of power, he argues, is the *gaze*, which is a relationship of the subject to the object and is concerned with the gathering of information, to inform and create a discourse on its subject matter (Fox 1998). The gaze, which may be medical, educational, masculine, aesthetic...etc. (ibid.), operates through modernist techniques of surveillance turning the Other into an object fixed by the gaze of the subject (Majumdar 2007). The Other is not a *visible* object; rather, it is rendered visible through a particular one way of seeing that creates the 'self-evident', natural' (Vivian 1999) and 'common-sense'. It should not be forgotten also that the gaze is not reducible to one ideal unseen viewer, but public individuals are always seeing and seen, and 'subsumed within the entire field of visibility' (ibid. p. 118). This can be clarified by Foucault's argument in his essay 'what is an author' in which he asserts that studying of works should not be reduced to their authors' personas, to thoughts and experiences, but attention should be paid to their 'modes of existence'. In the essay, he confirms that the author is an 'ideological product' of a culture rather than a 'perpetual surging of an invention' (p. 119). The gaze then is not to be understood as coming from an 'ideal unseen subject' but it should be situated within an entire 'field of visibility' (Vivian 1999) which encourages individuals to enact differential power relations and inhabit certain 'modes of existence'.

## 2.2 Orientalism, Coloniality and Postcoloniality

The fundamental inequality which is intrinsic in the form of the gaze is reinforced by colonial relations of power, which are still alive in the postcolonial world. As a reaction to these unequal relations, a body of work, called postcolonial studies, has emerged. According to Shome and Hedge (2002), postcolonial studies are

an interdisciplinary field of inquiry committed to theorizing the problematic of colonization and decolonization. As a field it is positioned within the broader critical project of cultural studies that has had so much influence in communication scholarship. (p. 250)

Postcolonial theory works provide a 'historical and international depth to the understanding of cultural power' (ibid.) through exploration of issues such as race, class, gender and nationality within 'geopolitical arrangements, and relationships of nations and their international histories' (ibid.). Shome and Hedge point out that the concern of postcolonial studies goes beyond national boundaries, and that these works locate the nation in a larger context of global power and relation, and in that they differ than the rhetoric of multiculturalism: while postcolonial theory allows for multiplicity in thought, multiculturalism is based on 'Otherness' which 'resurrects the native in essentialist trappings and fixed categories' (p. 262). Multiculturalism misses the point about diversity as struggle, but aims through the package of otherness to 'create a savvy work force who can navigate cultural differences' (p. 263), maintaining 'White' normativity and privileges. Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, deconstructs 'white privilege' and rejects post-colonial imperial values and relations.

In *Orientalism* (1978), one major and inspirational work in the field of postcolonial research, Edward Said analyzes 'Western' texts that describe or relate to the 'Orient' or 'Orientals', ranging from the Eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. What distinguishes Said's work from other works which discuss Orientalism is his use of Foucault's notion of discourse, which places knowledge and power at the centre (Poole 2002). Said shows through his book how Orientalism as an institutionalized discourse was created to provide knowledge of the Orient and the Oriental in order to have power over this 'Other' and how the knowledge of the Other was created out of an ideological construction which combined fear of the other and an imperialistic outlook of the Oriental domain.

Although *Orientalism* was criticized by many scholars such as Turner (1994) for having a monolithic framework for the divergent and different traditions of Orientalism, and for emphasizing the negative side of Orientalism and ignoring intellectual and philosophical benefits that have been reaped from this field, the book has contributed significantly to the understanding of the link between knowledge and power in the process 'Northern' societies have institutionalized their imaginaries about the Other (Karim 2000). Said has succeeded in drawing attention to common ideological patterns in Orientalism that promoted clashes and conflicts with the 'East' and which are still dangerous if not intellectually and discursively challenged and resisted.

Orientalism is defined by Said as 'Knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing' (p. 41). Orientalism then as a field embodies a *gaze* which turns the Other and what is related to 'it' into an object for study and scrutiny. This scientific-colonial gaze was applied within 'traditional learning (the classics...philology), public institutions (governments...universities) and generically determined writings (travel books...)' (Said 1978: 202), affecting almost every field of academic learning (ibid.).

The 'gaze' that constructed the relationship between the West and East as active spectators and passive objects of seeing in colonial periods has survived throughout long periods of history. The Orientalist-colonial archive informs modern discourses especially in media about the 'Other', keeping a dichotomous image of the East and the West where the former symbolizes irrationality, violence, cruelty and backwardness and the latter represents the opposites of these traits (Jiwani 2006). Bannerji argues that:

Their skin [the Other's skin] is written upon with colonial discourse-which is orientalist and racist. Thus memories, experiences, customs, languages, and religions of such people become interpreted into reificatory and often negative cultural types or identities. (cited in Jiwani 2006: 13)

The 'custom' of veil is one 'empty signifier' (Hall 2006) that has been interpolated through the colonial gaze as a 'negative identity'. According to Stuart Hall, signifiers are systems and classifications based on cultural meaning; their meanings are changeable and never fixed. However, changing the meaning of a signifier is, 'to trouble the dreams of who are comfortable inside'. The meaning of the face veil has been secured through colonial discourses in the Eighteenth century when colonial expansion began to produce a western narrative of Muslim women. According to Vivian (1999), western discourse, which consisted of paintings and print culture, rendered Muslim women, who were veiled from the colonial gaze, as exotic and installed the face veil as a centre of exoticism (ibid.). 'Desire' (ibid.) for the veil, nevertheless, was in relation with imperial desires; removal of the veil was then the 'ultimate form of colonization' (p. 122). The veil became a symbol of Islam, a people and even a civilization. It became a lens through which the Other and Islam could be seen (ibid.) and could be occupied. The veil, thus, became invested with a two-fold desirous 'way of seeing' within the colonial discourse: one is the desire to see what is beneath the veil and the other is to civilize and modernize these veiled women (ibid.) through colonial modernist ideology.

This ambivalent way of seeing is still persistent in some media portrayals of Muslim women. Jack Shaheen (2007), for example, argues that Arab and Muslim women have been consistently stereotyped in Hollywood as exotic dancers or women bundled in black and abused by 'Oriental' men. Although the image may change, the same Orientalist theme which highlights the Muslim woman being submissive and being subjugated to the 'oriental' man's desires (sexual or patriarchal) is maintained. Richardson (2004) argues that portraying the Muslim women is more complex than that of the Muslim male since the issues of race, ethnicity and gender are all interwoven in current images of Muslim women. Negative stereotypes of veiled Muslim women

being compliant, repressed, uneducated and abused by the male other are added to stereotypes of Muslims as threatening and backward.

According to Bullock (2002), the veil of the Muslim woman (which some Muslim women choose not to wear while others advocate it) has become in Western media a symbol of male aggression against Muslim women rather than a form of worship or a Muslim woman's choice or judgment of advantages that are provided by the veil. Bullock argues that although many Muslim women wear the veil because of their own desire to do so and their conviction in its benefits (protection, a symbol of dignity, spirituality...etc.), it is pictured in the media as a male or social command, which results in discriminating women wearing it and stereotyping them as weak and passive women unable to stand up for themselves and their rights. Face veil then reflects the peculiarities of the Other, their inferior, barbaric and traditional constructions and traditions. Such representation evokes a narrative of rescue for the 'covered women'. The theme of rescue through benevolence, Jiwani testifies, underpins power relations which were evident in imperial literature that was full of representations constructing women from the East as Others who needed to be unveiled. In analysis of the newspaper articles, it will be shown how the savior theme is recurrent in their discursive arguments.

## 2.3 Setting the Scene

### 2.3.1 Canada as a 'subject of empire'

Michale Billig (2005) in 'Banal nationalism' aims to refute claims that nation-states are in decline and that ideology is disappearing in the twentieth century, advocated by prominent figures such as Fukuyama. Such claims also assert that liberal democracy may constitute the end point of mankind's ideological systems and the final form of human government and as such constituted the 'end of history' (ibid.). Billig disputes these claims by asserting that democracy conditions in 'democratic' labelled systems emerge from the very nation-state ideology. In his analysis of data collected from British press, such as the *Guardian*, *Star*, *Today*, and *Telegraph*, he concludes that that these newspapers, even the sophisticated left *Guardian*, do not stand outside the ideology of nationalism.

Canada's reputable commitment to liberty and democracy comes from the 'imagined rugged independence and self-reliance of European settlers' against harshness of the 'North' climate, qualities that are presumed to have given birth to the nation (Razack 2007: 75). This national mythology overshadows that the nation building and the creation of the Canadian state was carried out through colonization. Citing Thobani, Jiwani (2006) argues that the nation, which was imagined by the British and later by Canadian elites as White one, was founded through colonization of Aboriginal peoples and the appropriation of their resources. The reality of colonization is evident in its during legacy where the colonization transformed the world as existed; it privileged a hierarchy where 'Whiteable-bodies, heterosexual (by and large) males remained at the helmet of colonial enterprises' (p. 8). Carrying a similar argument, Razak (2007) posits that mythologies of national stories define who belong and who do not belong to the nation. The story of the 'Canadian' land as developed by civilizing settlers and, the trapping of Aboriginal people in the pre-modern phase is a racial story, which defines current roles of these

racially categorized people. Razack makes further comment that if Aboriginal people are placed in a pre-modern place and time, people of color are scripted as late arrivals to the nations: she illustrates that slavery and labour exploitations - the Chinese who built the railways and the Sikhs who worked in the lumber industry in the nineteenth century - have been removed from Canadian national story. The resulting hierarchal nature in contemporary society which has been established through such historical stock of knowledge is often part of taken-for-granted 'common-sense'. Therefore, the hierarchy remains invisible, yet transparent in the economic and cultural privileging of certain groups over others (Jiwani 2006).

A broader discussion of race-based hierarchies can be also grounded in discussion of the contemporary policy of multiculturalism, given that it is a main ideology that regulates relations between individuals and groups in society. Critical readings of the policy suggest that the Trudo Liberals introduced the multiculturalism policy (1971) to allow for personal freedom and national unity within the frame of bilingual languages, the French and English, and to appease the needs of the 'Third Force' especially the Ukrainian and German populations. From mid 80s, the policy has evolved from political and ethnic emphasis to celebration of culture and heritage and inclusion of anti-racist discourses (Abu-Laban 1992). However, this over-focus over culture, as critiqued by many academic works, mystifies state representations of real and material interests of ethnic minorities: the policy lacks materiality and overshadows economic and institutional equality (ibid.). Further, in dealing with 'culture', the multiculturalism policy grapples non-controversial aspects of 'cultures, such as food, dance and music, which are unproblematic but rather supportive of tourism and contributing to the image of Canada as peace-loving (ibid.). Such contradiction consisting in applying some cultural aspects and leaving others even yields the illusion of 'total democracy' and obscures unbalance entrenched in social and institutional dynamics. The policy, according to many critical voices, is designed as a homogenizing policy, integrating non-white minorities into the imagined Canadian community, rather than a policy for a pluralist society with acknowledgment of material and cultural needs of all cultural groups (ibid.).

The assimilative political policy and the hierarchal structure of society are reflected in how racial minorities are mediated in media and everyday talk (Jiwani 2006). Jiwani illustrates that two ideal types emerge in discourses that inform social life about race and gender: the *reasonable person* and the *preferred immigrant/conditional Canadian*. The reasonable person, as stated by Jiwani, is the ideal White, able-bodied, rational middle-class person who speaks the dominant language and embodies national mythologies that are then performed accordingly. This person makes few demands and performs her/his duties according to the law, a narrative that comes from the notion of Canada as a peaceful kingdom. Therefore, benevolence also marks his/her attitude towards other. The second ideal type, the preferred immigrant, Jiwani explains, fits the reasonable person prototype but tends to be a person of color. This hypothetical person does not bring conflicts from his/her homeland but brings aspects of his/her cultures that are not problematic or that can be periodically celebrated outside the family. S/he is able to assimilate into the dominant society and learn the main language, and integrate his/her children in the Canadian dominant society. S/he is loyal to

Canada, a land that has provided many opportunities and for which s/he is grateful; and he can use such opportunities to contribute to Canada and achieve success. These, according to Jiwani, are implicit standards against which people in media are usually measured. Applying this categorization to the discourse of the data articles, it will be illustrated how these ideals are constantly referred to in portrayals of Others who are not fitting into these 'common-sense' predominating standards.

### **2.3.2 Canada as an object of empire**

Canada, however, has been ordered as both a 'subject and object of empire' (Berland 2009: 15). A former outpost of the British Empire, Canada is assumed by Innis (Berland) also in current times an outpost of 'empire' by being marginal to U.S. through a staples-based economic system. Innis asserts that Canada's being the provider of raw materials and U.S' possessing the power of major industries has created the centre-margin relation between the two (ibid.). A margin, according to Innis, is 'a space which is drawn into the axes of imperial economy, administration and information but which remains "behind"...or "outside" in terms of economic and political power' (p. 77). Centralization and marginalization of power, to Innis, is not restricted to economics but is also influential in knowledge Formation (ibid.). He presumes that the doctrine of free press was a key instrument in the formation of press monopolies which depended on Canada for raw materials for American manufacture. This relation of centre -which produces technology and materials- and margin -which produces raw material for newsprint - raises Innis's skepticism about the knowledge thereby disseminated (ibid.).

This staples-based economic theory set by Innis is important to explain the commonality between the Canadian media and other Western media in 'representation'. Karim (2002) in his book *Islamic Peril* shows how the Western media (including U.S.), and Canadian mass media share a narrow, limited and usually negative set of interpretations of issues related to Muslims. He attributes the commonality in the discursive treatment between them to the dependence of the Canadian mass media on other western countries' news sources and agencies for reporting and representing events especially those that are related to Muslims; Canadian media institutions, according to Karim, do not have yet large and independent foreign news bureaus. This lack of technological and corporate resources leads Canadian institutions to rely on other Western media institutions for knowledge and information materials. Therefore, the 'Canadian view' cannot be discernable in reports and articles about Muslim events and actors (ibid.).

## **3. Data and Analysis**

### **3.1 Data**

The data for the paper includes six opinion articles taken from three newspapers: two national newspapers – *the Globe and Mail* and *National Post* – and one local newspaper – *the Ottawa Sun*. One of these articles is an editorial (Our Kind of Multiculturalism, 2010) taken from *National Post* while the other ones are columns or 'comment' articles. All of them have been written after the French ban of the face veil in a time that ranges from June to



October in 2010; they tackle the face-veil, however, more in a Canadian local context, relating the veil to locally cultural and national issues, than in the French historical and political terrain. By localizing the discussion of the veil, they all share a call –implicit or explicit- for the ban of the veil in Canada as it has been legislated in France.

### 3.2 Analysis

The *gaze* operates as an epistemic form in the rhetoric of the articles which feature preoccupation with the veil as a visual ‘object’. This can be demonstrated by redundancy of visually-based descriptions of the face veil such as ‘eye-slit veils’ (Washington 2010: 1), ‘zombie women, masked head-to-toe’ (p. 11), ‘ominous photo of a woman in burka’ (Our Kind of Multiculturalism, 2010: 13), ‘head-to-toe shroud’ (Levant 2010: 1), ‘The face is covered with a mesh grille, like a beekeeper’s hat’ (p. 3) and ‘I feel sorry for the veiled women I see taking their kids to schools’ (Wente 2010: 5). The face veil represents a visible barrier to this explorative gaze from discovering *what* is beneath it, which is coded in the discourse studied as the ‘identity’ of these women (Washington 2010: 11; Levant: 2010: 3, 21).

The burka/niqab is sustained also as ‘visible statements of separation and difference’ (Wente 2010: 3) (a statement that is used by one of the article writers to describe the face veil). It is rendered through a colonial-inscribed ‘way of seeing’ as a marker of polarization between civilized progressive Western ‘Us’ and uncivilized ‘them’ who are assumed to be incapable of making progress and development; the dichotomy is constructed of opposition between ‘our’ values and ‘their’ values through a discourse of ‘common-sense’ and universal values versus deviant principles and traditions. The *National Post* editorial (Our Kind of Multiculturalism 2010: 3) interprets the face veil as a concrete representation of a ‘part of those cultures comes into conflict with the values we truly hold dear—liberalism, religious pluralism, human treatment of children, respect for women, equal treatment of children’. Levant in the *Ottawa Sun* (2010) introduces his article about the veil ban by setting a strong advocacy to the ban because ‘Not banning full-body coverings lets a despicable part of medieval culture live on a society that should know better’ (p. 1). Solberg (2010), also in *Ottawa Sun*, states that ‘Some people from other countries and faiths aren’t quite so easy to win over. Some of them hate freedom and equality and pass the loathing to the next generation’ (p. 10) and then he continues that ‘a strong majority of Canadians loathe the concept of burka for what it implies...It implies that eternal and universal rights, freedom and equality, don’t apply in...Canada’ (p. 17). The acceptance of Muslim women bodies is conditioned then on ‘modernist’ ideology that limits and restricts the ‘mobility’ (Jiwani 2006) of these bodies within the ‘modern’ paradigmatic framework of western ‘morality’ (ibid.) which is ‘universalized’ and brought as the normative standards against which other ‘cultures are judged. A similar argument narrated through the rhetoric of oppositional values is made by Hassan (2010), in *the Globe and Mail*, who states that the niqab is a representative of ‘a segment of the community whose values remain diametrically opposed to Canadian values’ (p. 6). The discursive statements listed use coded words such as ‘culture’ and ‘community’ to reify other ‘visible’

categories as absolutes against Western normalized and universalized belief systems.

The face veil as an object of surveillance is also reduced to a material symbol of the patriarchal system of the Other, an image that is in alignment with one of the main old-Orientalist clichés about Eastern harem masters and their slaves. Some of the comments endorsed by the article writers on the veil are, 'it's become a symbol of oppression, subservience, property of males' (Washington 2010: 9), 'immigrants who insist on special treatment—say by demanding the right to veil their women in courtrooms' (Our kind of multiculturalism 2010: 9), 'it is a manifestation of tyranny – a brutal husband demanding submission; a radical imam threatening frightened immigrant women' (Levant, 2010: 23), 'oppression is allowed to flourish in dark corners of Canada' (Sloberg 2010: 20), 'The *niqab* to many symbolizes...patriarchal control and inveterate misogyny' (Hassan 2010: 2) and 'Despite pronouncements by *niqab* clad women to the contrary, the *niqab* is just a means of control over women's bodies' (3). If the face veil is portrayed as patriarchal 'symbol' of the other, ironically, a patriarchal stance towards these women is invoked, one that requires interventional methods to remove the veil without the veiled women's consent, as it is evidenced explicitly in the comment made by Hassan in which she states that 'For groups who fear forced sequestration of women as a result of state legislation...Their conclusion is based on the flawed assumption...She cannot live her entire life hiding behind her *niqab*...Public institutions must not enable Islamism and its symbols' (9).

The stereotypes of the subjugated Muslim woman who is unable to make decisions is underscored by what I describe as 'buzz' stories which are interpreted reductively and basically in relation to a visually described 'veil', excluding other socio-historical conditions; these stories are widely circulated in media as a means to justify the 'rescue' narrative invoked towards 'veiled' women; stories such as that of Neda Agha Sultan who was shot in the Iranian protest last year 'because she wore her hijab too loose on her head' (Wente 2010: 1), Aqsa Parves, who was 'killed by her father and brother for dressing in western fashion rather than in traditional Islamic clothing' (Levat 2010: 24), and 'Afghanistan, uncovered women have acid thrown in their faces' (24). Such violence is constantly interpreted as a policy and decision, neither as a matter of momentary rage or as an accidental incident nor a part of complex socio-political and historical conditions. I do neither claim a 'truth' version of such stories nor by any means stand as a defendant of the crime perpetrators; however, I contend that providing simplistic descriptions of the events and making these stories representative of all face-veiled women's conditions lead first to more mystification of the veil, and, second, to exclusion of these veiled women since they are presumed to be controlled by threat and fear rather than having their own voices and individual stances.

Besides being a symbol of subjugation and suppression, the veil is rendered as an emblem of banal fundamentalism. Hassan (2010) in *Globe and Mail* argues that 'it is obvious the *niqab* inspires loyalty among fundamentalists...Why is the law so tolerant of Islamism' (p. 8) since 'Islamist will most certainly invoke this as a precedent to their fundamentalist agenda' (p. 5). Solberg (2010) in the *Ottawa Sun* warns that 'there is no fun at all in their fundamentalism and waxing poetic about our tolerance must look like weakness to them' (p. 12)

and Wente (2010) through an assumed 'objective' spectator's perspective states that 'But maybe we should judge. When Zaynab Khadr (Omar's big sister) stares angrily from her eye slit, perhaps she's telling us that her values are not aligned with ours' (p. 8). To emphasize the threatening fundamental aspect of the niqab, it is even lumped with historically well-known ideology of oppression; Levant (2010) in *Ottawa Sun* posits a question in his article that 'if burka is okay, how about a Ku Klux Klan mask' (p. 22), connecting the niqab to terrorist practices and ideologies that are a source of fear in the social psyche.

Beside this colonial 'way of seeing', a national form of seeing, which is interwoven with the colonially-filtered one, is also applied as a way of knowledge formation about the face veil. A logic of assimilation echoes well in the discourse of the articles, where the veil is seen as a 'visibility of resistance' (Vivian 1995) to nationalist unity. In *Globe and Mail*, Wente (2010) is 'concerned if large numbers of women don the niqab...and refuse to integrate into Canadian life' (p. 1); she cannot be convinced by anybody that these women 'are about to assimilate into Canadian life' (p. 5). Hassan (2010), strikingly in a similar way, asserts that 'the proliferation of the *niqab*, and all its stands for spell serious repercussions for Canadian society' (p. 10). The editorial of the *National Post* also (Our Kind of Multiculturalism, 2010) puts forth that 'demanding the right to veil their women in courtrooms...create the impression that immigrants from certain backgrounds cannot become "real" Canadians' (p. 9).

The *National Post* editorial also emphatically reiterates one of the main totems of multiculturalism ideology, that immigrants should conform to expectations of behavior, language and culture and 'established' Canadian norms:

If multiculturalism is to be understood as social contract between minority cultures and established Canadian society, then both sides must pursue their obligations in good faith. Immigrants and their children should do their best to integrate –which means learning an official language, getting education and becoming a productive member of society...while the rest of should do our best to exhibit genuine color-blindedness. (p. 8)

Such mixing between 'culture' and racial 'color' in this text, and which resonates with multiculturalism ideology, makes rules of 'inclusion and exclusion' of people are easier and more acceptable to impose in the current age where racial racism is considered as taboo in democratic societies.

However, these immigrants allowed to practice and show their home cultural aspects that only can be enjoyed by the nation, another principle of multiculturalism, which is articulated by Solberg (2010) directing his speech towards the immigrant 'Go ahead and practice your faith, set up a great restaurant, have your ethnic festivals and we'll celebrate you as part of the Canadian mosaic' (p. 5). Solberg continues demanding gratefulness for such 'free' and democratic opportunities: 'We do all this because we assume that people from unpleasant country will just appreciate our niceness and will be grateful for our social programs' (p. 8). The *National Post* defines this gratefulness as full assimilation: 'immigrants who would take advantage of our generosity without any intention of becoming fully part of our societies' (Our

Kind of Multiculturalism 2010: 12). The inclusion into the nation then is established on the standard of assimilation first, productivity second; that the immigrant does not insist on 'visible' cultural markers of differentiation or on demanding special and private rights. Such discourse insists on superiority of nation over culture and of homogeneity over plurality

The national perspective of the veil is also underscored through reproduction of stories that construct the veil as threat to national security and legal systems: stories as the one about 'A gunman wearing the burka robbed a courier in Australia - one of several cases of men (and women) wearing burkas as disguise while committing crimes' (Washington 2010: 14); 'stories and a video circulate of two Muslim women who allegedly boarded an Air Canada plane without having to drop their veils' (Solber 2010: 13), and a case of sexual-assault woman refusing to remove her veil in the court (Wente 2010; Hassan 2010). Such stories provide the 'signification' of threat and danger to the veil signifier; a meaning that is, taken in conjunction with other symbols and practices listed above, the face veil becomes the focus of suspicion, fear, submission, regulation, fundamentalism, threat and danger.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the paper, I have attempted to demonstrate how the face-veil is examined in the opinion articles through a gaze that is bound with the two interwoven ideological forms of colonialism and nationalism. This epistemic ideology interpolates veiled women as a foreign homogenized group objectified for examination through monolithic cultural and national standards. This vision of surveillance was the very form of seeing that brought around ideologies such as Orientalism which ruled out deep cultural dynamics and understandings. At the end of the paper, I would like to bring a quote by James Carey (1989) (who, ironically, would probably disapprove of such 'elite-inspired' and 'causally' modeled work as the one I did). I see his view of 'conversation' among cultures as a substitute model for epistemological investigations and orgasms and as an essential forum of pluralism for creating democratic societies and resisting ideological homogeneities:

Rather than grading experience into zones of epistemological correctness, we can more usefully presume that given what we are biologically and what culture is practically, people live in qualitatively distinct zones of experience that cultural forms organize in different ways...The analysis of mass communication will have to examine the several cultural worlds in which people simultaneously exist - the tension...the patterns of mood and distinctive to each and the interpretation among them. Simultaneously, it will have to release ...one cultural version among many...and some final court against which to judge the veridicalness of other modes of existence. (p. 50)

What I am trying to demonstrate through the excerpt is that the 'gaze' is inevitably flawed as long as there is absence of debate and conversation with ones who have been made into objects of the epistemic. I have followed many of the stories published after the French legislation of the face-veil ban, and I have not encountered any accounts or arguments that have been narrated and voiced by face-veiled women. Rather, stories and narratives have been

constructed through Western imaginary discourses and positions, which position veiled women as objects rather than subjects of such narratives.

Perhaps this is just an unrealistic dream in the current ideologically dominated world, but what I hope is what Carey has enunciated above: democratically pluralist societies.

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